

Notes on Daniel

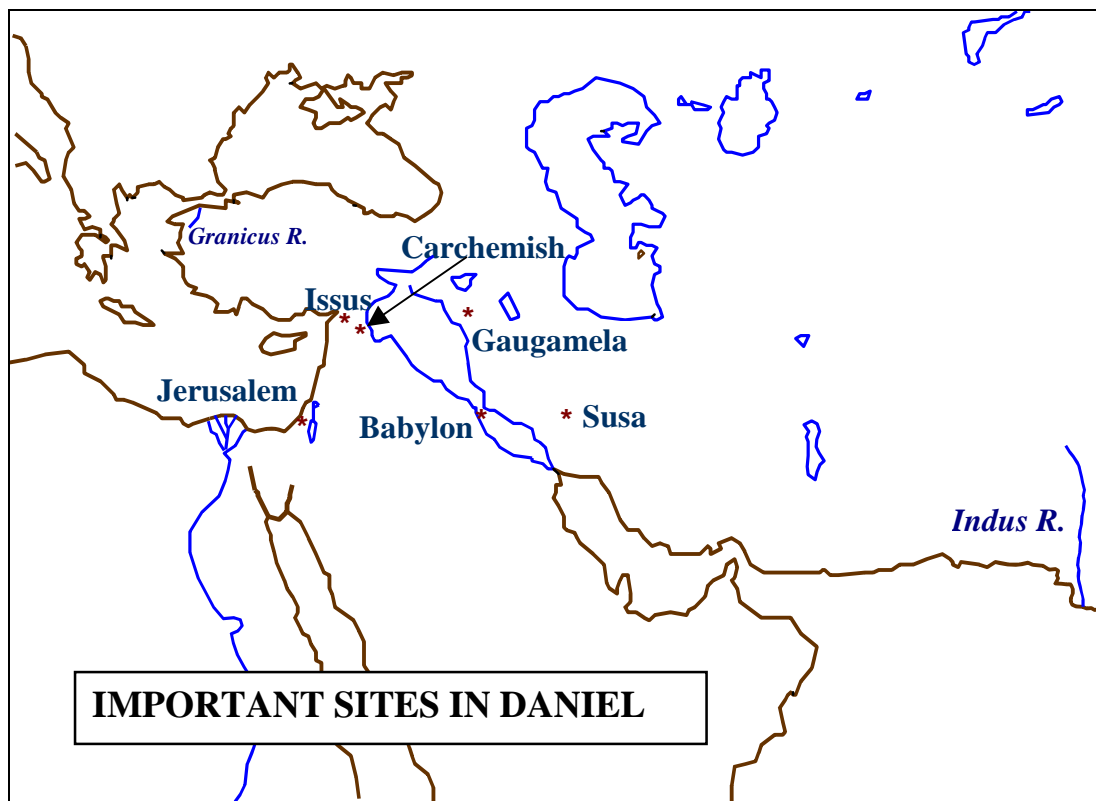
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Introduction

BACKGROUND

In 605 B.C., Prince Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian army of his father Nabopolassar against the allied forces of Assyria and Egypt. He defeated them at Carchemish near the top of the Fertile Crescent. This victory gave Babylon supremacy in the ancient Near East. With Babylon's victory, Egypt's vassals, including Judah, passed under Babylonian control. Shortly thereafter that same year Nabopolassar died, and Nebuchadnezzar succeeded him as king. Nebuchadnezzar then moved south and invaded Judah, also in 605 B.C. He took some royal and noble captives to Babylon (Dan. 1:1-3), including Daniel, plus some of the vessels from Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 36:7). This was the first of Judah's three deportations in which the Babylonians took groups of Judahites to Babylon. The king of Judah at that time was Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1-4).



Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah and Coniah) succeeded him in 598 B.C. Jehoiachin reigned only three months and 10 days (2 Chron. 36:9). Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah again. At the turn of the year, in 597 B.C., he took Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with most of Judah's remaining leaders, including young Ezekiel, and the rest of the national treasures (2 Kings 24:10-17; 2 Chron. 36:10).

A third and final deportation took place approximately 11 years later, in 586 B.C. Jehoiakim's younger brother Mattaniah, whose name Nebuchadnezzar had changed to Zedekiah, was then Judah's puppet king. He rebelled against Babylon's sovereignty by secretly making a treaty with Pharaoh Hophra under pressure from Jewish nationalists (Jer. 37—38). After an 18-month siege, Jerusalem fell. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem, burned the temple, broke down the city walls, and took all but the poorest of the Jews captive to Babylon. He also took Zedekiah prisoner to Babylon, after he executed his sons, and put out the king's eyes, at Riblah in Aram (modern Syria; 2 Kings 24:18—25:24).

SCOPE

Daniel, the main character from whom this book gets its name, was probably only a teenager when he arrived in Babylon in 605 B.C. The Hebrew words used to describe him, the internal evidence of chapter 1, and the length of his ministry, seem to make this clear. He continued in office as a public servant at least until 538 B.C. (1:21), and as a prophet at least until 536 B.C. (10:1). Thus the record of his ministry spans 70 years, the entire duration of the Babylonian Captivity. He probably lived to be at least 85 years old and perhaps older.

WRITER

There is little doubt among conservative scholars that Daniel himself wrote this book under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Probably he did so late in his life, which could have been about 530 B.C. or a few years later. Several Persian-derived governmental terms appear in the book. The presence of these words suggests that the book received its final polishing after Persian had become the official language of government. This would have been late in Daniel's life.

"If Daniel was a youth (*yeled*, i. 4, 10) of from fifteen to eighteen years of age at the time of his being carried captive into Chaldea, and died in the faith of the divine promise soon after the last revelation made to him in the third year (ch. x. 1) of king Cyrus, then he must have reached the advanced age of at least ninety years."¹

What makes Daniel's authorship quite clear is both internal and external evidence.

¹C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, p. 3.

Internally, the book claims in several places that Daniel was its writer (8:1; 9:2, 20; 10:2). References to Daniel in the third person do not indicate that someone else wrote about him, because it was customary for ancient authors of historical memoirs to write about themselves this way (cf. Exod. 20:2, 7).²

"As in several other books of prophecy (e.g., Jeremiah and Hosea), the author is also the chief actor in the events recorded."³

Externally, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of this book as the writing of Daniel (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). The Jews believed that Daniel was its writer from its earliest appearance. The early church father Jerome argued for Daniel's authorship against a contemporary critic of his, Porphyry, who contended that someone composed it about 165 B.C. and claimed that he was Daniel.⁴

CANONICITY

The Jews placed Daniel in the Writings section of their Bible. The first two divisions of the Hebrew Bible are the Law and the Prophets. The Writings in Hebrew are called the Kethubim, and in Greek, the Hagiographa.⁵ They did this because Daniel was not a prophet in the sense in which the other Hebrew prophets were. He functioned as a prophet and wrote inspired Scripture, but he was a government official, an administrator in a Gentile land, rather than a preaching prophet (cf. Nehemiah).

". . . though Christ spoke of Daniel's *function* as prophetic (Matt. 24:15), his *position* was that of governmental official and inspired writer, rather than ministering prophet (cf. Acts 2:29-30)."⁶

In contrast to Ezekiel, his contemporary in Babylon, Daniel lived and worked among Gentiles primarily, whereas Ezekiel lived and ministered among the Israelites. Only Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi follow Daniel chronologically among the prophetic books of the Old Testament, but Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles also do among the historical books.

The Greek and Latin translators of Daniel placed this book among the other Major Prophets in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions because of its prophetic content. That tradition influenced the scholars who produced our English versions.

²Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in *Daniel-Minor Prophets*, vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 4.

³Robert D. Culver, "Daniel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 769.

⁴For a discussion of the critical views of authorship, see Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 373-76.

⁵See Thomas J. Finley, "The Book of Daniel in the Canon of Scripture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165:658 (April-June 2008):195-208.

⁶*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Daniel, Book of" by R. K. Harrison, 2:12-21.

DATE

The dating of this book is one of the most controversial subjects in the field of Old Testament Introduction.⁷ The controversy is not due to the obscurity of evidence but to the presuppositions of critics.

It is quite easy to determine when Daniel lived and ministered because of the many historical references in this book. His fellow prophet Ezekiel also referred to him (cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). However, because the book contains prophecies that Antiochus Epiphanies fulfilled in the second century B.C., many rationalistic critics who deny that the Bible contains predictive prophecy have said that Daniel could not have written it. They contend that it must have been written after Antiochus, namely, about 165 B.C. Modern criticism follows Porphyry's view. However, there are many evidences within the book itself that point to its origin in the sixth century B.C.⁸

"Human inventiveness in things spiritual or unspiritual is very limited. It would be difficult probably to invent a new heresy. Objectors of old were as acute or more acute than those now; so that the ground was well-nigh exhausted."⁹

No significant writer espoused a late date for the book after Jerome refuted Porphyry until the eighteenth century A.D. J. D. Michaelis revived Porphyry's theory in 1771, and it took root in the rationalistic intellectual soil of the Enlightenment. Since then many scholars who disbelieve in predictive prophecy have insisted that this book must have been the product of the Maccabean revolt (168-165 B.C.). Liberal critics still consider the late dating of Daniel to be one of the most assured results of modern scholarship. Nevertheless there is ample evidence in the book itself that Daniel wrote it and that it dates from the sixth century B.C.¹⁰

"One who claims that the book of Daniel is a product of the Maccabean age thereby denies that it is a work of true predictive prophecy as it purports to be. Furthermore, if the book of Daniel comes from the age of the Maccabees, I do not see how it is possible to escape the conclusion that the book is also a forgery, for it claims to be a revelation from God to the Daniel who lived in Babylon during the exile."¹¹

⁷See Longman and Dillard, pp. 373-76.

⁸See Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Book of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133:532 (October-December 1976):319-29.

⁹Edward B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet*, p. iii.

¹⁰For more information, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 1110-26; Gleason L. Archer Jr., *Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 380-403; idem, "Old Testament History and Recent Archeology From the Exile to Malachi," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127:508 (October-December 1970):291-98, or any of the better commentaries on Daniel, such as John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, pp. 16-25; Keil, pp. 19-57; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, pp. 35-46; or H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, pp. 8-14, 18-27. J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, pp. 1324-25, wrote a good brief discussion of the major objections.

¹¹Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, p. 5. See also pp. 19-20 and 23-26 for evidence that Daniel wrote the book himself.

LANGUAGES

Daniel is one of the few books in the Old Testament that was originally written in two different languages. One was Aramaic (also known as Chaldee or Syriac), the common language of the ancient Near East, and the other was Hebrew. The other Aramaic passages are Ezra 4:8—6:18; 7:12-26; and Jeremiah 10:11. The compound name Jegar-Sahadutha in Genesis 31:47 is also Aramaic. The Aramaic portions in Daniel deal with matters pertaining to all the citizens of the Babylonian and Persian empires, whereas the Hebrew sections describe predominantly Jewish concerns and God's plans for Israel. Probably Daniel wrote the Aramaic sections for the benefit of his Gentile neighbors, and he wrote the whole book for the Jews who could read both languages.

PURPOSE

To the interested observer of Israel's fortunes in Daniel's time, it seemed that Yahweh had either become impotent or had abandoned His chosen people. The gods of Assyria and Babylon had apparently triumphed over Him. His temple lay in ruins, His capital had been ravaged and stood empty and vulnerable, and His people were living as unhappy captives in a foreign land.

At such a time as this, God revealed His supernatural power. He did so to demonstrate that He is the one true God, and that He is still sovereign over the affairs of humanity and history. He manifested His power to the supreme rulers of Babylon and Persia, so that they might know that He governs over everyone from heaven—that He alone is God.

This was a time in Israel's history similar to the time just before the Exodus. Israel was in captivity, and Israel's God was in disgrace. Daniel contains proof of God's sovereignty, which the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea demonstrated to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Daniel, as Exodus, relates several "contests" between false gods and Yahweh in which Israel's God proves to be the only true and living God. Like Daniel, Esther also shows God working for His people during a period of their divine discipline.

"The predominant message is that God's people will experience suffering and be threatened with extinction, but that will not be the end of the story because their God is the living and all-powerful God who will get glory by vindicating His name and who will save them."¹²

"Daniel's purpose in writing blended the two themes of prophecy and piety. He wrote first to show God's *future* program for the nation of Israel (in light of her fall) during and after 'the times of the Gentiles.' Second, he wrote to show what the believers' *present* response should be as they await the coming kingdom of God. Daniel encouraged his readers to remain faithful to God in a hostile society while they waited for God's promised kingdom."¹³

¹²Baldwin, p. 66.

¹³Charles H. Dyer, in *The Old Testament Explorer*, p. 701.

THEOLOGY

Theologically, the book stresses the sovereignty of God.

"The absolute sovereignty and transcendence of God above all angels and men literally permeates the book."¹⁴

"The theme running through the whole book is that the fortunes of kings and the affairs of men are subject to God's decrees, and that he is able to accomplish his will despite the most determined opposition of the mightiest potentates on earth."¹⁵

"The collapse and fall of both Israel and Judah notwithstanding, the book of Daniel makes crystal clear that the Lord God remains absolutely sovereign over human affairs. This is apparent in the present, despite political and religious conditions that might suggest otherwise, and in the future, when there would be no doubt in anyone's mind."¹⁶

Merrill highlighted three aspects of Yahweh's sovereignty that Daniel reveals: His sovereignty over all, the sovereignty of (fallen) man, and the restoration of God's universal dominion.¹⁷

The powerful miracles recorded in chapters 1—6 show God's sovereignty at work for His people. The prophecies in chapters 7—12 show His sovereignty over the Gentile nations and Israel by unveiling what He will do with them far into the future. Daniel's name means "God is my judge" or "God is judging" or "God will judge," and this was the burden of his message. Especially the period that Jesus Christ referred to as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) is the focus of this revelation.

"The times of the Gentiles is that extended period of time in which the land given in covenant by God to Abraham and his descendants is occupied by Gentile powers and the Davidic throne is empty of any rightful heir in the Davidic line. The times of the Gentiles, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C., will continue till the Messiah returns. Then Christ will subdue nations, deliver the land of Israel from its Gentile occupants, and bring the nation Israel into her covenanted blessings in the millennial kingdom."¹⁸

Second, Daniel's prophecies also reveal the fulfillment of God's great redemptive plan that began at the Fall and will culminate in the return and reign of the Son of Man on the earth. One writer stated the theme of the book as: "Only God is truly sovereign and He will establish His eternal kingdom."¹⁹

¹⁴John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel*, p. 17.

¹⁵Archer, "Daniel," p. 8.

¹⁶Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of Ezekiel and Daniel," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 388.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 388-95.

¹⁸Pentecost, p. 1329.

¹⁹Les P. Bruce, "Discourse Theme and the Narratives of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160:638 (April-June 2003):175.

A third theological emphasis is the power of prayer. God's working in response to His people's prayers is evident everywhere in this book, particularly in the first six chapters and in chapters 9 and 10.

Another theological theme is the indomitable grace of God. Even though the Jews had failed Him miserably, God revealed that He had not cast off His people Israel. He was disciplining them presently, but He has a future for them as a nation (cf. Rom. 11:25-27, 29). Furthermore, He will fulfill His promises to the patriarchs regarding Gentile blessing, too.

GENRE

Daniel is a book of narrative history. Historical narrative is its primary genre (literary type). The first six chapters all contain narratives of the life of Daniel and his three Hebrew friends. The last six chapters are set in a narrative context even though they contain several prophecies that God gave Daniel. Since so much of the book contains prophecy, this is also one of its primary genres.

There is some debate about whether the historical chapters are prophetic, as well as the chapters that record the revelations God gave him about the future. I believe the first six chapters are prophetic, since these events give foreshadows of events to come that the later prophetic chapters articulate more specifically.

The Israelites viewed history, as well as prophetic visions and oracles, as revelatory. We can see this in the fact that they called the books of Israel's history in the Promised Land in the Hebrew Bible the "Former Prophets" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). They regarded God's dealings with them in history to be just as revelatory, of Himself and His ways, as His messages to them through the prophets. Therefore, I think that God intended us to see previews of what Daniel prophesied in what he experienced, since the major lessons correspond.

"Among the great prophetic books of Scripture, none provides a more comprehensive and chronological prophetic view of the broad movement of history than the book of Daniel. Of the three prophetic programs revealed in Scripture, outlining the course of the nations, Israel, and the church, Daniel alone reveals the details of God's plan for both the nations and Israel. Although other prophets like Jeremiah had much to say to the nations and Israel, Daniel brings together and interrelates these great themes of prophecy as does no other portion of Scripture. For this reason, the book of Daniel is essential to the structure of prophecy and is the key to the entire Old Testament prophetic revelation. A study of this book is, therefore, not only important from the standpoint of determining the revelation of one of the great books of the Old Testament but is an indispensable preliminary investigation to any complete eschatological system."²⁰

²⁰Walvoord, p. 7.

"In NT prophecy Daniel is referred to more than any other OT book. Moreover, it contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible."²¹

"In many respects, the book of Daniel is the most comprehensive prophetic revelation of the Old Testament, giving the only total view of world history from Babylon to the second advent of Christ and interrelating Gentile history and prophecy with that which concerns Israel. Daniel provides the key to the overall interpretation of prophecy, is a major element in premillennialism, and is essential to the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Its revelation of the sovereignty and power of God has brought assurance to Jew and Gentile alike that God will fulfill His sovereign purposes in time and eternity."²²

Daniel is also one of three Old Testament books that is apocalyptic. The apocalyptic sections are chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10—12. The other two books are Ezekiel (37:1-14; 40:1—48:35) and Zechariah (1:7—6:8). Some writers considered only Daniel and Revelation complete apocalypses.²³ In the New Testament, Revelation is the only apocalyptic book. Extrabiblical pseudepigraphical apocalyptic books include 1 Enoch, 2 Esdras, and 2 Baruch. Apocalyptic literature (or apocalyptic) is a particular genre.

"Apocalyptic literature is symbolic visionary prophetic literature, composed during oppressive conditions, consisting of visions whose events are recorded exactly as they were seen by the author and explained through a divine interpreter, and whose theological content is primarily eschatological."²⁴

"Whereas in the prophetic literature the eschatological kingdom [*sic*] of God arises out of history through a son of David, in apocalyptic literature it comes in an apocalyptic, transcendent breaking in from heaven. Whereas the prophets looked for a son of David to rule Israel in the eschatological kingdom, the apocalyptic thinkers looked for a Son of Man who rides the clouds to bring in the eschatological kingdom. Jesus identified himself as both the son of David and as the Son of Man, especially the latter."²⁵

"The book of Daniel is unquestionably the key to all biblical prophecy. It is the great apocalyptic book of the Old Testament, whereas Revelation is that of the New Testament. Passages such as Matthew 24—25, Mark 13, Luke 21, and the book of Revelation are unintelligible without a knowledge of the book of Daniel."²⁶

²¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 3.

²²Walvoord, p. 27.

²³E.g., Culver, p. 772, and Young, p. 22.

²⁴Ralph H. Alexander, "Hermeneutics of Old Testament Apocalyptic Literature" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 1.

²⁵Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 158-59. See also the discussion of apocalyptic in Longman and Dillard, pp. 386-89.

²⁶Charles L. Feinberg, *Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*, p. 13.

"No one who has reverently studied the book of Daniel in the context of the completed Scriptures can deny the crucial contribution of this book to God's complete prophetic revelation. Our Lord spoke often of 'the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 5:3; Dan. 2:44) and of Himself as 'the son of man' (Matt. 26:64; Dan. 7:13-14). Looking toward His second coming to the earth, He referred to 'a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now' (Matt. 24:21; cf. Dan. 12:1), and to 'the abomination of desolation' that will stand in the Temple (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27; 12:11). The apostle Paul also referred to this work of 'the man of lawlessness' (2 Thess. 2:3-4; cf. Dan. 7:25; 11:36-39) but rejoiced that someday 'the saints will judge the world' (1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27)."²⁷

OUTLINE

- I. The character of Daniel ch. 1
 - A. Historical background 1:1-2
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar's training program for promising youths 1:3-7
 - C. Daniel's resolve to please Yahweh 1:8-13
 - D. The success of the test 1:14-16
 - E. God's blessing of Daniel and his friends 1:17-21
- II. The Times of the Gentiles: God's program for the world chs. 2—7
 - A. Nebuchadnezzar's first dream: the big picture ch. 2
 1. The king's dream 2:1-3
 2. The failure of the king's wise men 2:4-13
 3. Daniel's request for time 2:14-16
 4. Daniel's reception of a revelation and his thanksgiving 2:17-23
 5. Daniel's appearance before Nebuchadnezzar 2:24-30
 6. What Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream 2:31-35
 7. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream 2:36-45
 8. The consequences of Daniel's interpretation 2:46-49
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar's golden image ch. 3
 1. The worship of Nebuchadnezzar's statue 3:1-7
 2. The charge against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego 3:8-12
 3. The response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego 3:13-18
 4. The execution of the king's command 3:19-23
 5. God's deliverance of His servants 3:24-27
 6. The consequences of God's deliverance 3:28-30
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar's pride and humbling ch. 4
 1. Nebuchadnezzar's introductory doxology 4:1-3
 2. The king's frustration over his second dream 4:4-9
 3. Nebuchadnezzar's account of his dream 4:10-18

²⁷Whitcomb, p. 16.

4. Daniel's interpretation 4:19-27
 5. The fulfillment of threatened discipline 4:28-33
 6. Nebuchadnezzar's restoration 4:34-37
- D. Belshazzar's feast ch. 5
1. Belshazzar's dishonoring of Yahweh 5:1-4
 2. God's revelation to Belshazzar 5:5-9
 3. The queen's counsel 5:10-12
 4. Belshazzar's request of Daniel 5:13-16
 5. Daniel's rebuke of Belshazzar 5:17-24
 6. Daniel's interpretation of the writing 5:25-28
 7. Daniel's rise and Belshazzar's fall 5:29-31
- E. Darius' pride and Daniel's preservation ch. 6
1. Daniel's promotion in the Persian government 6:1-3
 2. The conspiracy against Daniel 6:4-9
 3. Daniel's faithfulness and Darius' predicament 6:10-15
 4. Daniel in the lions' den 6:16-18
 5. Daniel's deliverance and his enemies' destruction 6:19-24
 6. Darius' decree and praise of Yahweh 6:25-28
- F. Daniel's vision of future world history ch. 7
1. The four beasts 7:1-8
 2. The Ancient of Days and the destruction of the fourth beast 7:9-12
 3. The Son of Man's kingdom 7:13-14
 4. The interpretation of the four beasts 7:15-18
 5. Daniel's request for interpretation of the fourth beast 7:19-22
 6. The interpretation of the fourth beast 7:23-25
 7. The end of the fourth beast and the beginning of the everlasting kingdom 7:26-28
- III. Israel in relation to the Gentiles: God's program for Israel chs. 8—12
- A. Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat ch. 8
1. The setting of the vision 8:1
 2. The ram 8:2-4
 3. The goat 8:5-8
 4. The little horn on the goat 8:9-14
 5. The interpretation of this vision 8:15-26
 6. The result of this vision 8:27
- B. Daniel's vision of the 70 sevens ch. 9
1. Jeremiah's prophecy of Jerusalem's restoration and Daniel's response 9:1-3
 2. Daniel's prayer of confession 9:4-14
 3. Daniel's petition for restoration 9:15-19

4. God's response to Daniel's prayer 9:20-23
 5. The revelation of Israel's future in 70 sevens 9:24-27
- C. Daniel's most detailed vision of the future chs. 10—12
1. Daniel's preparation to receive the vision 10:1—11:1
 2. The near future 11:2-35
 3. The distant future 11:36—12:4
 4. The end of Israel's trials 12:5-13

This outline reflects the linguistic divisions of the book, chapters 1 and 8—12 having been written in Hebrew, and chapters 2—7 in Aramaic.

Many students of the book simply divide it into two parts.

- I. The history of Daniel chs. 1—6
- II. The prophecies of Daniel chs. 7—12

MESSAGE

The Book of Daniel contains many unique and significant emphases. I am going to point out some of these first, before we organize them into an explanation of what God has given us in this book to reveal.

Theologically, Daniel stresses the sovereignty of God. Specifically, it shows that God is wise enough and powerful enough to create and control history. In the ancient Near East, people typically credited great wisdom to some of their gods and great power to others, but not normally to the same gods.

Philosophically, Daniel reveals the course and the culmination of good and evil throughout human history.

Hermeneutically, we observe that God teaches His people what will happen in the future by helping them appreciate what has happened in the past. In other words, we learn to understand the future by studying the past. The future builds on the past and is an extension of the past. The literal fulfillment of prophecy encourages us to interpret the unfulfilled prophecies literally.

Pedagogically, we observe that God teaches us by going from the simple to the complex, from the known to the unknown. This applies as we look back on history, and it applies as we look forward in prophecy. For example, God gave Daniel simple visions first, and then more complex ones later that built on the earlier ones. The first vision in Daniel is the most simple to interpret, and the last one is the most difficult to interpret.

Temporally, the book proceeds from what happened in the past to what will happen in the future. Some students of the book divide it into two parts: history (chs. 1—6), and prophecy (chs. 7—12). This illustrates generally how the content of this book moves from past events to future events.

Anthropologically, Daniel deals with two groups of people that occupy planet earth in time: Israel and the Gentiles. Some students of the book, including myself, prefer to divide it into three parts. We believe that the languages that Daniel chose to write in reflected his emphases on revelation, stressing particularly Gentiles or Jews in the various sections of the book.

Chronologically, the revelation in Daniel advances from the present, to the near future, to the far future, from Daniel's perspective. Even liberal students of the book admit this. From Daniel's perspective in history, some of what God revealed to him involved what was past, and some was future. From our perspective, we can see that what God revealed was not just past and future for him—but past, near future, and far future.

Now with this background, we turn to the major revelations in the Book of Daniel. The contrasts are observational; they help us see clearly what is here. The major revelations are interpretational; they help us understand clearly what is here. I will now suggest what is significant about what we observe. There are essentially two major revelations.

The first major revelation is that Yahweh is sovereign in history. By history, I mean what is past. In Daniel, God has proved that He is the ultimate ruler of the world by the way things turned out in the past. Half of the book deals with history; the other half, generally speaking, deals with prophecy.

God has revealed much evidence in this book that proves He is sovereign over history: that He has made it turn out exactly the way He wanted it to turn out. We find this evidence particularly in the record of the three rulers in chapters 1—6.

We have the most evidence in the record of King Nebuchadnezzar.

In chapter 1, we read, "The Lord (Adonai) gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand" (1:2). All the events of chapter 1, beginning with Daniel's insignificance in Judah and his quick rise to great significance in Babylon, demonstrate God's sovereignty in the past.

In chapter 2, we have the vision of Nebuchadnezzar's image that gets crushed by a stone that is hurled at it from heaven. This revelation teaches that all the kingdoms of the earth are subject to the kingdom of heaven. Daniel's own testimony to God's sovereignty in 2:20-22 expresses the main point of the dream, which the most powerful king in the ancient world received from God.

In chapter 3, we see how God takes care of people who acknowledge His sovereignty, namely: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

In chapter 4, we see how He takes care of people who do not acknowledge His sovereignty, namely: Nebuchadnezzar. Learning who is the ultimate authority, and responding appropriately to Him, is extremely important for all human beings.

Belshazzar was the second king through whom God revealed His sovereignty (ch. 5). Belshazzar could not read the handwriting on the wall, but Daniel could. The God of

heaven had evaluated the king on earth, had found him deficient, and had decided to replace him. What a demonstration of Yahweh's sovereignty we have in this chapter!

The third king was Darius (ch. 6). When Darius visited the lion's den early in the morning, he voiced a question that all people have asked. The Jews of Daniel's day, whom their Gentile enemies had wrenched from the land that Yahweh had promised them and given them, were asking this question. Darius said, "Has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lion's mouth?" (6:20). The lion was a symbol of Babylon (7:4), though here Darius was referring to literal lions. Daniel's reply testified to Yahweh's sovereignty: "My God . . . shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me" (6:22).

This is the historical evidence of Yahweh's sovereignty that provided a base of confidence for the prophet, and for the reader, to believe that He is sovereign over the future as well.

How were Daniel and his three friends able to perceive the fact that God is sovereign, when most people did not? There are three keys to their spiritual perception that this book identifies for our education. First, they separated themselves unto God and His will. Daniel did this in chapter 1. We read that his three friends did it in chapter 3. Second, in response to their choice to separate to His will, God gave them the ability to understand His will (1:20; 3:17-18). Third, the outcome of their decision, and God's provision, was the glorification of God publicly (3:28-29; 4:34-35; 6:25-27).

Notice also how God communicated the fact of His sovereignty to Daniel, and through him to others. Notice His methods.

First, Daniel's contemporaries saw God's *wisdom*, manifested through His own servants, in their ability to interpret dreams and visions that no one else could interpret (1:20; 2:10; 5:11-12). The Jews who returned to the land to reestablish life there needed this wisdom, and God's provision of it to Daniel and his friends would have encouraged them. *We* see God's wisdom manifested primarily in *His Word*, rather than in dreams.

Second, Daniel's contemporaries saw God's *power*, manifested through His own servants, in His care of them (1:15, 21; 2:48-49; 3:24-26, 30; 5:29; 6:28). The many instances in which God protected His own, who had committed themselves to following Him faithfully, would have encouraged Daniel's contemporaries particularly. They encourage us as well. God has protected us for eternity, not necessarily for a long life before we die.

A second major revelation of the Book of Daniel is God's sovereignty in the future. He has shown us that He is sovereign over the past in history, and now He asks us to believe that He is sovereign over the future in prophecy. The major subjects of prophecy in this book are three.

The first general subject of prophecy in Daniel is humanity in general. He told us how He would direct the affairs of Gentile world powers in the future. He did this by comparing nations to the parts of a man's statue, and to various beasts. What He showed Daniel about Gentile world powers under the man's statue (ch. 2) revealed their *external*

manifestations primarily: their relative power and glory. What He showed Daniel about them under the figures of wild animals (chs. 7 and 8) revealed their *internal* character primarily: their haughtiness, brutality, aggressiveness, vileness, etc. Note that these were all wild animals and birds of prey, symbolizing their hostility toward one another.

The second general subject of prophecy in Daniel is the Israelites. This is a particular element within humanity, namely: Israel. God also told us how He would direct the affairs of His chosen people in the future. Essentially He will do this in two stages, both of which were future from Daniel's perspective in history, but only one of which is future from our perspective. The first stage, or *near* future, involved Israel's affairs culminating in a great persecution under a *Greek* ruler: Antiochus Epiphanes (9:23-26; 11:2-35). This persecution happened in the second century B.C. The second stage, or *far* future, involved Israel's affairs culminating in a greater persecution under a *Roman* (Roman-like?) ruler: the Antichrist (9:27; 11:36-45). This would happen in the far future.

Daniel struggled to understand this revelation because these two antagonists were both future from his perspective. God did not specify that they would be separate individuals. We can understand this revelation more easily than Daniel could, because one antagonist has appeared and the other has not yet appeared. Similarly, the Old Testament prophets struggled to understand God's revelation about the two advents of Christ (Isa. 61:1-2). From our perspective, we now understand that He had always predicted two advents of Messiah, and that we live between them.

The third general subject of prophecy in Daniel is God Himself. It is God's sovereign control over time and space that He stressed in the Book of Daniel. However, two sub-revelations help us appreciate Yahweh's sovereignty, namely: His wisdom, and His power.

Absolute sovereignty demands perfect wisdom and limitless power. We can see God's perfect wisdom in His insight into the course of history and in His ability to impart that wisdom (insight) to His prophet. We can see God's limitless power in His setting up and taking down Gentile kingdoms, and in His delegating great worldly power to His prophet. In contrast, national sovereigns (presidents, kings, etc.) have neither perfect wisdom nor limitless power.

We come now to the "so what" of the book. We have observed several important characteristics of this book, and have pointed out the significant major revelations. We have done observation and interpretation of the book as a whole, so now we will do application. What effect did God intend that this book should have on the readers: the original Jewish readers of Daniel's day, and us in our day? I suggest three important applications.

First, we must apply the revelation that God is sovereign by acknowledging it and by submitting to Him. We need to know that God is sovereign—that is, to have an unshakable conviction that God is in control—to believe that He is the ultimate ruler over all the affairs of humankind. The Book of Daniel can strengthen this belief in us. However, we must not just believe this fact as true. We must also yield ourselves to Him,

as Daniel and His three friends did. If He is sovereign, then we must submit to His will. His slightest wish must be, for us, a command. We must live according to His revealed will.

Second, as we submit to His sovereignty, we can understand what is going on in history. In this book, God has revealed that He is guiding the course of evil to its end, which is destruction. He has also revealed that He is guiding the course of good to its end, which is victory.

Some people are saying that the days in which we live are the most wonderful that the world has ever seen. The world is getting better and better, and utopia is just around the corner. With just a few more modifications, we can realize a world order that will surpass anything in the past. This is the message of evolutionary philosophy, both biological and social.

Other people say that the world is getting worse and worse. Crime and violence are running rampant. We are just the push of a button away from extinction as a race. There are enough weapons of mass destruction in the hands of enough different groups of people today so that we could annihilate one another. Which viewpoint is true? Are things getting better or worse?

Daniel reveals that both viewpoints are true. If both are true, we seem to be headed for a crisis: a final conflict between the forces of good and evil. Daniel reveals that such a crisis is coming. It also tells us what the outcome of that conflict will be. God will intervene in history to terminate evil and to establish good. The "stone from heaven," God's kingdom, will crush the human statue, which represents Gentile world dominion.

Third, how should we then live? We should live as Daniel and his three friends lived. We should separate ourselves unto God and His will. We should receive inspiration to persevere from the insight that He has given us in this revelation. Moreover, we should worship the sovereign God of the universe who, in His infinite wisdom and power, will eventually raise His own to everlasting life and reward them with participation in His coming kingdom (12:2-3, 13). Someone has defined worship as a positive personal response to divine revelation. Study of the Book of Daniel should lead us to worship God.²⁸

²⁸Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 1:2:145-62.

Exposition

I. THE CHARACTER OF DANIEL CH. 1

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the whole book. It relates early events in the lives of Daniel and his three Hebrew contemporaries, but the emphasis is on Daniel's decisions. These choices formed the basis for his character, and his character and abilities accounted for the unusually long and successful career that he enjoyed in the service of several monarchs. His godly character also provides a key concerning God's choice of him to receive and transmit the remarkable revelations of the future that this book contains. God's choice of Daniel was sovereign, but Daniel's choices qualified him to serve as God intended (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12).

"The first chapter . . . is introductory. It sets forth the moral condition suited to enlightenment in the ways and counsels of God. . . .

"If we are going to get the mind of God in studying this book, we must remember that it consists of revelations, deliverances and visions given to a spiritually-minded man who was separated from the iniquity of his day; and if we are to understand it, we also need to be spiritually-minded, and to walk apart from all that is unholy, all that would hinder progress in divine things."²⁹

Structurally, the chapter is a chiasm, with the first 14 verses presenting a tension, and the last seven providing the resolution.³⁰

- A Babylonia assumes supremacy over Israel vv. 1-2
- B Young men taken and subjected to pagan training vv. 3-7
- C Daniel seeks to remain faithful to his God v. 8-14
- C' Daniel remains faithful to his God vv. 15-16
- B' Young men triumph in their pagan training vv. 17-20
- A' Daniel proves supreme over the Babylonians v. 21

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1:1-2

- 1:1 The book opens with a synopsis of the first Jewish deportation in 605 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 24:1-2; 2 Chron 36:6).³¹ Daniel and his three friends were part of the nobles and royal families taken from Jerusalem as captives then. We know nothing more about Daniel's family background. Apparently he lived apart from his family in Babylon (cf. vv. 11-13). Perhaps the Babylonians killed his parents, but this is only speculation.

²⁹H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, pp. 10, 11.

³⁰See John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, pp. 8-12.

³¹D. J. Wiseman, *The Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings*, pp. 25, 46-47, and 66-69, validated this date.

The date of this deportation by Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C.), as Daniel recorded it, was the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign (v. 1; cf. 2 Kings 24:1; 2 Chron. 36:6). However, Jeremiah wrote that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605 B.C.) was the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (Jer. 25:1; cf. 46:2). Many critics of Daniel have seized upon this apparent contradiction and have tried to discredit this prophecy.³²

Scholars have proposed several solutions to this problem.³³ The best one, from my viewpoint, is that Daniel wrote from the Babylonian perspective and Jeremiah from the Jewish. It would have been only natural for Daniel to do so, since he spent virtually all of his life in Babylon. The Babylonians considered the first year of their kings' reigns as the accession year, the year they acceded to the throne. That "year" sometimes lasted only a few months. The first regnal year, the first full year of their reign, began with the first day of the new civil year. For the Babylonians this was the first of Nisan (late March and early April). This is the accession-year system of dating.³⁴

Jeremiah was writing from the Jewish perspective. During the reigns of Jehoash to Hoshea, the Jews also followed the accession-year system. However, the Jews began their civil years on the first of Tishri (late September and early October). This explanation harmonizes these references.³⁵ Other conservative scholars have offered other ways of resolving this problem that they, too, regarded as only an *apparent* contradiction.³⁶

". . . he [Jeremiah] without doubt represents it [605 B.C.] as
the beginning of the seventy years of Babylonish exile
. . ."³⁷

1:2 Daniel wrote that the Lord was responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's success in defeating Jehoiakim (cf. 2 Kings 24:1-2; 2 Chron 36:6). He viewed God as sovereignly controlling the past affairs of His chosen people (cf. Eph. 1:4). As the book unfolds, this appreciation for God's sovereignty continues as Daniel described God's future dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles.

Daniel used the name "Shinar" to describe Babylon (v. 2). Shinar is a biblical name for Babylon that often connotes a place hostile to God and faith in God (cf. Gen. 10:10; 11:2; 14:1; Isa. 11:11 [NIV margin]; Zech.

³²E.g., J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, pp. 113-16.

³³See Longman and Dillard, pp. 376-77.

³⁴See Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 202.

³⁵Archer, "Daniel," pp. 31-32. Cf. Walvoord, pp. 30-31; and Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 344.

³⁶E.g., Leupold, pp. 47-55; E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 166; Culver, p. 772; and Pentecost, pp. 1328-29.

³⁷Keil, p. 59.

5:11 [NIV margin]). Carrying off the vessels from a conquered people's temple was a way that ancient Near Eastern kings expressed their victorious sovereignty over that nation, particularly its gods (cf. 5:3-4). Therefore Daniel began this book by reminding his readers that it was not only Israel's king who suffered defeat at Nebuchadnezzar's hands, but also Yahweh had experienced humiliation. He then proceeded to vindicate Yahweh with all that follows.

B. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PROMISING YOUTHS 1:3-7

1:3-5 Nebuchadnezzar's enlightened policy was to employ the best minds in his kingdom in government service, regardless of their national or ethnic origin.

"Among the Persians the education of boys by the *paidagogai basileioi* [royal pedagogues] began, according to Plato (*Alcib.* i. 37), in their fourteenth year, and according to Xenophon (*Cyrop.* i. 2), the *epheboi* [adolescents] were in their seventeenth year capable of entering into the service of the kings."³⁸

Leon Wood calculated that Daniel and his three friends must have been in their middle teens, since Daniel lived at least until 536 B.C.³⁹

"Freedom from blemish and personal beauty were looked upon as a characteristic of moral and intellectual nobility . . ."⁴⁰

We do not know how many other Jews and Gentiles were the classmates of Daniel and his three friends. However, they were evidently the only ones who expressed a desire to observe the Jewish dietary laws (Exod. 34:15; Lev. 11; Deut. 14; cf. Deut. 8:3; Prov. 20:1).

"In selecting these youths for education in the king's court in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was accomplishing several objectives. Those carried away captive could well serve as hostages to help keep the royal family of the kingdom of Judah in line. Their presence in the king's court also would be a pleasant reminder to the Babylonian king of his conquest and success in battle. Further, their careful training and preparation to be his servants might serve Nebuchadnezzar well in later administration of Jewish affairs."⁴¹

³⁸Ibid., p. 73.

³⁹Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 383, n. 23.

⁴⁰Keil, pp. 73-74.

⁴¹Walvoord, p. 34.

There has been some question whether Daniel and his three friends were castrated and made eunuchs. This possibility seems unlikely since there is no direct evidence of this in the text. Josephus implied that they may have become eunuchs.

"He [Nebuchadnezzar] also made some of them [the most noble of the Jewish children] to be eunuchs; which course he took also with those of other nations whom he had taken in the flower of their age, and afforded them their diet from his own table, and had them instructed in the institutes of the country, and taught the learning of the Chaldeans . . ." ⁴²

The Hebrew word *saris* ("official," v. 3) can mean both "court official" (cf. Gen. 37:36, where it describes Potiphar, who was married) and "eunuch" (Isa. 56:3; cf. 2 Kings 20:18). These youths were without defects (v. 4). If Nebuchadnezzar wanted youths without defects, it seems unreasonable that he would then turn around and give them a major defect (cf. Lev. 21:17).⁴³

Josephus also wrote that Daniel and his three peers "were four of the family of Zedekiah."⁴⁴ This may be accurate or only Jewish tradition, but clearly they were either members of the royal family or children of Judean nobles (v. 3; cf. Isa. 39:6-7).

The three-year program of study that Daniel and his three companions underwent involved study of the literature and language of the Chaldeans (v. 4). The term "Chaldean" has a double meaning in the Book of Daniel. In some places, including here, it refers to ethnic southern Babylonians (cf. 3:8; 5:30; 9:1). In others, it describes a class of astrologers and priests that emerged from the ethnic Chaldeans (2:2, 4-5, 10; 4:7; 5:7, 11).⁴⁵

"The Babylonian sages combined many of the functions fulfilled by wise men, prophets, and priests in Israel, though they are to be distinguished from those cultic functionaries who were more especially concerned with the temple and its ritual. They were the guardians of the sacred traditional lore developed and preserved in Mesopotamia over centuries, covering natural history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, myth, and chronicle. Much of this learning had a practical purpose, being designed to be applied to life by means of astrology, oneirology, hepatoscopy and the study of other organs, rites of

⁴²Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10:10:1. So also Culver, p. 773.

⁴³See *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Eunuch," by R. J. A. Sheriffs, pp. 398-99.

⁴⁴Josephus, 10:10:1.

⁴⁵Cf. Keil, p. 74.

purification, sacrifice, incantation, exorcism and other forms of divination and magic."⁴⁶

Evidently what these young men studied was the history and literature of this ancient part of the world (cf. Acts 7:44). This included the old Akkadian and the ancient Sumerian cultures from which the Babylonian had developed.

"Though Aramaic had begun to replace Akkadian by 600 B.C., Babylonian scholars continued to study and even write literature in their classical tongue."⁴⁷

Learning the language of a people is one of the best ways to absorb the worldview of its people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to acculturate these youths and make them thoroughly Babylonian.

"In order to witness to their God in the Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of those around them, just as the Christian today must work hard at the religions and cultures amongst which he lives, if different thought-worlds are ever to meet."⁴⁸

This is a dangerous task, however (cf. Deut. 12:30; 1 Cor. 10:12; Col. 2:8).⁴⁹

". . . Daniel had no physical blemish and was pleasing in appearance. Mentally, he was intelligent, knowledgeable, and quick to learn. Socially, he was poised and able to live in the king's court without creating embarrassment for himself or others."⁵⁰

Notice the similarity between Daniel's experience and character—and Joseph's and Moses'—throughout this chapter.

1:6-7 Daniel's name probably means "My Judge is God." "Hananiah" means "Yahweh Has Shown Grace," "Mishael" means "Who is What God Is?" and "Azariah" means "Yahweh Has Helped." The new names assigned them all included or referred to various Babylonian gods: Bel, Aku, and Nego (a possible variant of Nebo). "Beltshazzar" may mean "Bel's Prince," or possibly "Lady Protect the King," referring to the goddess Sarpanitu, the wife of Marduk. "Shadrach" may mean "Command of

⁴⁶Goldingay, p. 16.

⁴⁷*The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 1418.

⁴⁸Baldwin, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁹See Whitcomb, p. 32.

⁵⁰Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams*, p. 9.

Aku," or "I Am of Little Account." And "Abednego" most likely means "Servant of [the god] Nebo."

"It seems the world always tries to blot out the distinctive marks of a believer . . ." ⁵¹

The practice of changing names was a way to express sovereign control over others. These new names would have also encouraged these youths to think of themselves as part of the culture in which they were living, rather than the culture from which they had come (cf. Gen. 41:45).

"Like Zerubbabel and Mordecai, the four can use their foreign names without worrying about them, perhaps on the same basis that Paul can eat meat sacrificed to idols—because the idol is really nothing." ⁵²

The fact that each of their Jewish names included some reference to the Lord may indicate that they had godly parents. Perhaps their early upbringing by godly parents is one reason they stood for God in Babylon.

C. DANIEL'S RESOLVE TO PLEASE YAHWEH 1:8-13

1:8 Evidently Daniel took the initiative with this decision, and his three friends followed his lead. His decision was not to remain morally pure but to remain ceremonially pure. Ceremonial purity was something that concerned only the most faithful Jews. Jews who were careful to remain ceremonially pure would have been equally careful to preserve their moral and ethical purity. Daniel wanted to please the Lord in every respect, not just in the most important moral aspects of his life (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-4, 6, 14).

Undoubtedly the meat ("food") and wine that they refused had been offered to the Babylonian gods (Marduk [or Bel], Nebo, Ishtar, etc.), since it came from the king's table (cf. 2 Kings 25:29; 1 Cor. 10:19-20, 28-29). ⁵³ These young men faced a situation common to every modern Christian youth. They could be a part of the crowd and submit to peer pressure to get ahead. Or they could do what they knew would please their God though it might involve persecution and cost them advancement opportunities.

"The command of the king, that the young men should be fed with the food and wine from the king's table, was to Daniel and his friends a test of their fidelity to the Lord and to His law, like that to which Joseph was subjected in

⁵¹Feinberg, p. 19.

⁵²Goldingay, p. 24.

⁵³Keil, p. 80.

Egypt, corresponding to the circumstances in which he was placed, of his fidelity to God (Gen. xxxix. 7 f.)."⁵⁴

"It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence—that's superstition—but obeying in spite of consequences."⁵⁵

". . . the only way we can advance in the truth is by maintaining a good conscience [cf. 1 Tim. 1:19; 1 Pet. 3:16; et al.]. Allow one thing in your life unjudged that you know to be contrary to the word of God, or that you fear is not in line with God's will for you, and you will soon find your spiritual eyes become darkened, your spiritual susceptibilities deadened, and no real progress made in your soul, but rather a steady decline. But where there is faithfulness in separation from that which is opposed to the mind of God; where His word is allowed to sit in judgment on all your ways, you will learn that 'the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.' The Word will illumine each step before you as you take the one already pointed out."⁵⁶

1:9-13 Daniel must have established a good relationship with the officials in direct authority over him, especially the overseer (steward, v. 11). He received a favorable response (Heb. *hesed*, loyal love, and *rahamim*, compassion) when he proposed a ten-day dietary test. But it was Yahweh who moved the overseer's heart (cf. 1 Kings 8:50; Ps. 106:46), another indication of God's sovereignty. Notice that Daniel did not rebel against the restrictions that his elders placed upon him. Instead he courteously requested permission to abstain, and then, having received an encouraging response, he offered a positive alternative course of action.

Daniel proposed a vegetarian diet. Omitting meat and wine from one's diet does not normally result in obviously better health. Perhaps Daniel was relying on God to cause him and his friends to look better at the end of the test period—miraculously. Another possibility is: The youths may have been served such rich food that they could reasonably expect to look and feel better if they abstained.

D. THE SUCCESS OF THE TEST 1:14-16

God gave the young men better (fatter, i.e., healthier) appearances by natural or by supernatural means. The result of the test encouraged their supervisor to continue feeding them a diet of things grown in the ground. This is the meaning of the rare Hebrew word

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, "Daniel," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*, p. 254.

⁵⁶Ironside, p. 21.

translated "vegetables" or "pulse" (AV).⁵⁷ God blessed these three young men because they followed His will, not because they ate vegetables instead of meat. We should not use this passage to argue for the intrinsic superiority of vegetarian diets (cf. Gen. 9:3; 1 Tim. 4:3-5).

"Even a small act of self-discipline, taken out of loyalty to principle, sets God's servants in the line of His approval and blessing. In this way actions attest faith, and character is strengthened to face more difficult situations in the future."⁵⁸

E. GOD'S BLESSING OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS 1:17-21

1:17 In addition to favor with their overseers, God gave Daniel and his three friends the ability to master the subjects they studied and wisdom in these matters (cf. James 1:5). They may have thought that Nebuchadnezzar had designed their curriculum, but really God had. Like Moses and Paul, Daniel had an excellent educational background and an unusually brilliant mind (cf. Acts 7:22; Phil. 3:4). God also gave Daniel the supernatural ability to understand visions and dreams (v. 17).

Visions and dreams were the primary means God used to communicate His revelations to prophets in the Old Testament (Num. 12:6). From the writer's perspective, Daniel qualified for the blessing of receiving this special gift by choosing to remain loyal to God's will. Daniel's similarity to Joseph is again obvious.

"In Hebrew usage the wisdom terms of this verse [v. 4] had ethical religious overtones, for without wholehearted commitment to the Lord and obedience to His will there could be no wisdom (Jb. 28:28)."⁵⁹

1:18-20 At the end of their three-year curriculum, the four faithful friends received a final examination that included an oral testing by the king himself (cf. Prov. 22:29). They passed at the head of their class (cf. 1 Sam. 2:30). They were probably close to 20 years old at this time.⁶⁰ Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to give them positions of significant government responsibility, which their education had equipped them for. In these positions they proved far superior to any of the other officials. "Ten times better" (v. 20) seems to be a hyperbolic idiom meaning many times better (cf. Gen. 31:7, 41; Num. 14:22; Neh. 4:12; Job 19:3).

⁵⁷Young, p. 46; Montgomery, p. 132.

⁵⁸Baldwin, p. 84.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 79.

⁶⁰See Walvoord, p. 41.

The fact that Daniel called these other officials magicians (Heb. *hartummim*, astrological diviners) and conjurers (Heb. *assapim*, enchanters, NIV) has raised questions about whether the four Hebrew youths practiced occult arts. If they refused to eat non-kosher food because of religious conviction, they presumably would not have participated in divination and magic, which the Mosaic Law also expressly forbade (Deut. 18:10-12). Probably we should understand that they excelled in the matter of offering wise advice to their king.

Daniel also received insight into the future from the Lord (v. 17), so he would have had better knowledge of the future than the Chaldean astrologers. Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7—12 validate this claim. There we read of no pagan divining but straightforward prophetic revelation, some in direct answer to prayer. Daniel could write this of himself without boasting, because he credited God with giving him his abilities.

1:21 Daniel excelled quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The kings under which he served recognized and continued to employ his divinely bestowed talents for many years. Cyrus' first year as king of Babylon was 538 B.C. This was the year in which Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to their land.⁶¹ The first return took place the next year, in 537 B.C. Thus Daniel's ministry as a government official spanned approximately 65 years. Daniel 10:1 clarifies that Daniel continued to receive revelations from the Lord even after his career as a government official ended.

". . . 'Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus,' means only that he lived and acted during the whole period of the exile in Babylon, without reference to the fact that his work continued after the termination of the exile."⁶²

Two dates bracket this first chapter, the year that Daniel went to Babylon as a captive (605 B.C.) and the year that his government career ended (538 B.C.). The content of this chapter focuses on the key to Daniel's remarkable career. He purposed to remain faithful to God's will even in a relatively minor matter. God blessed that commitment and gave this already gifted and diligent young man additional talents and opportunities with which to serve Him. The chapter introduces the rest of the book, which contains such amazing revelations that the reader might question their validity, without this introduction to the prophet himself.

"Daniel and his three friends became models of how Jews were to remain faithful to God while under gentile dominion."⁶³

⁶¹See Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, pp. 230-33.

⁶²Keil, p. 83.

⁶³Dyer, p. 702.

II. THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES: GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THE WORLD

CHS. 2—7

Daniel wrote 2:4b—7:28 in the Aramaic language. This literary change gives the reader a clue that this part is a distinct section of the book. The content of this section also identifies it as special. It concerns the future history of the Gentiles during "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). Aramaic was the common language of the world in which Daniel lived when he wrote. It is natural that he would have recorded what concerns the world as a whole in the language of the Gentiles.

The writer constructed this section of the book in chiasmic form.

- | | |
|----|--|
| A | A prophecy of an image concerning four Gentile nations and their end
ch. 2 |
| B | The supernatural persecution and deliverance of Daniel's friends
ch. 3 |
| C | God's revelation to the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar ch. 4 |
| C' | God's revelation to the Gentile king Belshazzar ch. 5 |
| B' | The supernatural persecution and deliverance of Daniel ch. 6 |
| A' | A prophecy of animals concerning four Gentile nations and their end
ch. 7 ⁶⁴ |

"Chapters 2 and 7 explain the succession of four gentile empires that would exert control over Jerusalem and the Jews until God's kingdom is established. Chapters 3 and 6 warned the Jews of the persecution they would face during this period and exhorted them to remain faithful to God. Chapters 4 and 5 encouraged the Jewish remnant by reminding them that a time would come when even the gentile rulers would acknowledge that the God of Israel rules over the nations."⁶⁵

A. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FIRST DREAM: THE BIG PICTURE CH. 2

This chapter is important because it records the broadest sweep of world history that God gave any prophet. It is the big picture, an overview of history yet future from Daniel's perspective.

"The second chapter of Daniel has been justly called 'the alphabet of prophecy.' Whoever wishes to understand the prophetic Scriptures must come to this chapter for the broad outline of God's future program for the nations, for Israel, and for the glorious kingdom of Messiah. This outline is the simple but comprehensive framework of a multitude of future events. No political document can compare with it, and its importance cannot be overstated."⁶⁶

⁶⁴See also A. Lenglet, "La structure littéraire de Daniel 2—7," *Biblica* 53 (1972):169-90.

⁶⁵Dyer, p. 704.

⁶⁶Feinberg, p. 29.

"Nowhere else in Scripture, except in Daniel 7, is a more comprehensive picture given of world history as it stretched from the time of Daniel, 600 years before Christ, to the consummation at the second advent of Christ. It is most remarkable that Daniel was not only given this broad revelation of the course of what Christ called 'the times of the Gentiles' (Lk 21:24), but also the chronological prophecy of Israel's history stretching from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the second advent of Christ. These two major foci of the book of Daniel justify the general description of the book as world history in outline with special reference to the nation of Israel."⁶⁷

"Few chapters of the Bible are more determinative in establishing both principle and content of prophecy than this chapter; and its study, accordingly, is crucial to any system of prophetic interpretation."⁶⁸

"The God of Daniel is the central figure and not the courtier."⁶⁹

"As you turn from chapter 1 to chapter 2, the atmosphere in the king's palace changes radically. Chapter 1 closes with recognition and security, but chapter 2 introduces rejection and danger."⁷⁰

1. The king's dream 2:1-3

2:1 Daniel opened this new section of his book with another chronological reference (cf. 1:1, 21). This indicates that his interest in this book was in the progress of events and their relationship to one another. As the book unfolds, chronology plays an important part in what God revealed, though the chronology is not always without interruption.

The events related in this chapter happened in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. According to several reliable scholars, Nebuchadnezzar officially became king on September 7, 605 B.C. On the first of Nisan, 604 B.C., the following spring, the first official year of his reign began. The intervening months constituted his accession year and were credited to his father's reign. The first year of his reign then ended on the first of Nisan the following year, 603 B.C. The second year of his reign (v. 1) began in 603 and ended in 602 B.C.⁷¹

Daniel probably arrived in Babylon during the summer of 605 B.C. and began his three-year education (1:4-5) shortly after that, perhaps in the fall. His curriculum may not have taken three full years; it could have ended in the spring of 602 B.C. Thus Daniel probably had finished his

⁶⁷Walvoord, p. 44. Cf. Culver, p. 777.

⁶⁸Walvoord, p. 45.

⁶⁹W. L. Humphreys, "A Life-style for Diaspora," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973):221.

⁷⁰Wiersbe, p. 257.

⁷¹Wiseman, pp. 25-26; Thiele, pp. 159-60; Finegan, *Handbook of . . .*, p. 38.

education and entered into government service when the events of chapter 2 unfolded, as the text implies.

The Hebrew of verse 1 says that Nebuchadnezzar had "dreamed dreams" that disturbed him. Evidently he had a recurring dream or similar dreams that he later described as one dream (v. 3). These dreams robbed him of rest, as Pharaoh's dreams did him (Gen. 41), and Ahasuerus' dream did him (Esth. 6). All of these Gentile rulers suffered insomnia as part of God's dealings with them and the people who lived under their authority. Another earlier Gentile ruler who received revelations from God was Abimelech (Gen. 20:3). The ancients regarded dreams as having significance and as portents of events to come.⁷²

Why did God give Nebuchadnezzar, rather than some other monarch, this dream? Evidently it was because it was Nebuchadnezzar who terminated the Israelite theocracy and began the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

"The world-power must itself learn in its first representative, who had put an end to the kingdom of God [the theocracy], what its own final destiny would be, that, in its turn overthrown, it would be for ever subject to the kingdom of God."⁷³

2:2-3 Nebuchadnezzar assembled his wise men (v. 12) to interpret the meaning of what he had dreamed. Daniel identified four distinct groups of them here. The king wanted to make sure someone could help him. The magicians (Heb. *hartummim*) were evidently scholars who could divine the future by using various means.⁷⁴ The conjurers or enchanterers (*assapim*) could evidently communicate with the dead.⁷⁵ The sorcerers (*mekassepim*) practiced sorcery and cast spells.

The "Chaldeans," or "astrologers" (*kasdim*), refer here to the priestly caste that studied the heavens to determine the future. The Chaldean astronomers were remarkably accurate.⁷⁶ Daniel prepared the reader for the failure of all the king's counselors, that follows, by pointing out that there were many different groups of them.

2. The failure of the king's wise men 2:4-13

2:4 The Chaldeans took the lead in replying to the king. They responded in the Aramaic language that was widely used in business and government throughout the empire.

⁷²Young, p. 56.

⁷³Auberlen, quoted by Keil, p. 85.

⁷⁴Leupold, p. 75.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 76.

⁷⁶See Whitcomb, pp. 36-37.

"Aramaic was called Chaldean until the latter half of the nineteenth century."⁷⁷

This reference to "Aramaic" introduces the section of the book that Daniel wrote in Aramaic (2:4b—7:28), apparently because it concerns matters of worldwide concern. Critics of the Book of Daniel have alleged that Aramaic was not in use when Daniel is supposed to have lived, but there is evidence of its use in the sixth century B.C.⁷⁸ The Chaldeans addressed the king with appropriate respect: "O king, live forever!" (cf. 1 Kings 1:31; Neh. 2:3; Dan. 3:9; 5:10; 6:6, 21).

"This represented a wish or hope that the king would live on from one age to another, with no foreseeable termination by death."⁷⁹

Evidently it was customary for the Babylonian kings to tell their dreams to their advisers, who would then provide a politically correct interpretation that would satisfy the monarch. However, Nebuchadnezzar wanted his wise men not only to give him an interpretation but also to tell him what he had dreamed.

"The [Chaldean] dream manuals, of which several examples have come to light, consist . . . of historical dreams and the events that followed them, arranged systematically for easy reference. Since these books had to try to cover every possible eventuality they became inordinately long; only the expert could find his way through them, and even he had to know the dream to begin with before he could search for the nearest possible parallel. The unreasonable demands of the king and the protests of the interpreters in verses 3-11 are in keeping with his character and the known facts concerning dream books."⁸⁰

2:5-6 It is unclear in the text whether the king had really forgotten his dream or was just withholding it to test his counselors. The Authorized Version implies that he had forgotten it, by translating verses 5 and 8: "The thing is gone from me." However, the NASB's, "The *command* from me is firm," suggests that Nebuchadnezzar was referring to his command rather than his dream. The NIV and TNIV rendering is similar.

⁷⁷Young, p. 59.

⁷⁸See *ibid*, pp. 38-39.

⁷⁹Archer, "Daniel," p. 40.

⁸⁰Baldwin, p. 87. See also A. L. Oppenheim, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 46 (1956):179-373.

"The king was a young man who had been extraordinarily successful in his military conquests. He undoubtedly had developed a great deal of confidence in himself. It is entirely possible that the wise men were much older than the king, having served Nebuchadnezzar's father. It would be understandable that the king might have previously been somewhat frustrated by these older counselors and may have had a real desire to be rid of them in favor of younger men whom he had chosen himself. Nebuchadnezzar might well have doubted their honesty, sincerity, and capability, and may even have wondered whether they were loyal to him. He may also have questioned some of their superstitious practices."⁸¹

Regardless of what Nebuchadnezzar may or may not have remembered, his desire to validate the interpretation that his advisers would propose is beyond doubt. They claimed to offer infallible supernatural guidance. If they failed, they would suffer excruciating dismemberment and humiliation (cf. 2 Kings 10:27). If they succeeded, gifts, a special reward, and great honor would be theirs (cf. Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel).

"The violence and peremptoriness of the threatened punishment is in accordance with what might be expected at the hands of an Eastern despot; the Assyrians and Persians, especially, were notorious for the barbarity of their punishments."⁸²

- 2:7 The repetition of the wise men's request reinforced it. This is frequently the intent of the biblical writers in repeating something. Repetition assures the reader that something is very important or absolutely certain. This is especially true in prophetic revelations such as the ones that follow in this book (cf. Gen. 41:32).
- 2:8-9 The king saw through his seers' delay to an attempt to put distance between the dream and its interpretation. They hoped that as time passed, he would forget what he had dreamed, if he had not done so already. Perhaps his expectations of them would diminish as well. However, he wanted to guarantee that the interpretation they offered was correct.
- 2:10-11 The Chaldeans proceeded to explain, with profuse courtesy and flattery, that what the king requested was humanly impossible. No one could tell what the king had dreamed. Furthermore, no king had ever asked his counselors to do such a thing before. Only the immortal gods could provide this information, and the implication was that even these men

⁸¹Walvoord, p. 50. Cf. Culver, p. 778.

⁸²S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 20.

could not get information from the gods. Yet that is precisely what they claimed to be able to provide: supernatural information. Their confession sets the stage for Daniel's ability to do precisely what they said no person could do.

- 2:12-13 Their confession of inability, and their complaint that the king was being unfair with them, made Nebuchadnezzar very angry (cf. Gen. 40:2; 41:10; Dan. 3:13, 19). He gave orders to execute all the wise men in Babylon, specifically, those who were his counselors. Probably the *city* of Babylon is in view here, rather than the province or the whole empire (cf. v. 49; 3:1), since the king's counselors were the targets of his wrath. Daniel and his three friends fell under the edict because they were advisers to the king (1:20), not because they practiced divination, which, it is safe to say, they did not.

3. Daniel's request for time 2:14-16

- 2:14-15 When Daniel learned of his sentence, he responded with customary discretion and discernment (cf. 1:8, 12), not with objections (cf. vv. 10-11) or anger (cf. v. 12). Perhaps the king's decision in itself did not surprise Daniel since he surely realized that many of the wise men were charlatans. However, the harshness of the verdict puzzled him. Clearly the court officials, including the king himself, had come to respect Daniel highly, since they listened to him and granted his requests.
- 2:16 There is no other record of God having given anyone knowledge of a dream that another person had—without the dreamer telling him about it. Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and his servants after they told him what they were. However, Daniel believed that God could do *anything*, even reveal the dream *itself* to him, as well as its interpretation.

"The stage was now set to show the reality, wisdom, and power of the one true God—Yahweh—as over against the inarticulate and impotent imaginary gods the magicians worshiped. It is the same general theme that dominates the remainder of the book and serves to remind the Hebrew nation that despite their own failure, collapse, and banishment into exile, the God of Israel remains as omnipotent as he ever was in the days of Moses and that his covenantal love remains as steadfast toward the seed of Abraham as it ever had been."⁸³

4. Daniel's reception of a revelation and his thanksgiving 2:17-23

- 2:17-18 Daniel informed his three friends of the situation so they could pray together about it (cf. Phil. 4:6-7).

⁸³Archer, "Daniel," p. 42.

"It is the first instance of united prayer recorded in Scripture; and the fact that these children of the captivity resorted to it, discovers to us the secret of their holy and separate walk."⁸⁴

Since the decree affected them all, they joined in interceding corporately to "the God of heavens" (lit.). This title for God appears five times in this chapter (vv. 18, 19, 28, 37, 44) plus elsewhere, particularly in books that have pagan Babylon as their setting. It appears in 5:23; nine times in Ezra; four times in Nehemiah; and in Genesis 24:3, 7; Psalm 136:26; and Jonah 1:9. The Babylonians worshipped the heavens, but Yahweh is the God over *all* "the heavens," not just the God of heaven. He is sovereign over all.

The four young men prayed for compassion (mercy) from God, since the king's edict was very harsh (v. 15). They asked that God's compassion (mercy) would manifest itself by a revelation of the king's dream, and its interpretation (v. 16), so they would not die with the other wise men who were worthy of death (v. 18; cf. Gen. 18:22-33). The "mystery" in view was something unknown that they prayed God would reveal. In Scripture this is the consistent meaning of a mystery. It is not something spooky but something previously hidden by God but now revealed by Him.

2:19 The writer narrated these events to help us understand that God revealed the mystery as a response to the prayers of the four men (cf. James 4:2). The answer came at night, but in a vision, rather than in a dream. In a vision, the person receiving the revelation was awake, whereas in a dream, he or she was asleep. Both methods were common vehicles of divine revelation at this time (Num. 12:6). The writer waited until later to reveal to the reader what God had revealed. Here he wanted to focus our attention on the response to receiving this revelation.

2:20-22 Daniel wished that people would bless (praise) God's name forever because of two of His traits particularly.

"The *name* stands in Holy Scripture for the nature or revealed character of God, and not a mere label or title. It is found very frequently in the Old Testament as synonymous with God Himself in relation to man. . . . In the New Testament the same usage is perfectly clear."⁸⁵

Daniel mentioned God's wisdom and power at the beginning and the end of his praise (vv. 20, 23), and he illustrated both characteristics in between. This entire book clearly reveals God's wisdom and power.

⁸⁴Edward Dennett, *Daniel the Prophet: And The Times of the Gentiles*, p. 22.

⁸⁵W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:499 (July-September 1968):262.

Evidence of His power is His control of events; He changes times and seasons (v. 2a), perhaps the Jews' special days.⁸⁶ In other words, He determines when in history events will happen and how long each process or phase of history will last. The second evidence of God's power is that He controls the destiny of nations; He sets up kings and deposes them (v. 2b).

"Perhaps the greatest evidence of Yahweh's lordship in Daniel's own experience lay . . . in his unswerving conviction that his God was the one who appointed and deposed the monarchs of human kingdoms. Because these kings and their subjects thought they were called to their office and given its privileges and responsibilities by their own gods,⁸⁷ Daniel's assertion that the God of Israel was in fact the originator and grantor of human authority was a tacit denial of any perceived role for the gods of the nations."⁸⁸

Daniel identified two evidences of God's wisdom. First, He gives wisdom to the wise (v. 2c, d); He is the source of all wisdom. Second, He reveals things that would be unknown to humans otherwise (v. 22a). He can do this because He knows what is unknown to people (v. 22b), and the light of knowledge dwells with Him (v. 22c).

2:23 Perhaps Daniel referred to Yahweh as the "God of his [my] fathers" because he was experiencing God's compassion in a similar way that his spiritual forefathers had experienced it. He gave the credit for the wisdom, and its resultant power that he had received, to its proper Source. Daniel did not originate these revelations but received them from God and communicated them to others (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21). He viewed the vision as an answer to the prayers of himself and his three friends (v. 23).

Daniel was confident that the information God had given him would save their lives. This confidence is testimony to the clarity and obvious supernatural source of this revelation. Daniel did not need to contrive an answer that he hoped would satisfy the king, as the Babylonian seers did. He simply needed to declare the revelation that the only living and true God had given him.

We should bear this testimony of Daniel in mind when we read the later revelations God gave him in this book. They are as reliable as this one was, because they too came from the God of wisdom and power.

⁸⁶J. N. D[arby], *Studies on the Book of Daniel*, p. 82

⁸⁷Footnote 42: For many examples, see Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, pp. 42-52.

⁸⁸Merrill, p. 389.

5. Daniel's appearance before Nebuchadnezzar 2:24-30

2:24 Daniel had to go through Arioch to get to the king, since the king had authorized Arioch to execute all the wise men. Daniel could have requested his life and the lives of his friends alone. Perhaps Daniel asked for the lives of the other counselors, as well as his own, so they would have time to become believers in Yahweh.

"He was not so occupied with his own importance (even though he had just received knowledge concerning the dream) that he did not think of others."⁸⁹

2:25 Daniel convinced Arioch that he could identify the king's dream and interpret it. The king's commander therefore ushered Daniel into Nebuchadnezzar's presence and presented him as someone Arioch had discovered, among the exiles of Judah of all people! Obviously the commander hoped to put himself in the king's favor and to enjoy some of the reward that Daniel would receive. Arioch had great confidence in Daniel. If Daniel failed, Arioch would suffer the king's wrath. Actually, Daniel had sought Arioch out, not the other way around.

2:26-27 Arioch had focused on Daniel as the solution to the king's problem. Nebuchadnezzar viewed him the same way. Daniel, however, quickly redirected the king's attention from himself and placed it where it belonged, on God who revealed the future. No human being, neither the Babylonian wise men nor himself, could provide what the king required. Daniel used a new name for one of these groups of seers here: "diviners," meaning astrologers.⁹⁰ They tried to draw information about the future from the heavens, but "the God of heavens" had revealed the mystery.

Specifically it was information about "the end of the days" that God had given Daniel for the king (v. 28). This phrase occurs first in Genesis 49:1 and always refers to the future. The context determines how much of the future is in view, but it usually focuses on Messiah's appearance. This phrase "refers to the future of God's dealings with mankind as to be consummated and concluded historically in the times of the Messiah."⁹¹

"In the context of Daniel 2, 'the latter days' include all the visions which Nebuchadnezzar received and stretches from 600 B.C. to the second coming of Christ to the earth."⁹²

Young, an amillennialist, took this phrase as equivalent with "the last days," to which the New Testament writers referred, which we are now in

⁸⁹Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, p. 62.

⁹⁰See Leupold, p. 105.

⁹¹Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, p. 107.

⁹²Walvoord, p. 61. See his extensive study of this phrase on pp. 60-61.

(cf. Acts 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:1; 1 John 2:18).⁹³ This seems wrong in view of what the dream revealed.

2:29-30 Daniel then related the king's dream and its interpretation. He proceeded to remind Nebuchadnezzar that before he had fallen asleep, he had been thinking about the future. The dream that God had given him was a divine revelation of what that future would hold.

"No dream [recorded or referred to in the Bible], before this or since, has ever revealed so much of world history."⁹⁴

Daniel then assured the king again, that it was the true God who was responsible for this revelation, rather than Daniel himself, who was no greater than any other man. Thus Daniel gave all the glory to God (cf. Joseph in Gen. 41:16). It was important for Nebuchadnezzar to receive this revelation, since he was to be the first Gentile king in a significant period of history, namely: the times of the Gentiles. As mentioned earlier, "the times of the Gentiles" refers to the period during which Gentile nations would dominate Israel, lasting until Messiah subjugates Gentile power under His reign.

6. What Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream 2:31-35

2:31 Daniel next pictured clearly and concisely what Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream. The king had been viewing a large statue that was standing before him. There is no basis in the text for concluding that this was an idol. The statue was extremely splendid and awe-inspiring because of its appearance. Daniel did not say if it was a statue of a man or a woman, though it was presumably a man, or if it represented the king or someone whom the king knew. The important things about this statue were the materials that composed it and what happened to it.

"The figure of a man was employed here because God wished to make known what would transpire during man's day, the ages in which mortal man ruled the earth. Here, in one panoramic sweep, the whole history of human civilization is spread before us, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the end of time."⁹⁵

"The world-power is in all its phases one, therefore all these phases are united in the vision of *one* image."⁹⁶

⁹³Young, p. 70.

⁹⁴Feinberg, pp. 34-35.

⁹⁵Feinberg, p. 35.

⁹⁶Kliefoth, quoted by Keil, p. 102.

2:32-33

The head was of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver. Its abdomen and thighs were bronze. Its lower legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and clay. Archaeologists have discovered similar images made of several types of precious metals in Babylonia.⁹⁷

Several features are noteworthy. First, the head is the only member of the body made of only one metal. All the other parts had more than one substance with the exception of the arms. For example, the upper torso was silver but bronze lower down. The same was true of the legs and feet. Second, there is a consistently decreasing value to the substances beginning at the top and proceeding to the bottom of the image. Third, the image was top-heavy. The specific gravity of gold is about 19, silver about 11, brass about 8.5, and iron 7.8.⁹⁸ Fourth, the substances progress from the softest to the hardest, top to bottom. The feet are a non-adhering combination of very hard and hard but fragile materials. The clay in view may have been baked clay that the Babylonians used as tiles in construction projects.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM STATUE						
Head	Gold	Valuable	Soft	Self-contained unit	Heavy	Smallest
Chest & arms	Silver	Less valuable	Harder	1 unit & 2 parts	Lighter	Larger
Abdomen & thighs	Bronze	Even less valuable	Even harder	1 unit & 2 different parts	Even lighter	Even larger
Lower legs	Iron	Still less valuable	Still harder	2 parts	Still lighter	Still larger
Feet & toes	Iron & clay	Least valuable	Very hard and very soft	2 parts & 10 segments	Lightest	Largest

2:34-35

As Nebuchadnezzar beheld this image, he saw an uncut stone come flying out of the air and smashing its feet, which crumbled into little pieces. This was a stone uncut by *human* hands, but by *God's* powerful "hand." While he watched, the whole statue fell apart and disintegrated into powder. A wind whipped up the powder and blew it all away. Then the rock that had struck the image began to grow larger until it filled the whole scene.

⁹⁷See Baldwin, pp. 96-98.

⁹⁸Walvoord, p. 63.

"It is not said of the parts of the image, the head, the breast, the belly, and the thighs, that they were broken to pieces by the stone, 'for the forms of the world-power represented by these parts had long ago passed away, when the stone strikes against the last form of the world-power represented by the feet,' but only of the materials of which these parts consist, the silver and the gold, is the destruction predicted; 'for the material, the combinations of peoples, of which these earlier forms of the world-power consist, pass into the later forms of it, and thus are all destroyed when the stone destroys the last form of the world-power.'"⁹⁹

7. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream 2:36-45

2:36 Daniel carefully distinguished the dream (vv. 31-35) from its interpretation (vv. 36-45) for the sake of clarity. His reference to "we" telling the interpretation is probably an editorial plural. This form of speech allowed Daniel to present himself humbly to the king and at the same time remind him that God had given the dream and its interpretation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6).

2:37-38 Nebuchadnezzar was the supreme authority in the world of his day. Earlier, Jeremiah had warned the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon: that God had given Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty over the entire earth, including the animals (Jer. 27:6-7, 14). While the extent of his empire was not as great as those that followed him, he exercised absolute control as no one after him did.

"For a despot like Nebuchadnezzar, his government was the ideal type and was therefore esteemed as highly as gold. He exercised unrestricted authority over life and death throughout all Babylon. His word was law; no prior written law could challenge his will (v. 38)."¹⁰⁰

The Lord referred to Nebuchadnezzar as "king of kings" in Ezekiel 26:7. Nonetheless "the God of heavens" (cf. vv. 18, 28) had given this mighty monarch his position. The king ruled under the authority of a higher, infinitely more powerful ruler.

"At the time of Creation the right to rule over the earth was given man who was to have dominion over it and all the creatures in it (Gen. 1:26). Here Nebuchadnezzar by divine appointment was helping fulfill what God had planned for man."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Keil, p. 104, with quotation from Kliefoth.

¹⁰⁰Archer, "Daniel," p. 46.

¹⁰¹Pentecost, p. 1335. Cf. Merrill, p. 389.

It took considerable courage for Daniel to tell the most powerful ruler of his time that he was responsible to God (Elohim). God had given Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty (symbolized by the head of the statue), power (the head's weight), strength (the connotation of the head on a body), and glory (its value as gold).

The "head of gold" aptly described Nebuchadnezzar. It also symbolized the kingdom over which he ruled (cf. v. 39).¹⁰² Nebuchadnezzar ruled about 45 years (605-560 B.C.), and his empire only lasted another 21 years. Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, founded the Neo-Babylon Empire in 627 B.C., and it fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. So it existed for only 88 years.

2:39a The Medo-Persian Empire led by Cyrus the Great would have been inferior in quality to Babylon from Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, and it *was* in reality (cf. 5:28, 31). The Medo-Persian monarchs could not annul a law once it went into effect (cf. 6:8, 12). This restricted the absolute authority of the king. However, in some respects this kingdom was superior to Babylonia. For example, it covered a larger geographical area, and it lasted longer (539-331 B.C., 208 years). The arms of the image evidently represented the two nations of Media and Persia that united to defeat Babylon.

Some interpreters take the second kingdom depicted in the statue as Media, the third as Persia, and the fourth as Rome. Most conservatives hold that they were Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. However a few conservatives have argued for the four being Assyria, Media, Medo-Persia, and Greece.¹⁰³ Two others have argued for the four being Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Greco-Roman empire, and the empire of Antichrist.¹⁰⁴

2:39b The world kingdom that succeeded Medo-Persia was Greece—under Alexander the Great (cf. 8:20-21). Its territory was even larger than that of Medo-Persia. Greece dominated the ancient cradle of civilization from 331 to 31 B.C., so it lasted longer than either Babylonia or Medo-Persia (i.e., 300 years).

However, after Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C., the empire split into four parts, and each of Alexander's generals took one piece.¹⁰⁵ Antipater ruled Macedon-Greece, Lysimachus governed Thrace-Asia Minor, Seleucus headed Asia, and Ptolemy reigned over Egypt, Cyrenaica, and

¹⁰²Young, pp. 73-74; Keil, p. 105.

¹⁰³E.g., R. Gurney, "the Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7," *Themelios* 2 (1977):39-45; and John H. Walton, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29:1 (March 1986):25-36.

¹⁰⁴James F. and Marjorie Matheny, *Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron*. See especially pp. 36, 37, 113, 115, 117-18, and 132.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Josephus, 11:8:7.

Palestine. Thus, Greece lacked the unified strength of Medo-Persia and Babylonia. Its democratic form of government gave more power to the people and less to the rulers. The two thighs of the statue evidently represented the two major divisions of the Greek Empire: its eastern and western sectors.

"In the want of inward unity lay the weakness or the inferiority in strength of this kingdom, its inferiority as compared with the Babylonian."¹⁰⁶

2:40 Rome defeated the last vestige of the Greek Empire in 31 B.C. and ruled for hundreds of years—until A.D. 476 in the Western Roman Empire, and until A.D. 1453 in the Eastern Roman Empire. The eastern and western divisions of this empire crushed all opposition with a brutal strength that surpassed any of its predecessors. Certainly iron legs fitly symbolized the Roman Empire. Rome also dominated the map more extensively than any previous kingdom, encompassing almost all of Europe, including Spain and the British Isles, as well as India. Those legs stood astride most of the ancient world.

"The Roman Empire embraced a much wider territory in which the Western division became fully as strong as the Eastern, and this seems to be portrayed by the two legs."¹⁰⁷

However, in terms of absolute authority, Rome was indeed an inferior power. The people and the senate played major roles in setting its policies, and they controlled the emperors more than had been true in the preceding empires in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch, and those rulers who followed him (the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman sovereigns) were increasingly less powerful personally.

Even though each succeeding empire controlled more territory than the preceding one, deterioration from one to the next is obvious. This can be seen in the quality of the metals used to describe each kingdom, the specific gravity of these metals, the relative position of each part of the image (the head having more honor than the feet), the division of sovereignty (one man and kingdom, to two kingdoms, Medo-Persia, to four parts, following Alexander the Great's death, to ten toes), and the statement of Scripture (v. 39).¹⁰⁸

2:41-43 In contrast to the preceding empire descriptions, which were quite brief, Daniel gave an extended explanation of the fourth one. The chief feature of the feet is that there were two materials that composed them, and these two materials do not adhere well to one another. Whereas Daniel used

¹⁰⁶Keil, p. 106.

¹⁰⁷Walvoord, p. 73.

¹⁰⁸J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 3:540.

metals to describe the kingdoms previously, now he referred to clay, perhaps kiln-fired clay, mixed with iron. The final form of the fourth kingdom—Daniel did not identify it as a fifth kingdom—would not have the cohesiveness that the earlier kingdoms possessed.

What elements are in view in the figures of iron and clay? Obviously one substance is very strong and the other is quite weak. The other metals apparently represent forms of government that were more desirable or less desirable from Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, and stronger or weaker in controlling populations in terms of their sovereigns' personal authority. That is probably what is in view here too.

The "iron" is quite clearly the well-organized imperial rule that allowed Rome to dominate her world. The "clay" may refer to some form of government that gives more rule to the people, perhaps democracy and or socialism. Perhaps the clay represents the democratic Roman Republic and the iron the imperial Roman Empire.

While democratic government has many obvious advantages over other forms of government, particularly the freedoms that its citizens enjoy, it is essentially weak. Its rulers must operate under many checks and balances imposed by the people whom they serve. Perhaps the clay represents the masses of people that compose the different nations of the ten toes.¹⁰⁹ A similar view is that the mixed iron and clay composition simply represents a government made up of diverse elements.

The political weakness of *democracy* is becoming increasingly obvious in America, which has led the world in exemplifying and promoting this form of government. Self-interest gets in the way of political efficiency. People can block political action with demonstrations and lawsuits. In one sense, this is good because it checks the government's powers. However, in another sense, it makes the job of political leaders much more difficult than if they could simply do what they want.

Imperial power caters to the leaders, whereas democracy caters to those led. It is impossible to have both work effectively at the same time. Therefore, this may be what is in view with the unmixable iron and clay combination—not that America is necessarily in view in this prophecy.¹¹⁰

Another indication that democracy, or socialism, may be what is in view in the clay figure, is that people are essentially clay physically (Gen. 2:7). Rule by the people (i.e., democracy) is rule by clay. Thus it should be no surprise that many students of this passage have seen some combination of imperial (or dictatorial) rule and democracy in the final stage of the fourth (Roman) empire.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 3:541.

¹¹⁰See my comment on Rev. 17:11 in my "Notes on Revelation."

"The rulers of the succeeding empires had their powers more and more circumscribed; until in the last state of the Roman empire we find iron mixed with miry clay, or brittle pottery—speaking of an attempted union between imperialism and democracy."¹¹¹

The reference to the seed of men (v. 43) seems to stress the amalgamation of people where everyone is equal, at least in theory. Again, diversity may be in view.

"The figure of mixing by seed is derived from the sowing of the field with mingled seed, and denotes all the means employed by the rulers to combine the different nationalities, among which the *connubium* [intermarriage] is only spoken of as the most important and successful means."¹¹²

"The final form of the kingdom will include diverse elements whether this refers to race, political idealism, or sectional interests; and this will prevent the final form of the kingdom from having a real unity."¹¹³

If this interpretation is correct, we have another problem. The Roman Empire never consisted of a combination of imperial rule and democracy at the same time, even though the people had an increasing voice in government as time went by. It remained imperialistic to its very end. The way that many scholars have dealt with this problem is to view the last stage of the Roman Empire in this vision (vv. 41-43) as still future from Daniel's point of view.

Some scholars believe that the Roman Empire will be revived in the last days. They believe that it ended and that it will somehow come back into existence in the future. Another view, which appeals to me, is that the Roman Empire exists today, though not in the same form in which it existed in ancient times, and it will continue to exist until it attains its "ten-toe" stage. The fact that the toes were attached to and were an integral part of the feet in the image argues for this view.

"The Roman Empire is the last, and it will be in existence in the latter days. Actually, it exists today. All of these other empires were destroyed by an enemy from the outside, but no enemy destroyed Rome. Attila the Hun came in and sacked the city, but he was so awestruck by what he saw that he realized he could not handle it. He took

¹¹¹Ironside, pp. 36-37. Cf. A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel*, p. 31.

¹¹²Keil, p. 109.

¹¹³Walvoord, p. 71.

his barbarians and left town. The Roman Empire fell apart from within—no enemy destroyed it. Rome is living in the great nations of Europe today: Italy, France, Great Britain, Germany, and Spain are all part of the old Roman Empire. The laws of Rome live on, and her language also. No one speaks Latin today, but it is basic to understanding French, Spanish, and other languages. Her warlike spirit lives on also: Europe has been at war ever since the empire broke up into these kingdoms. . . .

"I never speak of the *resurrection* of the Roman Empire; that implies that it died. . . . You see, the Roman Empire fell apart like Humpty-Dumpty. There have been a lot of men who tried to put it together again, but they have not succeeded. That was one of the missions of the Roman Catholic church at the beginning. Also, Charlemagne attempted to put it back together. Napoleon tried to do so, and also several emperors of Germany. Hitler and Mussolini attempted it, but so far the man has not yet appeared who will accomplish it. God is not quite ready for him to appear."¹¹⁴

Amillennialists such as Young believe there will be no future revival or continuation of the Roman Empire.¹¹⁵ They believe Christ defeated the Roman Empire by His death and resurrection at His first advent.

"This vs. [42] merely indicates how thoroughly composite is the nature of the kingdom, a diversity extending even to its toes."¹¹⁶

"Probably the best solution to the problem [of identifying the feet and toes] is the familiar teaching that Daniel's prophecy actually passes over the present age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ or, more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church. There is nothing unusual about such a solution as Old Testament prophecies often lump together predictions concerning the first and second coming of Christ without regard for the millennia that lay between (Lk 4:17-19; cf. Is 61:1-2).

"This interpretation depends first of all upon the evidence leading to the conclusion that the ten-toe stage of the image has not been fulfilled in history and is still prophetic. The familiar attempts in many commentaries to find a ten-toe

¹¹⁴McGee, 3:541.

¹¹⁵Young, p. 75.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 77.

stage of the image in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. do not correspond to the actual facts of history and do not fulfill the ten-toe stage. According to Daniel's prophecy, the ten-toe stage is simultaneous, that is, the kingdoms existed side by side and were destroyed by one sudden catastrophic blow. Nothing like this has yet occurred in history."¹¹⁷

"Verse 41 deals with a later phase or outgrowth of this fourth empire, symbolized by the feet and 10 toes—made up of iron and earthenware, a fragile base for the huge monument. The text clearly implies that this final phase will be marked by some sort of federation rather than by a powerful single realm. The iron may possibly represent the influence of the old Roman culture and tradition, and the pottery may represent the inherent weakness in a socialist society based on relativism in morality and philosophy. Out of this mixture of iron and clay come weakness and confusion, pointing to the approaching day of doom. Within the scope of v. 43 are disunity, class struggle, and even civil war, resulting from the failure of a hopelessly divided society to achieve an integrated world-order. The iron and pottery may coexist, but they cannot combine into a strong and durable world-order."¹¹⁸

Daniel 2 emphasizes Rome in its past two stages (legs), but chapter 7 reveals more about Rome in its future tenfold form (toes). The toes probably represent rulers (v. 44), though some interpreters understand them to be parts of this kingdom.¹¹⁹

2:44-45 These verses explain what the "rock" signifies, that crushed the feet and toes of the image and destroyed it completely. It is a fifth kingdom that God Himself will establish, following the final phase of the fourth kingdom (Rome; cf. Ps. 2:7-9; Rev. 11:15). The "Rock," a frequent symbol of *God* and *Jesus Christ* in Scripture (cf. Ps. 18:2; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Zech. 3:9; Matt. 21:44; 1 Pet. 2:6-8), evidently represents the King as well as His kingdom (cf. v. 38: "You are the head of gold"). This figure of a "rock" pictures God both as a righteous Judge (Deut. 32:4) and as a Savior (Deut. 32:15).

The "mountain" out of which the rock comes is evidently God (cf. Deut. 32:18; Ps. 18:2; 31:2-3), though a mountain is also a common figure for a kingdom or government in the Bible (cf. Isa. 2:2; 27:13; Jer. 51:25; Mic. 4:1; et al.). "Those kings" evidently refers to the 10 kings represented by

¹¹⁷Walvoord, pp. 72-73.

¹¹⁸Archer, "Daniel," pp. 47-48.

¹¹⁹Keil, p. 109.

the 10 toes. They are quite clearly contemporaneous with one another, not sequential rulers. God's kingdom, the mountain of verse 35, will fill the earth and will last forever (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16). It will never suffer destruction or be succeeded by another kingdom, as all the preceding kingdoms had. It will begin with the Millennium and continue forever in the Eternal State.

"The major burden of the book of Daniel is the tension and conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world."¹²⁰

"Though the differing metals within the image represent four chronologically successive kingdoms, the single statue suggests that these kingdoms, though diverse in their identity, actually comprise one entity, a world empire opposed to God. This explains why the entire statue is depicted as destroyed by the rock with a single blow delivered to the feet (vv. 34-35, 44b) and why this event is said to occur 'in the times of those kings,' that is, the kings of the four kingdoms symbolized in the vision (v. 44a)."¹²¹

Whereas almost all expositors agree that the kingdom of God is in view, they disagree on the nature of that kingdom. They also disagree on how it will destroy the preceding kingdoms, and when this destruction will happen. Amillenarians, and some postmillenarians and some premillenarians, believe that Jesus inaugurated this kingdom when He came to earth. They view the church as this kingdom that defeated Rome.

"The disintegrating and corrupt empire crumbled through decay from within as well as through the impact of the sound morals and the healthy life of Christianity that condemned lascivious Rome. . . . Christianity was in a sense God's judgment upon sinful Rome."¹²²

Many interpreters believe that the fifth kingdom will be composed of all believers of all ages, not just believers in the Church Age.¹²³

The term "premillennial," of course, refers to the view that Jesus Christ will return to the earth before He inaugurates His millennial (thousand-year) rule on the earth. The term "amillennial" refers to the view that there will be no literal millennial rule of Christ on earth. His present rule over His church, or His future eternal rule in heaven, is all the rule we should anticipate, according to its supporters.

¹²⁰Eugene H. Merrill, "Daniel as a Contribution to Kingdom Theology," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p. 217. See also Lourdino A. Yuzon, "The Kingdom of God in Daniel," *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 19 (1978):23-27.

¹²¹Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets*, p. 297.

¹²²Leupold, p. 121. Cf. Young, p. 78.

¹²³E.g., Keil, p. 110.

The "postmillennial" view sees the present Church Age as the millennium. Advocates of this view believe that Jesus will return at the end of the present age in which the church is presently and increasingly overcoming all ungodliness. Amillenarians and postmillenarians believe in a spiritual kingdom, but to be consistent with the imagery of this vision, it seems that the fifth kingdom must be an earthly kingdom—just as the preceding four kingdoms were. Daniel saw that it "filled the whole *earth*" (v. 35).

Many students of this passage, including myself, find the amillennial and postmillennial interpretations unsatisfying.

First, Rome did not fall because of Christianity primarily, but because of its own internal decay. Eventually Visigoth invaders from the North defeated it.

Second, the effects of the Roman Empire, the fragments of the legs and toes if you will, remained for hundreds of years after Jesus Christ's first coming. Yet the vision pictures all vestiges of this kingdom and its predecessors disappearing, apparently fairly soon. "The wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found" (v. 35).

Third, few people today would say that the kingdom of God has in any sense, certainly not politically, conquered the world. The popular title for our age as the "post-Christian era" testifies to this truth.

Fourth, God gave prophecies after Jesus Christ's ascension that He would return to the earth as King of Kings, smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:11-21).

"Nothing is more evident after nineteen hundred years of Christianity than that the stone, if it reflects the church or the spiritual kingdom which Christ formed at His first coming, is not in any sense of the term occupying the center of the stage in which Gentile power has been destroyed. As a matter of fact, in the twentieth century the church has been an ebbing tide in the affairs of the world; and there has been no progress whatever in the church's gaining control of the world politically. If the image represents the political power of the Gentiles, it is very much still standing."¹²⁴

Seeing the destruction of the final stage of the fourth kingdom as future seems more in harmony with the facts of history and with other Scriptures (cf. 7:24; Rev. 17:12). This premillennial view sees the kingdom that Jesus Christ will set up on earth, following His second advent, as the first stage

¹²⁴Walvoord, p. 76.

of His endless rule. The stone in Nebuchadnezzar's vision represents *that* Ruler and His kingdom.

Daniel concluded by explaining to Nebuchadnezzar that the sovereign God had revealed to him what would happen in the future. He further affirmed that the dream represented reality, and that the interpretation that Daniel had given was reliable.

If the stone from heaven represents the kingdom of God thoroughly destroying all earthly kingdoms when Messiah comes, as seems true, then it appears inconsistent to view that kingdom as beginning with Christ's first coming. Rather, it fits better Christ's second coming. If so, the establishment of God's kingdom on earth must begin with Christ's second coming, not His first coming. This is the view of normative dispensationalists, in contrast to progressive dispensationalists and historic premillennialists. These latter two groups see the church as the first stage in the kingdom of God, the second stage being the millennial reign of Christ.

"Daniel 2:31-45 indicates that the Aramaic word for 'kingdom' may include the concept of a kingdom with both earthly/temporal and heavenly/eternal aspects. The context in Daniel 2 allows for one kingdom beginning on earth and continuing into the eternal state. This kingdom is established by God, fills the whole earth after destroying all other earthly kingdoms, and will never be destroyed."¹²⁵

Wiersbe noted four implications of this vision: God is in control of history; human enterprises decline as time goes by; it will be difficult for things to hold together at the end of the age; and Jesus Christ will return, destroy His enemies, and establish His kingdom.¹²⁶

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM OF THE STATUE	
The materials	Their interpretation
Gold	Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire
Silver	The Medo-Persian Empire
Bronze	The Greek Empire
Iron	The Roman Empire of the past
Iron and Clay	The Roman Empire immediately before Christ's second coming
Rock	The messianic kingdom of Christ

¹²⁵Kenneth L. Barker, "Evidence from Daniel," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, p. 134.

¹²⁶Wiersbe, pp. 260-61.

8. The consequences of Daniel's interpretation 2:46-49

2:46-47 Clearly, Daniel had done what everyone considered humanly impossible. He had told the king the dream that Nebuchadnezzar alone knew, and had perhaps even forgotten, and he had given an interpretation of the dream that made sense to the king. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar concluded that Daniel must be some sort of god, and proceeded to treat him as one by bowing before him, presenting an offering to him, and burning incense to him (cf. Acts 10:25; 14:13).

Daniel's lack of protestation does not indicate that he viewed himself as a *god*. He was in no position to contradict the misguided adoration of an absolute monarch such as Nebuchadnezzar. Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar was not saying that Daniel was the true God. Verbally, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the sovereignty of Daniel's God.

". . . Daniel, the slave of men and servant of God, received the homage of a prostrate king just as the Lord Jesus Christ, who was submissive to men and the servant of God, will receive the homage of all men [cf. Phil. 2:10-11]."¹²⁷

2:48 The king also promoted Daniel to be head man over the province of Babylon, and chief of the wise men. He evidently became the ruler in charge of this most important province (cf. 3:2). Normally this position would have gone to a Chaldean, a member of the "master race" of Babylonian society. The fact that Nebuchadnezzar gave it to a Jewish captive shows the tremendous respect that Daniel had earned with this revelation.

2:49 At Daniel's request, the king also promoted Daniel's three friends to positions of authority within the provincial administration (cf. vv. 17-18). Daniel himself remained in the palace and was available to Nebuchadnezzar as an adviser when the king needed him. God prepared for the arrival of thousands of exiled Judahites (in 597 and 586 B.C.) by placing men in authority who were sympathetic to their needs (cf. Joseph).

"Thus Daniel, the obscure Jewish captive who could have been lost to history like many others if he had compromised in chapter 1, is now exalted to a place of great honor and power. Like Joseph in Egypt, he was destined to play an important part in the subsequent history of his generation."¹²⁸

¹²⁷Feinberg, p. 40.

¹²⁸Walvoord, p. 78.

"This chapter, so basic to an understanding of all God's dealing in history and prophecy, reveals three important truths: 1. God, not man is sovereign in world affairs. . . . 2. Our sovereign God has a plan for the world. . . . 3. God is ordering history according to His plan."¹²⁹

B. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S GOLDEN IMAGE CH. 3

"Between these chapters (ii. and vii.) there are inserted four events belonging to the times of the first and second world-kingdom [*sic*], which partly reveal the attempts of the rulers of the world to compel the worshippers of the true God to pray to their idols and their gods, together with the failure of this attempt (ch. iii. and vi.), and partly the humiliations of the rulers of the world, who were boastful of their power, under the judgments of God (ch. iv. and v.), and bring under our consideration the relation of the rulers of this world to the Almighty God of heaven and earth and to the true fearers of His name. The narratives of these four events follow each other in chronological order, because they are in actual relation bound together, and therefore also the occurrences (ch. v. and vi.) which belong to the time subsequent to the vision in ch. vii. are placed before this vision, so that the two revelations regarding the development of the world-power form a frame within which is contained the historical section which describes the character of that world-power."¹³⁰

"In the first chapter of Daniel heathen customs were judged; in the second chapter heathen philosophy was judged; and in the third chapter heathen pride is judged."¹³¹

There is a logical connection between the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream (ch. 2) and the image that he had built on the plain of Dura (ch. 3). Perhaps he got the idea for the statue he built from the statue he saw in his dream. He forgot, however, the lesson that he had learned about Yahweh's sovereignty (2:47). Evidently thoughts of his position as the head of gold made him proud.

We know that this chapter describes events that followed those in chapter 2 because Daniel's three friends had assumed their positions of administrative leadership in Babylon (v. 12). How much later is unclear, though it seems that several years had elapsed. Dyer believed the likely background for these events was a coup attempt against Nebuchadnezzar that occurred in December 595 and January 594 B.C., which the Babylonian Chronicles record.¹³²

The Septuagint translation of verse 1 dates these events in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (about 587 B.C.), though that is not necessarily true. Whitcomb speculated that this event may have occurred shortly after the Babylonian conquest of

¹²⁹Campbell, p. 27.

¹³⁰Keil, p. 84.

¹³¹McGee, 3:543.

¹³²Dyer, p. 706.

Jerusalem (about 585 B.C.).¹³³ Such an empire-wide demonstration of the superiority of Babylon's gods and king would have been understandable then. What follows is the account of a ceremony designed to unify the empire under Nebuchadnezzar's leadership, which normally would have happened fairly early in his reign (closer to 605 B.C.).

1. The worship of Nebuchadnezzar's statue 3:1-7

3:1 The whole image that the king built was gold. The head of the image that Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream was also gold. Probably the image that Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream became the model for the statue that he built. This statue undoubtedly would have represented Nebuchadnezzar as the personification of the Babylonian Empire. Similarly, huge statues of Lenin that were erected in various countries within the former Soviet Union represented that Union.

"Daniel had told him [Nebuchadnezzar] that he was the head of gold (2:38) but that he would be followed by 'another kingdom inferior to you' (2:39) made of silver (2:32). Rejecting now the idea that any kingdom could follow his own, he may have determined to show the permanence of his golden kingdom by having the entire image covered with gold."¹³⁴

This image stood about 99 feet high and nine feet wide. This is the height of a ten-story building and the width of a 9-foot by 12-foot room. The famous Colossus of Rhodes stood 70 cubits (105 feet) high at the entrance to that ancient port. It is interesting that the dimensions of this statue, 60 cubits and 6 cubits, contain the number 6, which also appears in the mark of the Beast, 666, a latter day equivalent.¹³⁵

If the statue was a figure of a human, as seems very likely, it probably stood on a substantial base since it was quite narrow for such a tall statue.¹³⁶ However, it may have represented an animal, or a combination of human and animal. Archaeologists have discovered Babylonian images of all these types.¹³⁷ These images are also sometimes quite narrow in proportion to their height. Customarily these were wooden statues overlaid with gold (cf. Isa. 40:19; 41:7; Jer. 10:3-9).¹³⁸ Herodotus described a statue of Bel made of 800 talents (22 tons) of gold, but Nebuchadnezzar's image would have been much heavier and more costly.¹³⁹

¹³³Whitcomb, p. 53.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵See Ironside, p. 47.

¹³⁶Keil, p. 118.

¹³⁷See Leupold, p. 137; Young, pp. 83-85.

¹³⁸Montgomery, p. 195.

¹³⁹Herodotus, *History of the Persian Wars*, 1:183.

In view of Nebuchadnezzar's extraordinary ego (cf. ch. 4), the image was probably a likeness of him.¹⁴⁰ However, there is no evidence that the Mesopotamians ever worshiped statues of their rulers as divine during the ruler's lifetime.¹⁴¹ Some writers have suggested that the image may have resembled an obelisk similar to those found in Egypt.¹⁴² The image may have represented Nebuchadnezzar's patron god, Nebo.¹⁴³

The most probable site of the Dura Plain seems to be six miles southeast of Babylon.¹⁴⁴ The Aramaic word *dura* ("fortification") is common and refers to a place enclosed by a wall or perhaps mountains.

3:2 Nebuchadnezzar summoned his officials to the image for what he probably intended to be a demonstration of loyalty to him.

"The fairly recent date of the establishment of the Babylonian Empire as the successor to Assyria (at least in its southern half) made it appropriate for Nebuchadnezzar to assemble all the local and provincial leaders from every part of his domain and, in essence, exact from them a solemn oath of loyalty . . ."¹⁴⁵

The religious connotations of the gathering are unclear, but it was probably not a summons to worship one idol as God. The Babylonians were a polytheistic people and worshiped many gods.

"A refusal to yield homage to the gods of the kingdom they regarded as an act of hostility against the kingdom and its monarch, while every one might at the same time honour his own national god. This acknowledgment, that the gods of the kingdom were the more powerful, every heathen could grant; and thus, Nebuchadnezzar demanded nothing in a religious point of view which every one of his subjects could not yield. To him, therefore, the refusal of the Jews could not but appear as opposition to the greatness of his kingdom."¹⁴⁶

"What did Nebuchadnezzar really have in mind in making this image? We can observe here three things: (1) The making of this image shows the rebellion of Nebuchadnezzar against the God of heaven who had given

¹⁴⁰Feinberg, p. 44; McGee, 3:543.

¹⁴¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 50.

¹⁴²E.g., Pentecost, p. 1337; Young, p. 84; and Baldwin, p. 99.

¹⁴³Dyer, p. 706.

¹⁴⁴Montgomery, p. 197. Cf. Keil, pp. 118-19.

¹⁴⁵Archer, "Daniel," p. 51.

¹⁴⁶Keil, p. 124.

him world dominion. Instead of gratitude, this is a definite act of rebellion. (2) This also shows his vaunted pride in making an image which evidently was self-deification. The Roman emperors also attempted this later on. (3) Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar was seeking a unifying principle to weld together the tribes and tongues and peoples of his kingdom into one great totalitarian government. In other words, he was attempting to institute a world religion. This was nothing in the world but a repetition of the tower of Babel—a forming of one religion for the world."¹⁴⁷

3:3 Some of the titles of the officials named in the text are Persian and some are Babylonian. Daniel may have updated some of these Babylonian titles with modern Persian equivalents when he wrote the book in its final form. Or perhaps they were already common when the events of this chapter happened.

The "satraps" were the highest political officials in each province. The "prefects" (princes) were military chiefs. The "governors" (captains) were heads of sections of the provinces. The "counselors" (advisers, judges) were high-ranking judges. The "treasurers" were superintendents of the treasury. The "judges" (counselors) were secondary judges, and the "magistrates" (sheriffs) were lower level legal officials. The "rulers" (officials) were subordinates of the satraps.¹⁴⁸ These groups represented all the administrative government officials of the wide-ranging empire, and they spoke many different languages (v. 7).

3:4-7 The musical instruments referred to (vv. 5, 7) also have Persian names.¹⁴⁹ Some of these instruments were Greek as well. The Greeks had an influence on Babylonia earlier than Daniel's time.¹⁵⁰ These were various wind and stringed instruments.¹⁵¹ The Babylonians seem to have been an almost music-crazed culture (cf. Ps. 137:3; Isa. 14:11).¹⁵²

"The story of the three young men who were thrown into the fire because they would not worship the image (Dan. 3), brings to mind the great brick-kilns outside the city, where

¹⁴⁷McGee, 3:544.

¹⁴⁸Keil, pp. 120-21.

¹⁴⁹Archer, *A Survey . . .*, p. 375; K. A. Kitchen, "The Aramaic in Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, p. 43; T. C. Mitchell and R. Joyce, "The Musical Instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's Orchestra," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 19-27.

¹⁵⁰W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 259; E. M. Yamauchi, *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 17-24; Leupold, p. 143.

¹⁵¹For a full description of each, see Mitchell and Joyce, pp. 19-27; Leupold, pp. 144-45; Keil, pp. 122-24; and Charles H. Dyer, "The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147:588 (October-December 1990):426-36.

¹⁵²See Ironside, pp. 48-50, for interesting insights into spurious and real music in worship.

the bricks required for certain purposes in the vast building projects of Nebuchadnezzar were baked. Some of these great ovens were found in the [archaeological] excavations. Worth noting in this connection is a rather Solomonic judicial directive of the ruler Rim Sin (1750 B.C.), which appears in a recently published document of the Yale Babylonian Collection. He speaks thus concerning four men of Larsa: 'Because they threw a young slave into an oven, throw ye a slave into a furnace.' Clearly, that sort of thing was nothing new in Babylonia."¹⁵³

Other authorities believed the furnace was beehive or funnel-shaped and was constructed of metal.¹⁵⁴

In the Tribulation, the Antichrist will command everyone to worship him and his image (Rev. 13:3-18).

"The devil tempts us to destroy our faith, but God tests us to develop our faith, because a faith that can't be tested can't be trusted."¹⁵⁵

2. The charge against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego 3:8-12

3:8-11 The Chaldeans who brought charges against Daniel's three friends were nobles, not just astrologers. The Aramaic term *gubrin kasda'in* makes this clear.¹⁵⁶ They were in a position to profit personally from the execution of the three Jews, perhaps even to step into the government positions they occupied.

3:12 The charge was disregarding the king's command concerning pledging allegiance by bowing before the image. This constituted proof that the three Jews did not worship the king's gods and were not loyal to him.

"In situations like this, no crime is greater than nonconformity, yet that is exactly what God asks of us when the things of the world are arrayed against the things of God (Rom. 12:1-2)."¹⁵⁷

Many Israelites worshipped idols in Palestine, and Moses had predicted that they would worship them in exile (Deut. 4:27-28), but these young men were as scrupulous about their observance of the Mosaic Law as

¹⁵³E. G. Kraeling, *Rand McNally Bible Atlas*, p. 323. See also J. B. Alexander, "New Light on the Fiery Furnace," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 69:4 (December 1950):375-76.

¹⁵⁴See Goldingay, p. 70.

¹⁵⁵Wiersbe, p. 262.

¹⁵⁶Archer, "Daniel," p. 53.

¹⁵⁷Feinberg, p. 44.

Daniel. For them, death was preferable to disobedience. Nebuchadnezzar's gods were responsible for his success, according to Mesopotamian thinking, and to disregard them was tantamount to repudiating Nebuchadnezzar.

"The Chaldeans' attack, and Nebuchadnezzar's reaction, suggests that they saw the Jews' stance as involving both disloyalty (as if it were the king's statue) and impiety (as if it were a god's). Whatever the nature of the statue, it held religion and state together."¹⁵⁸

The term "Jew" usually appears as a pejorative term, as here, wherever it occurs in the Old Testament. It is a term that the Israelites' enemies used to describe them (cf. 6:13).

The absence of reference to Daniel here raises questions. Had he worshiped the image? Was he away on government business, was he occupied with pressing matters, or was he ill and unable to attend the ceremony? Did he enjoy such an exalted position or such favor with the king that these Chaldeans dared not accuse him? The writer did not explain this mystery. It was the response of Daniel's three Hebrew friends that he wanted to stress. It seems safe to assume that if Daniel had been present, he would have responded as his three friends did.

"Those who had proven themselves loyal at the royal court in Babylon would have been exempt from the ceremony. Thus Daniel did not have to appear at the gathering because he had been with Nebuchadnezzar at the royal court."¹⁵⁹

"God does not test all of His children at the same time or in the same manner."¹⁶⁰

3. The response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego 3:13-18

3:13-14 Nebuchadnezzar reacted to the news of the three Jews' response angrily (cf. 2:12; 3:19). He evidently took their disobedience as a personal affront as well as an act of insubordination. Nevertheless he controlled himself sufficiently to give them a second chance to obey and restated the punishment for disobedience. The king distinguished between serving his gods and worshiping his golden image (v. 14). This confirms that the worship of the image was primarily political rather than religious. However, failure to worship reflected disbelief in the king's gods, which was evidence of these Jews' lack of cooperation in things Babylonian.

¹⁵⁸Goldingay, p. 73.

¹⁵⁹Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 706.

¹⁶⁰Campbell, p. 33.

- 3:15 Even though Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed and testified to the sovereignty of Yahweh previously (2:47), he clearly did not believe that *even He* could save the accused (v. 15). Perhaps he figured that giving information was one thing, but saving people from a fiery death was something requiring greater supernatural power (cf. 2 Kings 18:33; Isa. 36:13-20). Similarly, many people today believe that God inspired the Bible, but they do not believe that He can deliver them from their serious personal problems, much less world problems. The king set himself above *all* gods; none of these gods could deliver the three Hebrews from him. He claimed absolute authority in political and religious realms.
- 3:16 The three young men told the king that they did not need to give him an answer. "We" is emphatic in the original text and implies a contrast with Yahweh. God would give the king an answer. Perhaps they meant that Nebuchadnezzar should have had no question about their loyalty to him. They did not need to argue that. Surely the king knew that their faith prohibited them from worshiping any god but Yahweh. They were known to be Jews (1:6-7).
- 3:17-18 They said they believed the Lord could deliver them from any fiery furnace and that He would deliver them. However, they also acknowledged the possibility that it might be God's will not to deliver them. God does not always save the lives of His children when they face martyrdom. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego knew this, but they had no question about God's ability to save them (cf. Matt. 10:28). Whether God would deliver them or not, they refused to serve idols or to bow before the king's image (Exod. 20:3-5).

"The quiet, modest, yet withal very positive attitude of faith that these three men display is one of the noblest examples in the Scriptures of faith fully resigned to the will of God. These men ask for no miracle; they expect none. Theirs is the faith that says: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,' Job 13:15."¹⁶¹

". . . Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego loved Yahweh more than life itself. Not only had they learned to recite the Shema—'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength' (Deut 6:4-5)—but they made it the center of their lives. For them the will and glory of Yahweh meant more than fame, position, or security."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹Leupold, p. 153.

¹⁶²Archer, "Daniel," p. 54. Cf. Acts 20:24.

"They believed not only in God's omnipotence but also in God's wise sovereignty . . . , and that is a great lesson to learn in the midst of suffering."¹⁶³

"Those who believe the saying, 'Every man has his price!' should consider well the response of these men in this crisis when their lives were at stake. They could not be bought—for any price!"¹⁶⁴

"The courteous but determined refusal of the Hebrews should be carefully observed. They had obeyed 'the powers that be' as far as conscience permitted. They journeyed to the Plain of Dura. And right at the point where conscience shouted, 'No further!' they rejected the temptation to be arrogant in their non-conformity. As Daniel before them had been courteous in his request to follow his convictions, so these three verbally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings alone. (cf. Acts 5:29; Mat. 22:21)."¹⁶⁵

4. The execution of the king's command 3:19-23

3:19 The determination of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to withhold the form of allegiance that Nebuchadnezzar required made the king as angry as he could be. He apparently ordered the furnace heated to seven times its normal heat to make an example of them. "Seven times more" is a proverbial expression and hyperbole for "much more" in some passages (cf. Prov. 24:16; 26:16), and it probably has that meaning here, too. "As hot as possible" seems to be the idea.

"His furnace was hot, but he himself got hotter! And when a man gets full of fury, he gets full of folly. There is no fool on earth like a man who has lost his temper. And Nebuchadnezzar did a stupid thing. He ought to have cooled the furnace seven times *less* if he had wanted to hurt them; but instead of that in his fury he heated it seven times *more*."¹⁶⁶

3:20-23 The fact that they were fully clothed when thrown into the furnace (v. 21) will feature later in the story. The Medo-Persian nobles later tried to have Daniel executed by getting King Darius to throw him to the lions (6:7; cf. Rev. 12:10). That the men who threw them into the fire perished is

¹⁶³Stephen J. Bramer, "Suffering in the Writing Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi)," in *Why, O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and the Church*, p. 158.

¹⁶⁴Campbell, p. 35.

¹⁶⁵D. Ford, *Daniel*, p. 107.

¹⁶⁶G. R. King, *Daniel*, p. 85.

testimony to the faithfulness of God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3). God cursed those who cursed His chosen people. Compare the fate of Haman (Esth. 7:10). Their fate should have warned the king.

"Judging from bas-reliefs, it would seem that Mesopotamian smelting furnaces tended to be like an old-fashioned glass milk-bottle in shape, with a large opening for the insertion of the ore to be smelted and a smaller aperture at ground level for the admission of wood and charcoal to furnish the heat. There must have been two or more smaller holes at this same level to permit the insertion of pipes connected with large bellows, when it was desired to raise the temperature beyond what the flue or chimney would produce. Undoubtedly the furnace itself was fashioned of very thick adobe, resistant to intense heat. The large upper door was probably raised above the level of the fire bed so that the metal smelted from the ore would spill on the ground in case the crucibles were upset."¹⁶⁷

5. God's deliverance of His servants 3:24-27

3:24-25 As Nebuchadnezzar watched what was happening inside the furnace, he marveled to see that the three Jews did not perish in an instant. Rising from his seat, he saw them loosed from their bonds and walking around inside the furnace.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not only saved from the conflagration, but also from asphyxiation, CO Poisoning, and possibly from other toxic fumes generated during the combustion process."¹⁶⁸

What startled Nebuchadnezzar even more was the presence of a fourth person with them. The fourth person had an unusual appearance, like "a son of gods" (lit.). The king probably meant that this fourth person appeared to be super-human or divine from his viewpoint as a pagan polytheist. Evidently the fourth person was either an angel or the Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ (cf. Gen. 16:13; et al.). He was with the three men in their affliction and protected them from harm in it (cf. Exod. 3:12; Ps. 23:4-5; Isa. 7:14; 43:1-3; 63:9; Matt. 28:20). He did not deliver them *from* the fire but *in* it (cf. Rom. 8:37).

3:26-27 Nebuchadnezzar then drew as close to the large door of the furnace as he could. It stood open to provide a view inside. He called to the three victims to come out of the furnace, and they responded obediently this time. The fourth person disappeared as mysteriously as He had appeared.

¹⁶⁷Archer, "Daniel," p. 56.

¹⁶⁸Charles E. Baukal Jr., "The Fiery Furnace," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:682 (April-June 2014):170.

The king described Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego as servants of the "Most High God" (v. 26). This title for God appears 13 times in Daniel, more than in any other book except Psalms. Seven times, either Nebuchadnezzar used it to describe God (3:36; 4:2, 17, 34), or Daniel used it in speaking of God to Nebuchadnezzar (4:24, 25, 32). Daniel used it twice when speaking to Belshazzar about Nebuchadnezzar (5:18, 21). It occurs four times in chapter 7, Daniel's vision of the four beasts, three times in the words of the interpreting angel (7:18, 25, 27), and once in Daniel's words in that chapter (7:22).

With this title, the king ascribed greater power to their God than to any other. He had obviously delivered them, as they said He could (v. 17), and the leaders of the Babylonian Empire had witnessed the miracle.

". . . it [the title "the most High God"] suggests a God of universal authority, but of otherwise undefined personal qualities. For a pagan, it would denote only the highest among many gods, but as an epithet of El it was accepted in early OT times and applied to Yahweh, so that for a Jew it has monotheistic (or mono-Yahwistic) implications."¹⁶⁹

The three Jews had escaped every form of destruction, even the smell of smoke. The ropes that bound them, symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar's power over them, were gone, undoubtedly burned up by the fire.

"Just as the reign of Nebuchadnezzar is symbolic of the entire period of the times of the Gentiles, so the deliverance of Daniel's three companions is typical of the deliverance of Israel during the period of Gentile domination. Particularly at the end of the Gentile period Israel will be in fiery affliction, but as Isaiah prophesied, 'But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Is 43:1-2)."¹⁷⁰

The three Hebrew young men quenched the fury of flames with their faith in their faithful God (Heb. 11:34; cf. 1 Macc. 2:59).

¹⁶⁹Goldingay, p. 72.

¹⁷⁰Walvoord, p. 92.

6. The consequences of God's deliverance 3:28-30

3:28-29 Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgment of Yahweh's superior power was an advance upon his earlier tribute to Yahweh's ability to reveal mysteries (2:47). The pagans believed that the gods used messengers to carry out their will. Evidently the king viewed the fourth person in the furnace as a messenger from Yahweh. This deliverance made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego's God superior to all others in Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. He had to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty over his own god, Nebo, in this respect. Therefore he issued a decree ordering everyone to respect Yahweh and to say nothing against Him.

Nebuchadnezzar's ability to cancel one of his laws and replace it with another is an evidence of the might of his personal power. Rulers of the Medo-Persian Empire, which replaced the Babylonian Empire (cf. 2:38-39), could not do this; it was impossible for them to override a previously written law (cf. 6:8, 12, 15; Esth. 1:19). Nebuchadnezzar made Judaism a recognized religion with rights to toleration and respect.¹⁷¹ His edict may have been responsible in part for the fairly comfortable conditions under which the Israelites lived in Babylonian exile.

Life for the Judean captives was comparatively pleasant in Babylon, in contrast to the bondage that their ancestors had experienced in Egypt. The Judahites were able to maintain some of their national traditions, such as rule by elders, and the teaching ministries of priests and prophets. They enjoyed freedom of movement in the land of Babylon; elders of the people came to visit Ezekiel, who occupied in his own house (Ezek. 8:1). The people could correspond with friends back in Judah (Jer. 29:1, 25). Favorable employment opportunities were also open to them (2 Kings 24:14-16), and many of them lived on fine, fertile land (Ezek. 1:1, 3; 3:15, 23). Nevertheless being uprooted from the Promised Land and their settled conditions there constituted a judgment from God.¹⁷²

This chapter began with Nebuchadnezzar intending to unite his kingdom under one religion (v. 5), but it ends with him acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty and permitting His worship. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that Nebuchadnezzar abandoned his pagan polytheism and cast himself wholly on Yahweh in saving faith, though some interpreters have concluded that he did come into a saving relationship with Yahweh.¹⁷³

3:30 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego also received the king's blessing. He approved their faith in Yahweh, who had demonstrated Himself to be as powerful as His three faithful followers had claimed that He was.

¹⁷¹Goldingay, p. 75.

¹⁷²Wood, *A Survey . . .*, pp. 385-87.

¹⁷³E.g., Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 709.

"This historical incident seems to have prophetic significance as well. In the coming Tribulation a Gentile ruler (7:8) will demand for himself the worship that belongs to God (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:8). Any who refuse to acknowledge his right to receive worship will be killed (Rev. 13:15). Assuming political and religious power, he will oppress Israel (Rev. 13:7). Most of the people in the world, including many in Israel, will submit to and worship him. But a small remnant in Israel, like the three in Daniel's day, will refuse. Many who will not worship the Antichrist will be severely punished; some will be martyred for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. But a few will be delivered from those persecutions by the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming [cf. Zech. 13:8; Rev. 12:10-17].

"In the forthcoming Tribulation period God will do for this believing remnant what He did for Daniel's three companions. They withstood the decree of the king, and though they were not exempted from suffering and oppression they were delivered out of it by the God they trusted."¹⁷⁴

This chapter advances the revelation in the preceding ones. Previously, God had revealed Himself as the only God who can reveal mysteries: things previously unknown but now made clear by Him. The image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and that Daniel interpreted (ch. 2), was a revelation of future world kingdoms and their characteristics. Chapter 3 shows that Yahweh is powerful enough to control history miraculously. He does so to remain true to His promises to His people, and to deliver those who put their trust in Him. He can reveal the future, but He can also bring it into existence. Chapter 2 demonstrates the wisdom of God, and chapter 3 the power of God primarily (cf. 2:20-23). The witness to Yahweh's superior powers was the most powerful human being of his day: King Nebuchadnezzar. Thus there should be no question about the Lord's greatness.

C. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PRIDE AND HUMBLING CH. 4

We have seen that in the first three chapters of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar came to an increasing appreciation of the greatness of Yahweh. In this chapter, he learned that Yahweh is sovereign over kings as well as kingdoms (cf. ch. 1). As the head of Gentile power, Nebuchadnezzar's humbling probably has typical significance suggesting the final overthrow of Gentile world dominion by the smiting stone: Jesus Christ (2:35, 44-45). However, the main lesson of the chapter is the sovereignty of Yahweh over the greatest human sovereign in the world (cf. vv. 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37).

"In the light of other passages in the Bible speaking prophetically of Babylon and its ultimate overthrow, of which Isaiah 13 and 14 may be

¹⁷⁴Pentecost, p. 1340.

taken as an example, it becomes clear that the contest between God and Nebuchadnezzar is a broad illustration of God's dealings with the entire human race and especially the Gentile world in its creaturely pride and failure to recognize the sovereignty of God."¹⁷⁵

The fact that Babylon falls in the very next chapter seems to support this conclusion.

"If the preceding history teaches how the Almighty God wonderfully protects His true worshippers against the enmity of the world-power, this narrative may be regarded as an actual confirmation of the truth that this same God can so humble the rulers of the world, if in presumptuous pride they boast of their might, as to constrain them to recognize Him as the Lord over the kings of the earth."¹⁷⁶

The form of the chapter is unusual. It is a decree that Nebuchadnezzar issued following his recovery from temporary insanity. The decree contains the record of events resulting in the issuing of the decree. Daniel himself may have written this account as a decree, or he may have inserted the king's actual decree from another source. It is unique in Scripture, being the only chapter composed by a pagan—if Nebuchadnezzar wrote it, and if he was unconverted.

The structure of the chapter is essentially ABBA, chiasmic. It begins and ends with praise of God (vv. 1-3, 34-37), and in the middle there is the narration of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 4-18), and its interpretation and fulfillment (vv. 19-33).

Jason Garrison observed that ". . . key images in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 4 were similar to those in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, thus having special significance to the literate King Nebuchadnezzar and to his servant Daniel."¹⁷⁷ These images are: dreams, the search for fame, the tree, the watchers, and the uncivilized man. They occur in reverse order in the two documents: the *Gilgamesh Epic* and the Book of Daniel.

The time of this incident seems to be considerably later than the event recorded in chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar had finished extensive building projects (v. 30, including the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon?). He reigned a total of 43 years (605-562 B.C.). Perhaps it was toward the end of his reign that these events transpired. Pentecost and Whitcomb estimated that the date may have been about 570 B.C.¹⁷⁸ If so, Daniel would probably have been about 50 years old. The Septuagint dates the incident in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (v. 4, LXX; about 587 B.C.), but that seems to reflect the opinion of the translators rather than the inspired writer. The Septuagint connected verses 1-3 to the end of chapter 3, and began chapter 4 with 4:4.

¹⁷⁵Walvoord, p. 95.

¹⁷⁶Keil, p. 134.

¹⁷⁷Jason A. Garrison, "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: An Inversion of Gilgamesh Imagery," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169:674 (April-June 2012):173.

¹⁷⁸Pentecost, p. 1341; Whitcomb, pp. 62-63.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's introductory doxology 4:1-3

- 4:1 The fact that Nebuchadnezzar addressed what follows to everyone living on the earth, even though he did not rule over the entire earth, should not be a problem. This was the universal language that he customarily used (cf. 3:29). He did, in fact, rule over a very large portion of the ancient world. Likewise the benediction, "May your peace abound," seems to be a typical salutation formula (cf. 6:25).
- 4:2-3 "Signs" and "wonders" are common biblical words used to describe miracles (cf. Deut. 6:22; 7:19; 13:1, 2; 26:8; Neh. 9:10; Isa. 8:18; et al.). Signs (Aram. *'atohi*) refer to "natural phenomena that because of their magnitude or timing decisively evidence God's intervention."¹⁷⁹ Wonders (Aram. *timhohi*) are "supernatural manifestations of divine intervention in the course of nature."¹⁸⁰ The "Most High God" is clearly Yahweh (cf. 3:26). The king had great respect for Yahweh, but that does not necessarily mean that he was a monotheist, much less a convert to Judaism. The king's praise of Yahweh opens and closes the chapter (cf. v. 37), forming an *inclusio* around the narrative.

The effect on the reader of this introduction is to make us eager to discover what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. We now want to pay close attention to the testimony that follows.

2. The king's frustration over his second dream 4:4-9

- 4:4 As mentioned above, the time of this dream was apparently later in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Historians have identified a seven-year period during his reign when he engaged in no military activity (ca. 582-575 B.C.).¹⁸¹ This may be the seven years during which he was temporarily insane. If so, he may have had this dream in 583 or 582 B.C. If this is the true date, Nebuchadnezzar would have defeated the Egyptians under Pharaoh Hophra (in 588-587 B.C.), and would have destroyed Jerusalem (in 586 B.C.) before he had this dream. In any case, he was at ease and resting in his palace when God gave him this revelation.

Nebuchadnezzar described himself as "flourishing" in his palace, in terms that in the original language picture him flourishing as a green plant. This king built the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which enriched his naturally arid capital with luxuriant foliage. His description of himself here anticipates the figure of the tree in his dream that represented him.

¹⁷⁹Archer, "Daniel," p. 59.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid., pp. 59-60.

"Nebuchadnezzar had a bad case of what I call 'perpendicular I-itis.'"¹⁸²

4:5-7 His dream, which was also a vision from God, terrified him, as the original language makes clear (cf. 2:1, 3). He still believed in his wise men even though they had let him down previously (2:10-12). This time he told them his dream and simply asked them to interpret it. They failed again, so he called in his expert in these matters: Daniel.

"This school of pompous quacks should long since have been dismissed."¹⁸³

4:8 Daniel may not have been with the king's other advisers because he occupied a position in the government that required his presence elsewhere. The king described Daniel by using both his Hebrew and Babylonian names. This would have had the double effect of causing those who read this decree to recognize Daniel by his common Babylonian name, and to honor Daniel's God (cf. v. 37).

Nebuchadnezzar probably meant that "a spirit of the holy gods" (cf. v. 17)—in a pagan sense—indwelt Daniel, since he used a plural adjective (translated "holy") to describe the noun ("gods").¹⁸⁴ However, we should probably not be dogmatic on this point since "holy" can mean divine rather than morally pure.¹⁸⁵ In this case the king may have meant "the Spirit of the holy God."

The true interpretation lies buried in the theological understanding of Nebuchadnezzar, which the text leaves unclear. I suspect that Nebuchadnezzar was speaking as a polytheist rather than as a monotheistic believer in Yahweh.

"Seeing that Nebuchadnezzar recognized another as 'my god,' it is doubtful if he regarded Jehovah as the only holy God."¹⁸⁶

"Several questions are called forth by this vs. Why did Dan. appear only after the wise men had failed to interpret the dream? Why, if Dan. was so well known for his ability to interpret dreams, and if he occupied a position of prominence over the wise men, was he not summoned first of all? . . .

¹⁸²McGee, 3:550.

¹⁸³Culver, "Daniel," p. 783.

¹⁸⁴See Leupold, p. 176, and Driver, p. 48.

¹⁸⁵Young, p. 99.

¹⁸⁶Culver, "Daniel," p. 783.

"The king . . . had not forgotten Dan. Rather, his dream apparently caused him to realize that he would suffer humiliation, and probably this humiliation would be at the hands of Dan.'s God. . . . With this God, Neb., as yet, wanted no dealings. If others can interpret the dream, he will go to them rather than to Dan."¹⁸⁷

- 4:9 Nebuchadnezzar addressed Daniel as the chief of the magicians. By this he probably meant that Daniel was his chief interpreter of the future, not that he was the head of a group of magicians.¹⁸⁸ Daniel's fame in this regard had evidently become well known (cf. Ezek. 28:3).

3. Nebuchadnezzar's account of his dream 4:10-18

- 4:10-12 The king described what he had seen in poetic language. His words therefore appear as a prophetic oracle. The ancients frequently used trees to describe rulers of nations (cf. Isa. 2:12-13; 10:34; Ezek. 31:3-17).¹⁸⁹ Thus Nebuchadnezzar may have anticipated that the tree in his dream represented himself. What happened to the tree in his dream then could account for his fear (v. 5). This tree was similar to Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom.¹⁹⁰ The beasts and birds probably represent the many types of people who benefited from Nebuchadnezzar's reign (cf. Ezek. 31:6; Matt. 13:32).
- 4:13-15 The watcher who descended from heaven (v. 13) was probably a divine agent, an angel, though Nebuchadnezzar described it using terminology from his background (cf. v. 17).¹⁹¹ Earthly kings had watchmen who served as their eyes and ears and who carried out the bidding of their lords. The binding of the stump (v. 15) hints at a restoration of the tree's life and its growth after its cutting down. After all, the stump could have been removed.

The significance of the iron and bronze band that bound the stump is questionable. It kept the tree stump from disintegrating, and perhaps it symbolized the madness that would bind Nebuchadnezzar¹⁹² or the fact that he would be protected while demented.¹⁹³ As the description proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that the tree represents a man. "It" now becomes "him" (v. 15).

¹⁸⁷Young, p. 100.

¹⁸⁸Leupold, p. 178.

¹⁸⁹Young, pp. 101-2.

¹⁹⁰See Paul Ferguson, "Nebuchadnezzar, Gilgamesh, and the 'Babylonian Job,'" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:3 (September 1994):321-31.

¹⁹¹Keil, p. 150; Goldingay, p. 88.

¹⁹²Walvoord, p. 103.

¹⁹³Archer, "Daniel," p. 64.

4:16 The man portrayed as a tree cut down would be out of his mind (*lebab*, lit. heart, including feelings, emotions, and affections) for "seven periods of time" (cf. vv. 23, 25, 32; 7:25). The word "periods of time" (*'iddanin*) is indefinite; it does not indicate how long these periods of time are.¹⁹⁴ It means years in 7:25, and that may be the meaning here too.¹⁹⁵ Seven hours, seven days, or seven weeks would have been too short a time for his hair to grow the length of feathers (v. 33), though that might be possible in seven months.

4:17 God also revealed the purpose of the judgment of this "tree." It was to teach all people that the Most High God (cf. 3:26) is sovereign over all the affairs of humankind (v. 17; cf. vv. 25, 32; 2:21; 1 Sam. 2:7-8; Job 5:11). He can, has, and will set up whom He will, even people of humble origin, to rule nations (e.g., Joseph, Israel's judges, Saul, David, et al.). God does not need the mighty to do His work. Therefore it is foolish to become proud over one's accomplishments and importance, as Nebuchadnezzar was.

God had sought to impress His universal sovereignty on Nebuchadnezzar previously (chs. 2, 3), but the king had not learned his lesson. So the Lord sent him a stronger lesson. This is often what He does (cf. Job 33:14-17). The last part of this verse is really a summary of the theme of the Book of Daniel.

4:18 The king concluded his description of what his dream contained by appealing to Daniel to interpret it for him. It seems incredible that the Babylonian soothsayers could not offer an interpretation of this dream, since its meaning seems quite transparent. Perhaps God hid the meaning from them, or maybe they pretended ignorance of it since it predicted Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, and they would not have wanted to tell him of that.

4. Daniel's interpretation 4:19-27

4:19 Daniel's initial reluctance to tell the king the interpretation must have been due to the bad news itself, or to the potentially harmful consequences to Daniel for telling it to the king. The AV translation "for one hour" (v. 19) describes a brief period of time better rendered "for a while" (NASB, et al.). Daniel had not hesitated to interpret the king's first dream (2:27-28). Sensing Daniel's uneasiness, Nebuchadnezzar encouraged the prophet to relate the interpretation without fear of punishment. This verse reflects the respect that each man held for the other.

¹⁹⁴Keil, p. 153.

¹⁹⁵Pentecost, p. 1342.

"This verse reveals the heart of Daniel as well as any in the entire book of Daniel. He knew the meaning of this dream and how well Nebuchadnezzar deserved what was to come upon him. Nevertheless, Daniel's heart was concerned for the king and grieved over what he had to tell him. This was the distinctive feature of the true prophets of God: though they often had to predict judgments, they were nevertheless grieved when any of God's creatures were chastised."¹⁹⁶

4:20-23 By repeating the facts of the dream as Nebuchadnezzar had previously narrated them, Daniel assured the king that he understood the dream exactly and was therefore interpreting it accurately. Nebuchadnezzar would have to leave his present place in society and would live in the open air with "beasts" (animals) of the field. Moreover, he would behave as an animal himself, even eating grass. *Zoanthropy* is a form of mental illness that causes such behavior. With it a person imagines himself or herself to be an animal. Perhaps this is what God used to afflict Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹⁷

Another possibility is that the king suffered from *boanthropy*. With this illness a person thinks himself or herself to be an ox (cf. 5:21). His or her outer behavior is irrational, but the inner consciousness remains virtually unchanged.¹⁹⁸ This may account for the statement that at the end of his affliction Nebuchadnezzar "raised his eyes toward heaven" (i.e., repented, v. 34).

R. K. Harrison recorded his personal observation of a mental patient with boanthropy who demonstrated exactly the symptoms described of Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹⁹ Joyce Baldwin quoted a consulting psychiatrist who witnessed a similar case.²⁰⁰

4:24-26 The king's condition, whatever it was, would continue for seven periods of time (cf. v. 16) until the king had learned that the Most High is sovereign. Then Nebuchadnezzar would receive back both his senses and his throne. "Heaven ruling" (v. 26) is a figure of speech (metonymy) for *God ruling*, since God lives in heaven. The Jews often substituted "heaven" for God's name out of respect for Him. This is most obvious in Matthew's Gospel, which was written primarily for Jews, in which "the kingdom of heaven" usually replaces the more common "kingdom of God" in the other Gospels. However, this is the only place in the Old Testament where the substitution of "heaven" for "God" occurs.

¹⁹⁶Feinberg, p. 56.

¹⁹⁷Keil, p. 159; Pentecost, pp. 1342-43.

¹⁹⁸Young, p. 112; Archer, "Daniel," p. 66.

¹⁹⁹R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 1116-17.

²⁰⁰Baldwin, pp. 109-10.

4:27 Daniel concluded with a bold exhortation for the king. What God had revealed would happen unless Nebuchadnezzar turned from his sins, practiced righteousness, and showed mercy to the poor. Clearly Nebuchadnezzar ruled with a heavy hand as well as a proud heart.

"This points out the principle that any announced judgment may be averted if there is repentance (cf. the Book of Jonah)."²⁰¹

5. The fulfillment of threatened discipline 4:28-33

4:28 Verse 28 introduces the fulfillment of what God had warned Nebuchadnezzar he could expect if he failed to repent. Perhaps he humbled himself initially, but after 12 months he was as proud as ever.

4:29-30 Archaeologists have discovered ancient documents in which Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the glory and splendor of Babylon.²⁰²

"The palace from which he surveyed Babylon was one of the citadels on the north side of the city. It had large courts, reception rooms, throne room, residences, and the famous hanging gardens, a vaulted, terraced structure with an elaborate water supply for its trees and plants, apparently built by Nebuchadnezzar for his Median queen. From the palace he would see in the distance the city's 27km outer double wall, which he had built. His palace stood just inside the double wall of the inner city, which was punctuated by eight gates and encircled an area 3km by 1km, with the Euphrates running through it. The palace adjoined a processional avenue that Nebuchadnezzar had paved with limestone and decorated with lion figures, emblematic of Ishtar; this avenue entered the city through the Ishtar Gate, which he had decorated with dragons and bulls (emblems of Marduk and Bel). It continued south through the city to the most important sacred precincts, to whose beautifying and development Nebuchadnezzar had contributed, the ziggurat crowned by a temple of Marduk where the god's statue resided. In Marduk's temple there were also shrines to other gods, and in the city elsewhere temples of other Babylonian gods, restored or beautified by Nebuchadnezzar."²⁰³

²⁰¹Pentecost, p. 1343. Cf. Jer. 18:7-10.

²⁰²See Montgomery, pp. 243-44; and Archer, "Daniel," p. 65.

²⁰³Goldingay, pp. 89-90.

Josephus quoted the ancient writer Berossus who in his *Chaldaic History* gave a description of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities.²⁰⁴

"The discovery of the cuneiform inscriptions has remarkably confirmed the accuracy of this vs. From these we learn that Neb. was primarily, not a warrior, but a builder."²⁰⁵

4:31-33 No sooner had the king articulated his pride, than he heard a voice from heaven pronouncing the punishment that Daniel had warned might come upon him. Immediately something snapped in his mind and he became like an animal. "Hair as eagle feathers" pictures hair that is neglected and matted as well as long. He did not think to trim his fingernails and toenails, either.

God's judgment is a sobering reminder that we are all but a breath or a heartbeat from insanity, or death, but for His grace. It is He who sustains us moment by moment (John 15:5; Col. 1:17). The humbling of proud rulers is a common theme in Scripture (cf. Deut. 17:14-20; Ps. 92; Prov. 16:5-7, 12; Isa. 10:5—11:10; 14:4-23; Ezek. 17:23-24; 19:10-14; 28; 31:5-6, 12-13; Acts 12:23).

"What he should have learned from his vision of the great image and from the deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace would [now] be indelibly impressed on him."²⁰⁶

"If there's one message that is emphasized in the Book of Daniel it's that 'the Most High rules in the kingdom of men' (Dan. 4:32, NKJV)."²⁰⁷

"Perhaps one should say that the true insanity belongs to the Nebuchadnezzar who has earlier been talking as if he were the eternal king and God did not exist. His outward madness is the external expression of a delusion he has already been the tragic victim of. Only a madman thinks he is a king or an emperor (Pascal): politics is the house rules of a lunatic asylum. But those rules are important, because they make the madness as little harmful as possible."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴Josephus, 10:11:1. See also Whitcomb, pp. 65-66; and Campbell, p. 50, for additional descriptions.

²⁰⁵Young, p. 109.

²⁰⁶Archer, "Daniel," p. 66.

²⁰⁷Wiersbe, p. 282.

²⁰⁸Goldingay, p. 96.

It would not have been abnormal for Nebuchadnezzar's enemies in Babylon to kill him and take his place. The fact that this did not happen during the time of the king's breakdown is another tribute to God's sovereignty. He kept affairs under control, so that when Nebuchadnezzar recovered, he could continue to rule.²⁰⁹ One wonders what role Daniel might have played in protecting the king, and encouraging the other royal officials to expect and plan for Nebuchadnezzar's restoration.

6. Nebuchadnezzar's restoration 4:34-37

The narrative resumes in the first person, adding the force of personal testimony to the story that the king had been telling. "Raising his eyes to heaven" implies that Nebuchadnezzar finally came to the end of himself—and sought divine help from Yahweh.

"Sanity begins with a realistic self-appraisal."²¹⁰

"The ability to recognize God is the fundamental difference between beasts and men. In any age, the glory of man is to recognize God and to take his place relative to the Sovereign of the universe."²¹¹

"Nothing is more insane than human pride. Nothing is more sober and sensible than to praise God."²¹²

The king described the Lord as "the Most High," "He who lives forever," and "the King of heaven" in these verses.

"The universal kingdom [of God] always exists efficaciously regardless of the attitude of its subjects [cf. Ps. 103:19]."²¹³

It is difficult to prove conclusively from the text that the monarch placed saving faith in Yahweh, but that is a distinct possibility in view of these titles and his accompanying praise.²¹⁴ Some interpreters held that Nebuchadnezzar did not become a believer in Yahweh in a saving sense.²¹⁵ Only God knows for sure.

²⁰⁹For extrabiblical support for Nebuchadnezzar's temporary madness, see *ibid.*, pp. 83-84; or Young, pp. 110-11.

²¹⁰Baldwin, p. 116.

²¹¹Feinberg, p. 58.

²¹²Culver, "Daniel," p. 785.

²¹³Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 30.

²¹⁴See Young, pp. 113-14; Walvoord, p. 112; Whitcomb, pp. 68-69; Campbell, pp. 53-54; and Ironside, p. 60.

²¹⁵E.g., Leupold, p. 204, Archer, "Daniel," p. 58, and Baldwin, p. 116.

"In chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar reaches a new spiritual perspicacity. Prior to his experience of insanity, his confessions were those of a pagan whose polytheism permitted the addition of new gods, as illustrated in Daniel 2:47 and 3:28-29. Now Nebuchadnezzar apparently worships the King of heaven only. For this reason, his autobiography is truly remarkable and reflects the fruitfulness of Daniel's influence upon him and probably of Daniel's daily prayers for him. Certainly God is no respecter of persons and can save the high and mighty in this world as well as the lowly."²¹⁶

What we can say certainly is that Nebuchadnezzar moved from acknowledging the sovereignty of no one but himself—to acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty over him.

4:36-37 Even as Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God's sovereignty, endless existence and rule, and His irresistible will and power, his sanity returned to him. His public decree, as well as his public confession of inferiority to Yahweh, show the genuineness of his repentance—as does God's greater subsequent blessing of him (cf. Job).

"This tremendously important principle had to be established in the minds of the captive Jews, serving out their years of bondage in Babylonia. . . . The captive Jews needed to know that even the apparently limitless power of Nebuchadnezzar was under the control of the Lord God Almighty, who still cared for them and had a great future for them in their land. Therefore, each episode recorded in the first six chapters concludes with a triumphant demonstration of God's sovereignty and faithfulness and his ability to crush the pride of unconverted mankind."²¹⁷

"There seems to be prophetic significance in this incident as well as in the one in chapter 3. Even though God has appointed Gentiles to a place of prominence in His program during the times of the Gentiles, yet most nations and people walk in rebellion against God. . . . God's judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, designed to subject him to God's authority, seems to prefigure God's judgment on the nations to subject them to the authority of the One who has been given the right to rule."²¹⁸

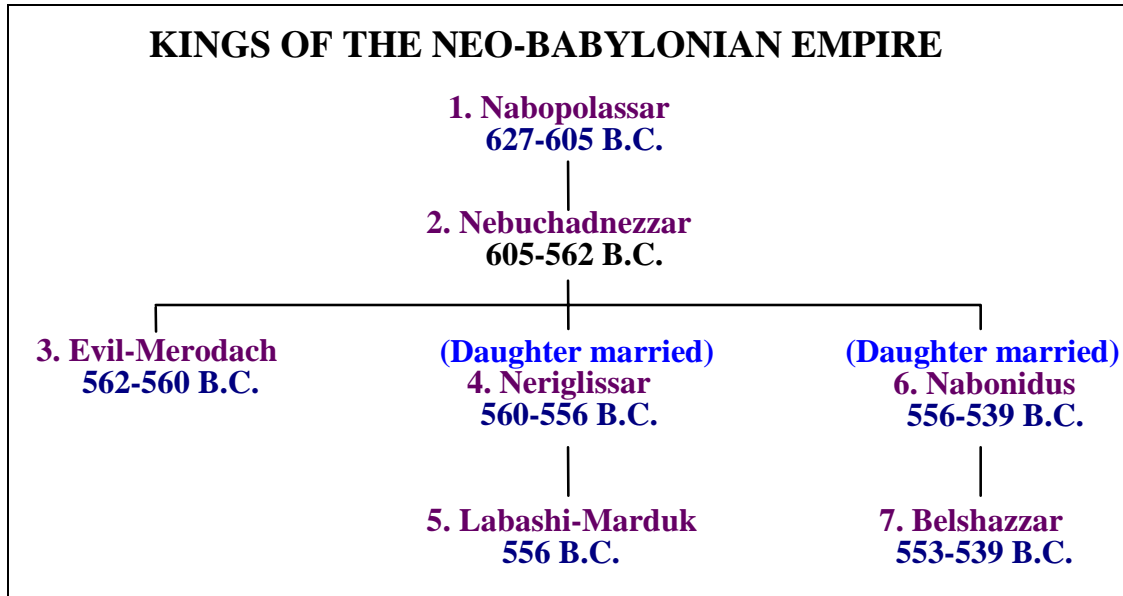
²¹⁶Walvoord, p. 112.

²¹⁷Archer, "Daniel," pp. 67-68.

²¹⁸Pentecost, p. 1344.

D. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST CH. 5

Belshazzar came to power some nine years after Nebuchadnezzar died.²¹⁹



The events of this chapter therefore occurred about 66 years after those in chapter 1, and about 36 years after those in chapter 4. Daniel received the revelation in chapter 7 in the first year of Belshazzar (553 B.C., 7:1), and the revelation in chapter 8 in Belshazzar's third year (551 B.C., 8:1). Thus chapter 5 follows chapters 7 and 8 chronologically by 14 and 12 years respectively. Daniel would now have been in his 80s.

1. Belshazzar's dishonoring of Yahweh 5:1-4

5:1 Some older critical scholars claimed that Belshazzar was never a king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.²²⁰ However, modern discoveries have shown that Belshazzar acted as king during his father's frequent and prolonged absences from Babylon.

"The last actual Chaldean king, Nabonidus, 'entrusted the kingship' in 539 B.C. to his son Bel-sar-usur during his ten-year absence from Babylon, returning as the threat from Cyrus grew."²²¹

²¹⁹For a brief history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar's reigns, I recommend Archer, "Daniel," pp. 69-70.

²²⁰E.g., H. H. Rowley, "The Historicity of the Fifth Chapter of Daniel," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (October 1930):12.

²²¹Goldingay, p. 106. See also Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 227-28; N. W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*, p. 76; Young, pp. 115-19; Keil, pp. 162-79, 222; Leupold, pp. 208-13; and Whitcomb, pp. 70-72.

Banquets the size described in this verse also drew the attack of critics. Yet the ancient historian Ktesias wrote that Persian kings frequently dined daily with 15,000 people (cf. Esth. 1).²²²

Later we shall read that Belshazzar hosted this banquet on the night the city of Babylon fell (vv. 30-31). The invading Medes and Persians, led by Ugbaru, commander of the Persian army, would have already taken the surrounding countryside, and everyone in the city would have known of their intentions. However, Babylon the city had not fallen to an invading army for 1,000 years because of its strong fortifications.

According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, Babylon occupied about 14 square miles with a double wall system enclosing a moat between the two walls. The outer wall was 87 feet thick, wide enough for four chariots to drive on side-by-side. It was 350 feet high with 100 gates, plus hundreds more towers that reached another 100 feet above the walls.²²³

Belshazzar's confidence in the security of his capital is evident in his banqueting and getting drunk while his enemy was at his door. His name, which means "Bel [also known as Marduk] has protected the king,"²²⁴ may have increased his sense of invulnerability. Herodotus also mentioned that a festival was underway in Babylon when the city fell.²²⁵

"With the armies of a conqueror pressing at the capital this deputy ruler took refuge in an orgy of wine."²²⁶

5:2-4 Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar's grandfather rather than his father, but the original language commonly used "father" in the sense of ancestor.

"Neither in Hebrew, nor in Chaldee, is there any word for 'grandfather,' 'grandson.' Forefathers are called 'fathers' or 'fathers' fathers.' But a single grandfather, or forefather, is never called 'father's father' but always 'father' only."²²⁷

Evidently the vessels taken from the Jerusalem temple had been stored as trophies of war and not used previously (cf. 1:2).²²⁸ Their presence in the warehouses of Babylon was sufficient humiliation of Yahweh who, in the

²²²See Leupold, pp. 214.

²²³Herodotus, 1:178-83.

²²⁴Pentecost, p. 1344.

²²⁵Herodotus, 1:191.

²²⁶Baldwin, p. 119.

²²⁷Pusey, p. 346.

²²⁸See Greg Goswell, "The Temple Theme in the Book of Daniel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55:3 (September 2012):509-20.

minds of the Babylonians, could not prevent their theft. However, using these vessels in praise of Babylon's gods was even more sacrilegious than just possessing them.

"Have you noticed how in recent years the world has stepped into the 'sanctuary' of faith and laid its ruthless hands on some of the things we hold most sacred? Our day has seen this impious sacrilege carried into many other realms, as well. Is God unmindful of this? Will He not visit for such defiance?"²²⁹

Again, as in chapters 3 and 4, a pagan king set himself up as superior to Yahweh. Perhaps Belshazzar did what he did to strengthen nationalistic pride among the Babylonians as well.

The description of Babylon's gods as gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone probably reflects the Hebrew perspective of the writer (cf. v. 23). For the Israelites, the gods that Belshazzar honored were no gods at all.

2. God's revelation to Belshazzar 5:5-9

5:5 Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar received an omen from God. In Nebuchadnezzar's case it was two dreams (chs. 1; 4). In Belshazzar's, it was handwriting on a wall. The night of revelry became a night of revelation.²³⁰

"In the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace archeologists have uncovered a large throne room 56 feet wide and 173 feet long which probably was the scene of this banquet. Midway in the long wall opposite the entrance there was a niche in front of which the king may well have been seated. Interestingly, the wall behind the niche was covered with white plaster as described by Daniel, which would make an excellent background for such a writing."²³¹

5:6-7 The "conjurers" that Belshazzar called to help him were magicians. These "Chaldeans" were scholars who knew the lore of the Babylonians. The "diviners" were astrologers. These were only three of the many groups of wise men that the king summoned (v. 8).

Clothing someone in "purple" meant giving him royal authority (cf. Esth. 8:15). This "gold chain" (necklace) would have had symbolic as well as monetary value. Belshazzar evidently offered to promote anyone who

²²⁹Feinberg, pp. 65-66.

²³⁰Campbell, p. 59.

²³¹Walvoord, p. 120. Cf. Montgomery, p. 253; Kraeling, p. 327; and Young, p. 120.

could interpret the mysterious writing, to "third" ruler of the kingdom, because he himself was the second ruler under his father, Nabonidus. Thus this was the highest official reward he could offer.

- 5:8-9 The writing appears to have been in the Aramaic language. Therefore it seems that the wise men's difficulty in understanding it may have been due to its interpretation, rather than just the meaning of the words (cf. vv. 14-16, 25).

3. The queen's counsel 5:10-12

- 5:10 Normally we would identify the queen as Belshazzar's wife. However, there are a number of reasons to prefer the view that she was really the "queen mother." She could even have been the surviving wife of Nebuchadnezzar.²³² Belshazzar's wives had been participating in this banquet (v. 2), but this woman now entered it apparently for the first time. She also spoke to the king more as a mother than as a wife.²³³ Moreover, she spoke as one who had personal acquaintance with Daniel's earlier interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (cf. 4:8, 9, 18).

Probably this "queen mother" was Belshazzar's mother, who was also the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.²³⁴ The queen mother was often a significant figure who exerted considerable influence in ancient courts (cf. 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 11:1-3; 24:12; Jer. 13:18). This woman proceeded to do for Belshazzar what Arioch had done for Nebuchadnezzar, namely: to bring Daniel to the king's attention (cf. 2:25).

- 5:11-12 As before, Daniel had not accompanied the other wise men whom the king had summoned (cf. 4:6-8). The reason for this is unclear, but the effect in the event and in the narrative is that it sets Daniel off as unique. Clearly Belshazzar did not know Daniel personally. Perhaps Daniel had left public service by this time.

When really severe crises arise, it is often the man or woman of God that others turn to for answers.

4. Belshazzar's request of Daniel 5:13-16

The king had heard of Daniel by reputation, even though he had not met him before (v. 13). He recognized him as a person whose extraordinary ability came from some divine source (cf. 4:8, 18). Perhaps it was because Daniel was a Jew that Belshazzar did not know him. However now, the king was quite willing to give even this Jewish exile all the honors that he had formerly promised his wise men.

²³²Ibid., p. 122.

²³³Arthur Jeffery, "The Book of Daniel, Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, 6:426.

²³⁴Archer, "Daniel," p. 72.

Here was Daniel, a worshipper of the God *whom Belshazzar had been dishonoring in his banquet*—who, ironically on this night of all nights, might prove superior to the Chaldeans in deciphering the mystery. The king's willingness to reward a Jewish exile shows how desperately Belshazzar wanted to learn the meaning of the enigmatic message on the wall.

"As in the previous instances in Daniel 2 and 4, the wisdom of the world is demonstrated to be totally unable to solve its major problems and to understand either the present or the future. Daniel as the prophet of God is the channel through which divine revelation would come, and Belshazzar in his extremity was willing to listen.

"Too often the world, like Belshazzar, is not willing to seek the wisdom of God until its own bankruptcy becomes evident. Then help is sought too late, as in the case of Belshazzar, and the cumulative sin and unbelief which precipitated the crisis in the first place becomes the occasion of downfall."²³⁵

5. Daniel's rebuke of Belshazzar 5:17-24

5:17 Daniel's reply to the king was in every sense a sermon, and a powerful one at that.²³⁶ The prophet began by declining the offered gifts. This had the effect, whatever Daniel's reason for doing so may have been, of helping Belshazzar realize that these gifts did not influence his interpretation of the writing.

5:18-23 Daniel reminded Belshazzar, and undoubtedly everyone else in the room, of the lesson in humility that God had taught the king's forefather, Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 4). The Most High God had given his grandfather his authority, and had taught him that he was under His greater sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar's pride had led him to behave arrogantly, as Belshazzar was doing by drinking from the sacred vessels of Yahweh—the Most High God.

Even though Belshazzar knew all about Nebuchadnezzar's pride and humiliation, he had not humbled his heart before the Lord of heaven and glorified Him. Therefore this same God, who held Belshazzar's life and his ways in *His hand*, had sent *the hand* to write the inscription on the wall.

"One of the most amazing spectacles in this world is how little men really profit from the judgments of God."²³⁷

²³⁵Walvoord, p. 124.

²³⁶King, p. 148.

²³⁷Feinberg, p. 69.

Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah used the title "the God of heaven" to describe Yahweh because this was the title of the chief Syrian god and a title that other people in the Persian Empire gave to their chief god (c. Ezra 1:2; 5:11-12; 6:9-10; 7:12, 23; Neh. 1:4-5; 2:4, 20; Dan. 2:18-19, 34, 44; 5:23). This title implies God's transcendence over all.²³⁸

5:24 Nebuchadnezzar had heard a voice from heaven while he was outdoors (4:31), but Belshazzar saw a hand from heaven indoors. Both forms of revelation have been extremely rare throughout history, but these occasions in the Book of Daniel involved leaders of the greatest nation on earth.

6. Daniel's interpretation of the writing 5:25-28

Scholars have wearied themselves trying to figure out how Daniel got his interpretation from these three apparently Aramaic words. They have been as unsuccessful as Belshazzar's original wise men were. It seems best to me simply to take Daniel's interpretation at face value, even though we may not be able to understand completely how he arrived at it. It has been said that Daniel could interpret these words because he recognized his Father's handwriting.²³⁹

This much seems clear. The words all referred to measures of weight.²⁴⁰ Daniel interpreted the consonants by adding vowels, which are absent in Aramaic, as in Hebrew, and made each word a passive participle. The Aramaic word *mene* means "mena," or with different vowels, *menah*, "numbered." Daniel understood this word to signify that the number of years that God had prescribed for the Neo-Babylonian Empire had expired. Its repetition probably stressed the certainty of this point. Joseph had told Pharaoh: "Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about" (Gen. 41:32).

Tekel (cognate with the Hebrew "shekel") when changed to *tekal* means "weighed." God had weighed Belshazzar and had found him deficient; he was not the ruler that he should have been because of his flagrant refusal to acknowledge the Most High God's sovereignty (v. 22).

Uparsin means "and half-shekels," and *peras* means "broken in two," or "divided," and relates to the division of Belshazzar's kingdom into two parts, one part for the Medes and the other for the Persians. However, *paras* means "Persia." Persia was the dominant kingdom in the Medo-Persian alliance. Thus *prs* had a triple meaning. The meaning of these words describing various weights would have been unintelligible to the Chaldean wise men. Even if they had supplied the vowels that Daniel did, and came up with the words "numbered," "weighed," and "divided"—they would have been meaningless without a context.²⁴¹

²³⁸Waltke, *An Old . . .*, p. 375.

²³⁹Campbell, p. 64.

²⁴⁰Goldingay, pp. 110-11; Baldwin, pp. 123-24.

²⁴¹For Josephus' explanation, see 10:11:4.

"The important consequence of this identification of the combined Medo-Persian Empire as the second kingdom in Daniel's series of four (embodied in Nebuchadnezzar's four-part dream-image in ch. 2) is that the third kingdom must be the Greek one; therefore, the fourth empire must be the Roman Empire—which, of course, did not actually take over the Near East till 63 B.C., a century after the Maccabean uprisings. Therefore, this handwriting on the wall demolishes the Maccabean date hypothesis, which insists that nothing in Daniel prophesies any event later than the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C., a hundred years before Pompey annexed Palestine-Syria to the Roman Empire."²⁴²

Ironically, as Daniel interpreted God's verdict against Babylon, the Medes and Persians were already pouring into the city.

"As God had judged Nebuchadnezzar's pride by removing him from the throne, so He would judge Belshazzar's pride by taking the kingdom from him and giving it to another people."²⁴³

7. Daniel's rise and Belshazzar's fall 5:29-31

5:29 Belshazzar kept his promise (v. 16), though Daniel's honors only lasted a few hours at most, typical of the honors of this world. The king's response is surprising. We might have expected him to execute Daniel for confronting him publicly. Perhaps his response indicates that he was drunk or that he repented. If he repented, his repentance was too late to prevent judgment from falling.

"In its rise to power the Babylonian Empire had conquered Jerusalem, taken its inhabitants into captivity, looted its beautiful temple, and completely destroyed the city. Yet this empire was to have as its last official act the honoring of one of these captives who by divine revelation predicted not only the downfall of Babylon but the course of the times of the Gentiles until the Son of man should come from heaven. Man may have the first word, but God will have the last word."²⁴⁴

5:30 "That same night" was October 12, 539 B.C.²⁴⁵ Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus, the Babylonian Chronicles, and Cyrus (on the Cyrus Cylinder) all described the fall of Babylon in writings that have remained to the present day.²⁴⁶ Isaiah and Jeremiah had predicted Babylon's fall (Isa.

²⁴²Archer, "Daniel," p. 74.

²⁴³Pentecost, p. 1346.

²⁴⁴Walvoord, p. 129.

²⁴⁵*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1429.

²⁴⁶See Goldingay, pp. 106-7; James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 305-6, 315-16; D. W. Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times*, pp. 81-83, 92-95; Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:20; and J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, p. 31.

13:17-22; 21:1-10; 47:1-5; Jer. 51:33-58). The Persians diverted the water from the Euphrates River that flowed south through Babylon into an ancient lake located to the north. This allowed them to walk into the city on the riverbed and scale the undefended walls that flanked the river.²⁴⁷ Herodotus pictured Babylon's fall as follows:

"Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been appraised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street-gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy as they were in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare), long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and revelling [*sic*] until they learnt the capture but too certainly."²⁴⁸

"The downfall of Babylon is in type the downfall of the unbelieving world [cf. Rev. 17—18]. In many respects, modern civilization is much like ancient Babylon, resplendent with its monuments of architectural triumph, as secure as human hands and ingenuity could make it, and yet defenseless against the judgment of God at the proper hour. Contemporary civilization is similar to ancient Babylon in that it has much to foster human pride but little to provide human security. Much as Babylon fell on the sixteenth day of Tishri (Oc. 11 or 12) 539 B.C., as indicated in the Nabonidus Chronicle, so the world will be overtaken by disaster when the day of the Lord comes (1 Th 5:1-3 [cf. Ps. 2:4-6; Rev. 19:15-16]). The disaster of the world, however, does not overtake the child of God; Daniel survives the purge and emerges triumphant as one of the presidents of the new kingdom in chapter 6."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷For a plan of the city, see any good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, or Kraeling, p. 322.

²⁴⁸Herodotus, 1:191.

²⁴⁹Walvoord, p. 131. For the Nabonidus Chronicle reference, see John C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, p. 73.

The record of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel is the story of an overbearing king who experienced temporary judgment, but the story of Belshazzar is one of a sacrilegious king who suffered permanent judgment. Xenophon also recorded Belshazzar's death. The night of revelry that had become a night of revelation now turned into a night of retribution.²⁵⁰

"Historically, Belshazzar perhaps fell because he could not handle a political crisis; but more profoundly, as Daniel sees it, he fell because of his irresponsibility before God . . ."²⁵¹

5:31 Belshazzar suffered execution that very night, and Darius the Mede became the ruler of Babylonia (cf. 2:21).²⁵² The writer introduced Darius in 5:31, which is the first verse of chapter 6 in the Hebrew Bible, and he is the prominent king in chapter 6.

"The references to Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem in the book."²⁵³

Critics, including Rowley, claim that history allows no room for a person by this name. At least two ancient historians, however, apart from the Book of Daniel and works that depended on it (e.g., Josephus), mentioned Darius.²⁵⁴

Archer suggested that "Darius" may have been a title of honor in the Persian Empire, as "Caesar" was in the Roman Empire—or, I might add, as "Pharaoh" was in Egypt.²⁵⁵ If this was so, "Darius" could refer to another man known in history by another name or names. The most likely possibility seems to me to have been Cyrus.²⁵⁶ This would account most naturally for the fact that Daniel referred to Darius as "king" in chapter 6. Furthermore, it would have been very unusual for a subordinate of Cyrus to divide the whole empire into 120 satrapies (v. 1). Darius was probably called "the Mede" because he was of Median descent (9:1).

²⁵⁰Campbell, p. 65.

²⁵¹Godlingay, p. 116. See also Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 229-30.

²⁵²See *ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

²⁵³H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*, p. 8.

²⁵⁴See Steven D. Anderson and Rodger C. Young, "The Remembrance of Daniel's Darius the Mede in Berossus and Harpocraton," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173:691 (July-September 2016):315-23.

²⁵⁵Archer, "Daniel," pp. 18-19, 76.

²⁵⁶D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 12-14.

Another possibility is that Darius is another name for Gubaru (Gobryas), a ruler of Babylon under Cyrus.²⁵⁷

"In his dealings with his Babylonian subjects, Cyrus was 'king of Babylon, king of lands.' . . . But it was Gobryas the satrap who represented the royal authority after the king's [i.e., Cyrus'] departure [from Babylon]."²⁵⁸

This view distinguishes Gubaru from Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium and Persian commander who led the assault against Babylon. A third view is that Ugbaru and Gubaru are different spellings of the same man's name.²⁵⁹

"But the syllable GU is written quite differently from UG in Akkadian cuneiform."²⁶⁰

A fourth view equates Darius the Mede with Cambyses, Cyrus' son, who ruled Persia from about 530 to 522 B.C.²⁶¹

Josephus wrote that "Baltasar [Belshazzar], who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus [Nabonidus]: against him did Cyrus, the king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, make war."²⁶² However, Belshazzar was actually Nabonidus' son, which throws into question what he said about Cyrus and Darius. Elsewhere Josephus referred to Darius and Cyrus as kinsmen.²⁶³

Darius the Mede was definitely not the same person as Darius the Great (Darius I) who was much younger and ruled Persia later, from 521-486 B.C., nor was he Darius II who ruled even later.²⁶⁴

"It must be emphasized that there is no established fact which contradicts a person by the name of Darius the Mede reigning over Babylon if Darius is an alternate name for a known ruler."²⁶⁵

²⁵⁷Archer, "Daniel," pp. 76-77; Whitcomb, *Darius the . . .*, p. 35; Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 128-29; *The Nelson . . .*, p. 1429. Cf. Wood, *The Prophets . . .*, p. 348. Young, p. 183, believed Darius was a viceroy under Cyrus.

²⁵⁸A. T. Olmstead, *The History of the Persian Empire*, p. 71.

²⁵⁹William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20 (Autumn 1982):229-47. See also idem, "The Search for Darius the Mede (Concluded), or, The Time of the Answer to Daniel's Prayer and the Date of the Death of Darius the Mede," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12:1 (Spring 2001):97-105.

²⁶⁰Archer, "Daniel," p. 76.

²⁶¹Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, pp. 142-55.

²⁶²Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 10:11:2.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, 10:11:4.

²⁶⁴See the discussion of the problem in Longman and Dillard, pp. 377-81.

²⁶⁵Walvoord, p. 134.

PERSIAN KINGS DURING THE EXILIC AND POSTEXILIC PERIODS		
<i>King</i>	<i>Reign</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
Cyrus	559-530	Ezra 1:1; 4:5; Dan. 5:31—6:28; 9:1; 11:1
Cambyses	530-522	
Smerdis	522	
Darius I	521-486	Ezra 5—6; Haggai; Zechariah
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	486-464	Ezra 4:6; Esther
Artaxerxes I (Artashasta)	464-424	Ezra 4:7-23; chs. 7—10; Nehemiah; Malachi
Darius II	423-404	Neh. 12:22

"This chapter illustrates the involvement of king and kingdom in one destiny. Belshazzar's blatant disrespect for the Most High God was all of a piece with the national character, indeed with our human condition, as it is depicted in Psalm 90. Though human days are numbered (verse 10), few number them for themselves and 'get a heart of wisdom' (verse 12). Belshazzar in this chapter presents a vivid picture of the fool, the practising [*sic*] atheist, who at the end can only brazen it out with the help of alcohol which blots out the stark reality."²⁶⁶

"The whole chapter is an instructive symbolic assessment of the perils and limits, the sources and responsibilities, of power in human affairs."²⁶⁷

Alexander Hislop claimed that "the Pope himself is truly and properly the lineal representative of Belshazzar."²⁶⁸

E. DARIUS' PRIDE AND DANIEL'S PRESERVATION CH. 6

Even though this chapter is one of the most popular in all the Bible, it has also been the target of strong critical attacks because of the problem of the identity of Darius. The chapter shares motifs with Psalm 2 and recalls Daniel 3. The structure of the chapter is basically chiasmic, centering on God's deliverance of Daniel.²⁶⁹

- A** Introduction: Daniel's success vv. 1-3
- B** Darius signs an injunction and Daniel takes his stand vv. 4-10
- C** Daniel's colleagues plan his death vv. 11-15
- D** Darius hopes for Daniel's deliverance vv. 16-18
- D'** Darius witnesses Daniel's deliverance vv. 19-23
- C'** Daniel's colleagues meet their death v. 24
- B'** Darius signs a decree and takes his stand vv. 25-27
- A'** Conclusion: Daniel's success v. 28

²⁶⁶Baldwin, p. 125.

²⁶⁷Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics*, p. 311, footnote.

²⁶⁸Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 3.

²⁶⁹Goldingay, p. 124.

Goldingay's apt title for this chapter is, "God Vindicates His Power When Daniel Chooses the Lion Pit rather than Apostasy."²⁷⁰

"The iniquity of world rulers during the 'times of the Gentiles' has not yet been examined to the last detail. These monarchs have sponsored idolatry in the past, and they will again in the prophetic future. They became deranged by their senseless, overbearing pride in the past, and they will again in the predicted future. They were blatantly impious in their desecration of holy things in the past, and they will be again in the foretold future.

". . . But that is not all; there is yet a final touch. Man will finally seek to displace God altogether."²⁷¹

1. Daniel's promotion in the Persian government 6:1-3

6:1-2 When the Medo-Persian alliance overthrew the Neo-Babylonian Empire, it acquired much geographic territory that it proceeded to incorporate into its kingdom. The Persian Empire became the largest that the world had yet seen, eventually encompassing much of modern Turkey (the ancient Lydian Empire), Egypt, and parts of India and North Africa as well as Babylonia. Darius divided his realm into 120 satrapies or provinces, and set a satrap ("protector of the realm") in charge of each one (cf. Esth. 1:1; 8:9).

The 120 satraps reported to three commissioners, one of whom was Daniel. Evidently Darius had heard about Daniel's unique gifts and accomplishments as a Babylonian administrator, and wanted to use him in his cabinet. Verse 1 strongly suggests that "Darius" and "Cyrus" refer to the same person. Because of the vast geographical region that 120 satrapies entailed, this number and size of provinces would be consistent with the Persian Empire as historically ruled by Cyrus.

6:3 As time passed, Daniel distinguished himself above the other commissioners, even though he was in his 80s. Darius purposed to put him in charge of them all, to elevate him to prime minister.

These verses set the stage for what follows by helping the reader appreciate how Darius felt about Daniel.

2. The conspiracy against Daniel 6:4-9

6:4 The text does not say why the other officials wanted to get rid of Daniel. Perhaps his integrity made it difficult for them to get away with graft and political corruption. Maybe since he was quite old they wanted to

²⁷⁰Ibid., p. 119.

²⁷¹Feinberg, p. 73.

eliminate him so someone from a younger generation could take his place. Anti-Semitism appears to have been part of their reason (cf. v. 13; 3:12). The text stresses the outstanding personal integrity and professional competence of Daniel.

"It is known in advance what an honest man will do in certain circumstances. Control the circumstances and you control him!"²⁷²

6:5 The accusers' plan was similar to that of the Babylonian officials who had tried to topple Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (ch. 3). They knew that Daniel was a God-fearing man who did not worship pagan idols. So they set a trap for him believing that he would remain faithful to his faith. When Daniel had to choose between obeying his God or his government, his God came first (cf. v. 10; Acts 5:29).

6:6-7 The adversaries' exaggerated their claim that all the rulers of the kingdom had concurred with their proposal. Obviously Daniel had not agreed to it. Nevertheless it was believable enough that Darius did not object or consult Daniel. Furthermore, the plan catered to the king's vanity. The proposed statute evidently covered petitions of a religious nature—rather than requests of any type—since a general ban, even a temporary ban, would have been absurd. Perhaps the antagonistic rulers also aimed at impressing the Babylonians with the importance of remaining loyal to their new Persian king. In any case, they promoted humanism, the philosophy that puts man in the place of God.

". . . this one king was to be regarded for the time being as the only representative of Deity."²⁷³

"*Parsism* [the official religion of Persia] did not indeed require men to regard the king as a god in his own proper nature, but to pay him supreme homage as the *representative* of Ormusd."²⁷⁴

"The probability is that Darius regarded this act as a pledge of loyalty to himself and a token of their desire to respect his authority to the utmost."²⁷⁵

The Babylonians burned criminals alive (ch. 4), but the Persians, who worshipped fire, threw them to the lions.²⁷⁶

²⁷²Culver, "Daniel," p. 787.

²⁷³Montgomery, p. 270.

²⁷⁴Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, p. 171.

²⁷⁵Walvoord, p. 137.

²⁷⁶Olmstead, p. 473.

6:8-9 Under Persian law, the king was bound by the authority of a royal edict (vv. 8, 12, 15; cf. Esth. 1:19; 8:8). This made his power less than it was under an absolute dictator such as Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2:39).

"The action of Darius was both foolish and wicked. What led him to yield to the request of the ministers can only be conjectured, but probably he was greatly influenced by the claim of deity which many of the Persian kings made."²⁷⁷

3. Daniel's faithfulness and Darius' predicament 6:10-15

6:10 The new decree did not deter Daniel from continuing to pray for the welfare of the city where God had sent them into exile, and for the Jews' return from exile. That this was the subject of his praying, among other things, including thanksgiving (v. 10), seems clear since Daniel possessed a copy of Jeremiah's prophecy (9:2; cf. Jer. 29:1, 7, 10). Jeremiah had written that God had promised to hear such prayers, if they were sincere and wholehearted, to restore the fortunes of the Jews, and to re-gather them to the Promised Land (Jer. 29:12-14).

Cyrus issued his decree allowing the Jews to return from exile in 538 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). The events of Daniel 6 must have happened just before or shortly after this great turning point in Israel's history. The events recorded in this chapter undoubtedly played some part in Cyrus' decision to favor the Jews. Daniel refused to pray to the king, but he willingly prayed to the king's Sovereign.

"It is not a question of a positive sin which he will not commit, but of a positive duty which he will not omit."²⁷⁸

Solomon had taught the Jews to pray to the Lord facing Jerusalem, since that is where He promised to *be* in a special sense for them (2 Chron. 6:21, 34-39; cf. Ps. 5:7). Jesus Christ later taught that the place of worship is not as important as truly spiritual worship (John 4:20-24). Daniel's kneeling posture, reminiscent of Solomon's at the temple dedication, indicated his dependence on God as a supplicant. Normally the Jews stood when they prayed (cf. 1 Chron. 23:30; Neh. 9; Matt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13), but they knelt (and prostrated themselves) when they felt a more urgent need (cf. 1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5).

Praying three times a day was evidently the practice of godly Jews dating back to David, if not before then (cf. Ps. 55:16-17). The fact that his window was open evidently symbolized for Daniel that his prayers were

²⁷⁷Young, p. 134.

²⁷⁸Driver, p. 71.

unhindered. Windows in ancient Near Eastern cities were normally small, high, and had a lattice covering, so Daniel was probably not praying with his window open to be seen by others.²⁷⁹

"While Daniel's consistency of life and testimony has been evident throughout the book of Daniel, here we learn the inner secret. In spite of the pressures of being a busy executive with many demands upon his time, Daniel had retired to his house three times a day to offer his prayers for the peace of Jerusalem as well as for his personal needs. This was not the act of a person courting martyrdom but the continuation of a faithful ministry in prayer which had characterized his long life."²⁸⁰

"It was this prayer-fellowship with Yahweh that had safeguarded Daniel from the corrupting influences of Babylonian culture."²⁸¹

"It is a common observation that those who have no regular habits of prayer very seldom do much praying. It is well for God's people purposefully and deliberately to set aside and faithfully adhere to a definite prayer schedule. Prayer is thus recognized as a [*sic*] important part of the Christian life and given the place which it deserves."²⁸²

"In times of testing believers need to remain faithful to God. Sometimes this will require:

- *Wisdom* to seek a creative compromise that enables the believer to meet society's expectations without violating his or her beliefs (1:8-14).
- *Courage* to be willing to stand up for one's beliefs when no compromise is possible (3:15-18).
- *Personal discipline* to develop a lifestyle of faithfulness so the right response to a test will come 'naturally' (6:10)."²⁸³

6:11 Daniel's colleagues knew about his prayer habits (cf. Phil. 4:6). They contrived to observe him praying in his own house, somehow, to enable them to give eyewitness testimony that they had seen him violate the king's order. Did they suppose that Daniel would deny that he had been praying? They expected that the edict would not deter him from his

²⁷⁹Baldwin, p. 129.

²⁸⁰Walvoord, p. 138.

²⁸¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 79.

²⁸²D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working with God: Scriptural Studies in Intercession*, p. 110.

²⁸³Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 703.

regular devotional habit—even though it might cost him his life! What a testimony Daniel had among his fellow workers!

- 6:12-13 After reminding Darius of his decree, the hostile officials informed the king that his prime minister elect had violated it, and was therefore worthy of death. Notice that they described Daniel as "one of the exiles from Judah" (cf. 2:25; 5:13), rather than as a royal cabinet minister. They were evidently hoping that Daniel's Jewish nationality and religion would contribute to Darius' distaste for him. This was not the result, however. They also used almost the same words that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's accusers had used when they charged Daniel with disregarding the king (cf. 3:12). To them, prayer to Yahweh constituted disrespect for the king, rather than respect for the Most High God. How quickly and persistently humankind reverts to humanism!
- 6:14-15 Daniel had so won the king's favor that Darius immediately and energetically began trying to rescue his friend. Nebuchadnezzar had become angry with Daniel's three friends when they refused to idolize him (3:19), but Darius became angry with himself for signing the decree (cf. 2:1; 3:13; 5:6, 9). This shows how much he respected and valued Daniel.

4. Daniel in the lions' den 6:16-18

- 6:16 Darius' parting words to Daniel are significant. One could render them, "Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."²⁸⁴ The idea is that Darius had tried to save Daniel and had failed. Now Yahweh must save him. We do not know, of course, if Darius knew about Yahweh's deliverance of Daniel's three friends. Again, we see that God did not preserve His servant from difficulty, but brought him through it safely—His normal way of dealing with His own.

"Observable in this assurance of Darius is the deep impression that Daniel's personal piety and faithfulness to God had made upon the king and that this impression had brought about Darius' own conviction that Daniel's God would come to his rescue in Daniel's extremity."²⁸⁵

"Though absolutely blameless, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. He suffered because of the jealousy of others."²⁸⁶

- 6:17 The lions' den appears to have been a large pit in the ground with an opening above that a large stone sealed, probably to keep people from stumbling into it. Such pits were commonly used as cisterns to store water

²⁸⁴Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, pp. 54-55.

²⁸⁵Walvoord, p. 140.

²⁸⁶Bramer, p. 158.

or as prisons.²⁸⁷ Daniel had to be lifted up out of it (v. 23), and others when thrown into it fell down toward its bottom (v. 24). It may also have had a side entrance or drain since if it did not, rain could have filled the den and drowned the lions. Keil summarized a description of a fairly modern lions' den in Morocco written by Höst.²⁸⁸ However, statements in the text cast the type of lions' den pictured in this description into question. The king and his nobles sealed the stone that covered the opening to make sure no one would release Daniel (cf. the sealing of Jesus' tomb).

6:18 In contrast to Nebuchadnezzar, who showed no compassion for Daniel's three friends, Darius spent a fitful night without food, entertainment, or sleep. Normally, prayer accompanied fasting among the Israelites. Darius may have prayed too, but the point of this description is that he felt extremely anxious over the welfare of his friend.

5. Daniel's deliverance and his enemies' destruction 6:19-24

6:19-20 Evidently, one night in the lions' den was the minimum sentence the law required, because early the next morning Darius set out to free Daniel—if he had survived. Uncertain about the prophet's fate, the king called to Daniel, whom he could not see, hoping that he might still be alive. Daniel had apparently told Darius previously that he worshipped the living God. Now Darius wanted to know if this God had been able to save His servant from the lions (cf. v. 16; 3:17).

6:21-23 Daniel's voice was untroubled. He even sermonized a bit from his unlikely chapel amid his subdued animal companions. After greeting the king courteously, he explained that his God had sent His angel who had shut the lions' mouths (cf. Heb. 11:33). This may have been the same angel, or the Angel of the Lord, who had visited Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (3:28).

Daniel believed that God had had mercy on him, because he had not sinned against God or against Darius in what he had done. True, he had violated the king's edict, but he had not done anything that really harmed the king. God had rewarded Daniel's trust (v. 23), which Daniel demonstrated by obeying God's will. Darius had Daniel extracted from the den, and undoubtedly marveled that he had sustained no injuries whatsoever (cf. 3:27). Compare the accounts of Peter's and Paul's releases from prison in Acts 12 and 16.

"Daniel's faithfulness got him into trouble (v. 10); his faith got him out of it (see Heb. 11:33)."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷Goldingay, p. 128.

²⁸⁸Keil, p. 216. He cited Ge. Höst, *Fez and Morocco*, p. 77.

²⁸⁹*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1431.

6:24 Then the king applied the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) and cast his friend's accusers into the very den in which they had placed Daniel (cf. Gen. 12:3; Esth. 7:9-10; Gal. 6:7). Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered and crushed them.²⁹⁰

"What Darius did seems arbitrary and unjust. But ancient pagan despots had no regard for the provision in the Mosaic law (Deut 24:16): 'Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.' (Even in Israel this humanitarian rule had been flouted, as when Abimelech ben Gideon had nearly all his father's sons massacred, or when Queen Athaliah nearly exterminated the Davidic royal line and Jehu had all Ahab's sons decapitated.)"²⁹¹

The effects of people's sins touch others beside themselves. The execution of the evildoers' family members seems unfair and cruel, but it reflects the principle of corporate solidarity that was common in the biblical world.²⁹²

6. Darius' decree and praise of Yahweh 6:25-28

6:25-27 This story ends, as previous ones in the book did, with the king praising and promoting Yahweh. This expression of praise, however, surpasses the others (cf. 3:28-29; 4:3, 34-35, 37). Not only did Darius personally praise God, but he ordered his subjects to do the same thing (cf. 3:29; 4:1). It is as though God was giving two witnesses to His people Israel: Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. Both monarchs testified to the living and eternal God's unshakable sovereignty, grace, and power in heaven and on earth (cf. 4:3, 34-35). These testimonies certainly would have encouraged the Israelites to trust Him in spite of the circumstances of the exile.

"Once again, during this time of Israel's helplessness with her survival in doubt, Yahweh of hosts acted redemptively to strengthen his people's faith in him. On the eve of their return to the Land of Promise under the leadership of Zerubbabel, God reassured them that he was still the same as in the days of Moses and was able to take them back to Canaan, where they could establish a new commonwealth in covenant fellowship with him."²⁹³

6:28 The last verse notes that Daniel continued to enjoy success during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus. That is, Daniel continued to enjoy success during the reign of Darius—even the reign of Cyrus—since Darius

²⁹⁰See Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 10:11:6.

²⁹¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 82.

²⁹²See Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*.

²⁹³Archer, "Daniel," p. 83.

was apparently a title for Cyrus. Cyrus' first full year as king of Babylon was 538 B.C., and this is when Daniel's career in government service ended (1:21). This was the same year that Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland. Daniel received the revelations of chapters 10—12 in the third year of Cyrus' reign (10:1), but he was no longer in government service then.

"Although historical and to be accepted in its literal portrayal of an event, it [this chapter] is also parabolic like chapter 3 and is a foreshadowing of the ultimate deliverance of the people of Israel from their persecutors in the time of the great tribulation at the end of the times of the Gentiles. When the power of God is finally demonstrated at the second coming of Christ, the persecutors of Israel and the enemies of God will be judged and destroyed much like the enemies of Daniel. Like Daniel, however, the people of God in persecution must remain true regardless of the cost."²⁹⁴

The first six chapters of Daniel contain his "court tales." Rationalistic critics of the book are quicker to grant them a sixth-century B.C. date of composition than they are the remaining six chapters, which are more explicitly prophetic. Conservative scholars agree that there is ample historical, linguistic, and literary evidence for a sixth-century B.C. date for these chapters.²⁹⁵

"In the first part of his book the writer presents the situations out of which his theology has grown, and the lessons are plain for all to see. But from the very fact that his God is in control of time and circumstances in heaven as well as earth, any experience of His deeds, whenever it may have occurred, is valid for all time and even for eternity (6:26). It is on this firm theological understanding that the revelations of the second part of the book are made."²⁹⁶

F. DANIEL'S VISION OF FUTURE WORLD HISTORY CH. 7

"As interpreted by conservative expositors, the vision of Daniel [in chapter 7] provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament."²⁹⁷

"The vision's setting in the Book of Daniel makes it the book's central hinge. In language [i.e., Aramaic], it belongs with the preceding chapters, while structurally it rounds off a chiasm begun in chap. 2:

²⁹⁴Walvoord, p. 144.

²⁹⁵Baldwin, p. 37; Richard D. Patterson, "Holding on to Daniel's Court Tales," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:4 (December 1993):445-54. See also Longman and Dillard, pp. 391-92, for discussion of the unity of the book.

²⁹⁶Baldwin, p. 135, who divided the book into two parts: chs. 1—6 and 7—12.

²⁹⁷Walvoord, p. 145.

- 2 A vision of four kingdoms and their end (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 3 Faithfulness and a miraculous rescue (the three friends)
- 4 Judgment presaged and experienced (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 5 Judgment presaged and experienced (Belshazzar)
- 6 Faithfulness and a miraculous rescue (Daniel)
- 7 A vision of four kingdoms and their end (Daniel) . . ."298

Goldingay recorded many excellent comparisons and contrasts between chapter 7 and chapters 2—6.²⁹⁹

This is the first of four visions that Daniel recorded in chapters 7—12 (cf. chs. 8; 9; 10—12). In this great chapter, Daniel revealed the consecutive history of four major world empires, concluding with the coming of Jesus Christ from heaven and the establishment of His kingdom—a fifth kingdom (cf. ch. 2). Thus it provides a framework for more detailed revelation of these kingdoms that follows in the Book of Daniel and in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Revelation. Chapter 7 gives more information about the first four kingdoms that Daniel had already revealed in chapter 2 (cf. Pss. 2; 110).

"In chapter 2, the four earthly kingdoms and Christ's heavenly kingdom were seen in their outward political appearance; by contrast, chapter 7 presents God's estimate of their innermost moral and spiritual features.

"In chapter 2, the symbols were taken from inanimate objects; here in chapter 7, they are taken from the animate. In chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar saw the splendor of world empires portrayed in the dazzling statue of a man, while the Kingdom of God was symbolized by a stone. By contrast, in chapter 7, Daniel's vision reveals the animalistic character of world empires and the fact that it is only in the Kingdom of God that man's full dignity is realized—in the Son of Man."³⁰⁰

"Almost all interpreters understand that these two visions are to be interpreted in the same way. . . . These four kingdoms, according to the interpretation commonly received in the church, are the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Macedo-Grecian, and the Roman. 'In this interpretation and opinion,' Luther observes, 'all the world are agreed, and history and fact abundantly establish it.' This opinion prevailed till about the end of the last [seventeenth] century, for the contrary opinion of individual earlier interpreters had found no favour. But from that time, when faith in the supernatural origin and character of biblical prophecy was shaken by Deism and Rationalism, then as a consequence, with the rejection of the genuineness of the book of Daniel the reference of the fourth kingdom to the Roman world-monarchy was also denied."³⁰¹

²⁹⁸Goldingay, pp. 157-58. See J. Paul Tanner, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160:639 (July-September 2003):269-82, who also argued for chapter 7 being the hinge of the book.

²⁹⁹Goldingay, pp. 158-59.

³⁰⁰Feinberg, pp. 83-84. See also Whitcomb, pp. 92-93.

³⁰¹Keil, pp. 245-46. See also pp. 19-57, for defense of the genuineness of the book.

Deists and rationalists, in contrast to supernaturalists, believe that there is no such thing as predictive prophecy. Therefore someone must have written the Book of Daniel after the events recorded happened.

"Critics hold that the real author of Daniel lived in the time of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), and that from the viewpoint of the second century B.C. he looked backward over the preceding four centuries, organized history in a manner which was significant for him, and made this the basis for anticipating a climax to the Maccabean persecution then under way. Accordingly, the pseudo-Daniel considered Antiochus as symbolic of the wickedness of the powers of this world which the author believed were soon to be judged by God, who was to intervene and replace the rule of tyranny under Antiochus by that of the saints of the Most High."³⁰²

These critics believe that the four empires in view in chapters 2 and 7 are not Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, but Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. Rowley and Montgomery are representative commentators who held this opinion. According to them, Rome was not a significant enough power in the world in the second century B.C. to warrant identifying it as the fourth kingdom. However, Jesus Christ spoke of an aspect of the fourth kingdom as still future (Matt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 12:11).

Josephus acknowledged that Daniel wrote about Antiochus Epiphanes and the Roman government before they came to pass.³⁰³ The Book of Revelation, written close to the end of the first century A.D., likewise predicts the fulfillment of aspects of this kingdom in the future (e.g., Rev. 13). Furthermore, Daniel 9:26 predicted the cutting off of Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem, both of which happened in the first century A.D.

Critics support their identification of the empires with two main points. First, references to Darius the Mede in chapter 6 indicate to them that the Median Empire was a significant enough one by itself for the writer to single it out. However, that very chapter states that it was the *joint* kingdom of the Medes and Persians that was then in power (6:8, 12, 15). Second, Greece would have been the dominant world power when pseudo-Daniel wrote in the second century B.C. This argument assumes the critics' hypothesis that someone wrote Daniel in the second century B.C., and reads the text through that grid.

A better approach is to respect the text as it stands, and seek to harmonize it with the rest of Scripture and the facts of history. This leads to the more natural conclusion that Daniel received revelations of the future—from his sixth-century perspective—from God. History has shown that there was one unified Medo-Persian Empire, and that what Daniel wrote about the third and fourth empires, fits Greece and Rome better than it fits Persia and Greece. It also shows that what Daniel predicted of the first three kingdoms, as well as some of what he wrote about the fourth kingdom, has happened. Scripture indicates

³⁰²Walvoord, p. 147.

³⁰³Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 10:11:7.

that some revelation concerning the fourth kingdom, and all the revelation about the fifth kingdom, describes what is still future from our perspective in history.

1. The four beasts 7:1-8

7:1 We have already read of two dreams that Nebuchadnezzar had (2:1; 4:5). Now God gave one to Daniel. It too was a vision from God that came to Daniel as he slept.

"In referring to the experience as 'a dream' (sing.) Daniel was emphasizing the unity of the revelation and in referring to it as 'visions' (pl.) he emphasized the successive stages in which the revelation was given. . . . The dream refers to his being asleep, and the visions refer to what he saw while dreaming."³⁰⁴

This revelation came to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar's reign as co-regent with his father, Nabonidus, namely, in 553 B.C.³⁰⁵ It was fitting that this vision of the downfall of world empires should come to the prophet during the reign of the last king of Babylon. God gave it to him 50 years after the similar revelation of the great image in chapter 2 (cf. Gen. 41:25, 32).

". . . Nebuchadnezzar, the founder of the world-power, saw this power in its imposing greatness and glory [ch. 2]; which Daniel, the prophet of God, saw it in its opposition to God in the form of ravenous beasts of prey [ch. 7]."³⁰⁶

Daniel would have been about 68 years old when he had this dream. Chronologically then we can place this chapter between chapters 4 and 5.

"God does not reveal all His truths at once, even to the wise, but reserves much for age and experience."³⁰⁷

Upon waking, Daniel recorded what he had seen. What follows in this chapter, he wrote, is only a summary of what he saw.

"For the first time in the book, a vision is written down. Earlier OT prophecies were put into writing as a stage in implementing them and, when they were disbelieved, as an evidence that they had been given before the events of

³⁰⁴Pentecost, p. 1350.

³⁰⁵Wood, *A Commentary* . . . , p. 179; Archer, "Daniel," pp. 84-85; Whitcomb, p. 91; Chisholm, p. 304. *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Belshazzar," by D. J. Wiseman, p. 139, claimed the year was 556 B.C.

³⁰⁶Keil, p. 221.

³⁰⁷Baldwin, p. 138.

which they spoke, and thus were indeed words from God (see Isa 8:1, 16; 30:8; Jer 36; Hab 2:2)."³⁰⁸

- 7:2 Daniel referred to himself in the third person in the first six chapters, but in the last six he used the first person. He may have made this change to make his visions more impressive and persuasive to the reader.

Daniel saw "the great sea," probably the Mediterranean (cf. Num. 34:6-7; Josh. 1:4; 9:1; Ezek. 47:10; et al.), stirred up by the four winds (or spirits) of heaven (v. 2; cf. Jer. 23:19; 49:36; Zech. 6:1-6; Rev. 7:1-3; et al.). The "sea" in Scripture and in ancient Near Eastern thinking represented the unorganized mass of humanity, the populace of the earth (v. 17; cf. Isa. 8:6-8; 17:12-13; 57:20; 60:5; Jer. 6:23; 46:7-8; 47:2; Matt. 13:47; Luke 21:25; Rev. 13:1; 17:1, 15; 21:1; et al.). The Mediterranean world seems to be particularly in view, since the sea was the Mediterranean Sea. The "wind" represents God's power expressed in judgment, using heavenly and earthly forces from all directions, to influence the nations as He wills (cf. Rev. 7:1; 9:14-15).³⁰⁹

"God often used the wind as a means to attain His ends (Gen 8:1; Ex 10:13-19; 14:21; 15:10; Num 11:31; I Ki 18:45; 19:11). . . . Of more than 120 references in the Bible to wind (more than 90 in the O.T. and about 30 in the N.T.), well over half are related to events and ideas which reflect the sovereignty and power of God. In Daniel, wind is uniformly used to represent the sovereign power of God, which is the viewpoint of the book."³¹⁰

- 7:3 The four beasts arising out of the sea represent four kings (v. 17). They personify the nations over which they rule, as becomes clear in the following revelation. They are anomalies, as are the other characters presented, and their abnormalities have significance.

"The monarchy vision of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 2) covers the same order of fulfillment as Daniel's beast vision, but with this difference: Nebuchadnezzar saw the imposing outward power and splendor of 'the times of the Gentiles' (Lk. 21:24; cp. Rev. 16:19 . . .), whereas Daniel saw the true character of Gentile world government as rapacious and warlike, established and maintained by force. It is remarkable that the heraldic insignia of the Gentile nations are all beasts or birds of prey."³¹¹

³⁰⁸Goldingay, p. 184.

³⁰⁹Cf. Keil, pp. 222-23.

³¹⁰Walvoord, p. 152. Cf. Gen. 1:2.

³¹¹*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 907.

7:4 The first beast looked like "a lion," but it also had "wings like (of) an eagle." It was common in ancient Near Eastern art to combine notable features of various animals into one composite animal figure to stress outstanding features in a symbol. Often animals represented nations, as they still do (cf. the eagle as a symbol of America, the bear for Russia, the dragon for China, etc.). Other biblical writers had compared Nebuchadnezzar to a lion and an eagle (cf. Jer. 4:7; 49:19; 50:17, 44; 49:22; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 17:3, 12; Hab. 1:8). As Daniel watched, something plucked this beast's wings off, made it stand on two feet like a man, and gave it a human mind or nature.

Many nations have used the lion as a symbol of royal power because it is the traditional king of beasts (cf. 1 Kings 10:20; 2 Chron. 9:19). Similarly the eagle has long represented the king of birds (cf. Ezek. 17:3, 7). Almost all interpreters, conservative and critical, believe this lion represents Neo-Babylonia. Huge winged lions guarded the gates of the royal Babylonian palaces.³¹² Babylon used both the lion and the eagle as national emblems (cf. Jer. 4:7, 13; Ezek. 17:3). The cropping of the lion's wings may allude to the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 4),³¹³ or perhaps to the deterioration of his kingdom after his death.³¹⁴ After Nebuchadnezzar's humbling by God, he became more humane.³¹⁵

7:5 The second beast resembled a bear. The Old Testament writers spoke of the bear as the most formidable beast of prey in Palestine after the lion (cf. 1 Sam. 17:34; Amos 5:19; cf. 2 Kings 2:24; Hos. 13:8).³¹⁶ The bear that Daniel saw appeared stronger on one side than the other. This probably reflects the superior strength of the Persian part of the Medo-Persian Empire (cf. 8:3, 20).

The three ribs in the bear's teeth probably stand for three nations or three parts of one nation that Medo-Persia had devoured, was devouring, or would devour. When Daniel saw this vision, Medo-Persia had not yet overthrown Babylonia, so perhaps these were nations of less prominence that it had conquered. Some scholars believe the ribs refer to the Babylonian, Lydian, and Egyptian Empires, all of which Medo-Persia conquered eventually.³¹⁷ Others suggest that they may refer to Media, Persia, and Babylon, the three major components of the Medo-Persian Empire.³¹⁸

³¹²Walvoord, p. 153.

³¹³Leupold, pp. 289-90; Archer, "Daniel," p. 85.

³¹⁴Feinberg, p. 86. Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 713, believed Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 4) and Belshazzar (ch. 5) are in view.

³¹⁵For additional study of prophecies about Babylon, see John F. Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy*, pp. 61-69.

³¹⁶See Driver, p. 82.

³¹⁷Keil, p. 226; Young, p. 145; McGee, 3:570; Archer, "Daniel," p. 86; Whitcomb, p. 95; Wiersbe, p. 282; *The Nelson . . .*, p. 1431.

³¹⁸E.g., Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 156.

Daniel heard voices (angelic?) encouraging the bear to devour much meat. This probably indicates that it would yet subdue many nations. Medo-Persia ruled for 208 years before Alexander the Great toppled it in 331 B.C., and its geographic extent was far-reaching. Leadership in the ancient Near East passed from Assyria to Babylon in 612 B.C., from Babylon to Medo-Persia in 539 B.C., and from Medo-Persia to Greece in 331 B.C.

"... when the book of Daniel was showed him [Alexander], wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended . . ." ³¹⁹

7:6 Most conservative Bible students have identified the third kingdom with Greece, because Greece overthrew Medo-Persia ("dominion was given to it"), and it bore the characteristics of the animal described here. Leopards (or panthers³²⁰) are less majestic and ponderous than lions and bears. Their outstanding characteristics are their speed, strength, and cunning (cf. Jer. 5:6; Hos. 13:7; Hab. 1:8). The four wings on this leopard's back made it even faster.

"With the swiftness of a leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India [334-331 B.C.]. The lightning character of his conquests is without precedent in the ancient world, and this is fully in keeping with the image of speed embodied in the leopard itself and the four wings on its back." ³²¹

Apparently each wing had some connection with each of this animal's four heads. Heads suggest intelligent direction. Greece had four governmental divisions with one person heading each division. Following Greece's defeat at Ipsus, in Phrygia, in 301 B.C., the Grecian Empire irretrievably divided into four parts under Alexander's four generals.

There is some question about who these four men were. Jerome and Calvin believed they were Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigonus.³²² Josephus wrote that there were five men: Antigonus (Asia), Seleucus (Babylon), Lysimachus (the Hellespont), Cassander (Macedonia), and Ptolemy (Egypt).³²³ Most modern commentators think they were Lysimachus (who ruled Thrace and Bithynia), Cassander (Macedonia and

³¹⁹Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 11:8:5.

³²⁰Young, p. 145-46.

³²¹Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 157. See also Finegan, *Light from . . .*, p. 244.

³²²Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 75; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 2:18-19.

³²³Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:1:1.

Greece), Seleucus (Syria, Babylonia, and the eastern territories), and Ptolemy (Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia Petrea).³²⁴

Each of these successors ruled one of the geographical segments of Alexander's empire: Greece, Western Asia, Egypt, and Persia. The exact identification of the rulers is debatable because it took about 20 years for the kingdom to be successfully divided. Still there is no question that Greece split into four major parts after Alexander died (cf. 8:8, 22).

A third conservative view, which I do not think is as strong, is that the four wings and heads represent the four corners of the earth.³²⁵ Archer wrote the following in response to the critical claim that the third beast represents Persia.

". . . there is no way in which a quadripartite character can be made out for the Persian Empire either under Cyrus or under any of his successors."³²⁶

7:7

Most conservative scholars believe that the fourth beast represents the Roman Empire, but critical scholars interpret it as referring to Greece. Walvoord called the identification of the fourth beast in chapter 7 "the crucial issue in the interpretation of the entire book of Daniel."³²⁷

In contrast to Greece, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire was slow. It began in 241 B.C. with the occupation of Sicily. Gradually it expanded throughout the whole Mediterranean world: western Europe including Britain, Gaul, and Spain; and western Asia as far east as the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. It formally ended in the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 410 when the Visigoths sacked Rome. However, its governmental influence persisted as late as A.D. 1453, when the last Roman ruler died in battle in Constantinople.³²⁸

Daniel did not compare the fourth beast that he saw to any known animal. It was unique. It was dreadful, terrifying, and extremely strong. Its large iron teeth chewed up what it attacked, and its feet crushed and trampled everything left by the former beasts.

". . . the Roman empire was ruthless in its destruction of civilizations and peoples, killing captives by the thousands

³²⁴E.g., Keil, p. 293; Feinberg, pp. 87-88; and Whitcomb, p. 95. Cf. Finegan, *Light from . . .*, pp. 244-46.

³²⁵Young, p. 146.

³²⁶Archer, "Daniel," p. 86. For additional responses to the critics' view, see Leupold, p. 287, or Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, pp. 158-59.

³²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 159.

³²⁸For a brief history of Rome, see *idem*, *The Nations . . .*, pp. 83-87. For a longer one, see C. E. Van Sickle, *A Political and Cultural History of the Ancient World*, vol. 2. The standard and most exhaustive ancient history is the 12-volume *Cambridge Ancient History*, edited by Bury, Cook, and Adcock.

and selling them into slavery by the hundreds of thousands."³²⁹

"Rome had no interest in raising the conquered nations to any high level of development. All her designs were imperial; let the nations be crushed and stamped underfoot."³³⁰

The identification of the 10 horns of this beast is more difficult. There is some obvious similarity between these 10 horns and the (10, by inference) toes of the image in chapter 2. They apparently represent 10 contemporaneous rulers (v. 17). Horns pictured strength and rulers in ancient Near Eastern iconography, yet scholars have not been able to agree on the identification of 10 outstanding rulers of the Roman Empire who ruled simultaneously.

There are two basic views about the identity of the 10 horns. First, some scholars spiritualize the number 10 as well as the number three (v. 8). That is, they do not take them literally. Almost all interpreters in this camp are amillennial. "Amillennial" refers to the belief that Jesus Christ will not reign on the earth for one thousand years in any literal sense.

Of these interpreters, some believe these numbers, 10 and three, refer to past rulers even though we cannot identify them. Young took the number 10 as figuratively indicating completeness.³³¹ Others believe these 10 refer to future rulers who will appear at the second coming of Jesus Christ.³³² Still others believe the number refers generally to those who will reign with Christ in the future in heaven.

Second, some scholars believe we should take the numbers 10 and three literally, since that is how we take most other numbers in the book.³³³ There is no clue in the text that we should interpret these numbers non-literally. This more consistent method of interpretation is what characterizes premillennialism. Premillennialists believe that prophecy, if interpreted literally, teaches that Jesus Christ will rule on the earth for 1,000 years following His Second Coming.

Even amillennialists acknowledge that if one interprets prophecy consistently literally, he or she will come out a premillennialist. They do not do so, however, because they believe that such a literal interpretation yields fanciful results. Consequently, they argue, we should adopt a

³²⁹Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 161.

³³⁰Leupold, pp. 297-98.

³³¹Young, pp. 148-50.

³³²Leupold, p. 308.

³³³E.g., Walvoord, Archer, Pentecost, Wood, Feinberg, Campbell, Ironside, and Culver.

different hermeneutic (method of interpretation) when reading prophecy, namely, a less literal one.

Most premillenarians believe that the 10 horns describe 10 rulers who will arise in the future and reign simultaneously. This seems unlikely to many, since the Roman Empire is no longer in existence—at least in the form that existed in ancient times. However, there seem to be indications in Daniel and elsewhere in the Bible, which I will point out later, that God will reshape or revive the Roman Empire in the future. It may not be called "the Roman Empire," but it will have connections to the old Roman Empire. Darby referred to it as "Europe."³³⁴

- 7:8 Daniel noticed an eleventh horn arising among the 10, which displaced three of the 10 horns. This horn had human eyes, probably symbolic of intelligence, and a mouth that spoke boastfully (cf. vv. 11, 20, 25). Another view is that the mention of "eyes like the eyes of a man" indicates that he was only human.³³⁵ This is evidently Antichrist (cf. Isa. 27:1; Matt. 24:5, 15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18; 4:3; Rev. 13; 17; 19).

Daniel saw a different "little horn" in another, later vision that he reported witnessing (8:9-11). However, the differences between these two little horns argue for their being different rulers, as my comments on 8:9-11 will show. Rulers represent the nations that they lead, as well as the rulers themselves (cf. vv. 17, 23).

2. The Ancient of Days and the destruction of the fourth beast 7:9-12

- 7:9 In some English versions, this verse and some that follow (vv. 10, 13-14) are in poetic form. This indicates a difference in the original language (Aramaic), which sets these verses off as distinct and more elevated in literary style, in the opinion of the translators. From what Daniel recorded, it seems clear that now he saw something happening in the courts of heaven. He saw thrones set up. The AV translation "thrones were cast down" is inaccurate.

The Apostle John later saw thrones in heaven, too (Rev. 1:4; 4:4; 20:4; et al.). The "Ancient of Days" seems to refer to God the Father (cf. vv. 13, 22; Isa. 43:13; 57:15), whereas in 7:13, God the Son is in view. Gaebelien took "the Ancient of Days" as a reference to Jesus Christ here (cf. John 5:22; Rev. 1:12-14), but this seems less likely (cf. v. 13).³³⁶ Daniel then saw God take His seat on His heavenly throne.

³³⁴D[arby], p. 38.

³³⁵Keil, p. 229.

³³⁶Gaebelien, p. 77.

The title "Ancient of Days" stresses God's eternity. His pure white clothing pictures His purity and holiness, and His pure woolly hair suggests His mature judgment. Daniel saw His throne blazing with fire (lit. a burning flame), symbolic of knowledge, purity, and judgment in Scripture (cf. Exod. 3:2; Deut. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 12:29; Rev. 1:14-15). The wheels probably imply that the throne and God can go in any direction, that He can do anything He pleases (cf. Ezek. 1:13-21).³³⁷

- 7:10 A river of fire was flowing out from before the throne of God the Father, probably symbolizing judgment proceeding from Him. Those attending Him were evidently angels (cf. Deut. 33:2). The court (cf. v. 26) seems to be a heavenly venue in which God renders judgment on rulers and their nations based on their deeds (Job 1—2; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16; Rev. 20:12; cf. Matt. 25:31-46).
- 7:11 The return to prose language signals the shift in Daniel's observation from heaven to earth, and the content of the revelation confirms this change. The boastful words of "the horn" (v. 8) kept attracting Daniel's attention. God passed judgment on the fourth beast and destroyed it along with all its horns (cf. Luke 21: 24-27; Rev. 19:20). Similarly, the stone cut out without hands crushed the toes of the image in chapter 2—suddenly and violently.
- 7:12 The end of the prior three empires contrasts with the end of this fourth one. God took away the dominion of each of the earlier three kingdoms one by one, but they continued to exist, as realms of the kingdom that overcame them, for some time. However, God will cut off the fourth empire completely, and it will continue no longer (v. 11). Thus the end of the fourth kingdom will result in a totally new condition on the earth: Messiah's thousand-year reign (cf. Rev. 19:19—20:6).

3. The Son of Man's kingdom 7:13-14

- 7:13 Daniel again saw something happening in heaven (cf. Rev. 5:1-10). One "like a Son of Man" was brought before the Ancient of Days. The angelic attendants in heaven's court probably ushered Him forward. This description glorifies the Ancient of Days, who then proceeded to give this Person authority to rule on earth (cf. Ps. 2:6; 110:1-2). The "One like a Son of Man" has similarities with human beings, as the title "son of man" implies. However, He comes with clouds of heaven, which elsewhere in Scripture describes how God has come to earth (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 19:9, 16; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ps. 18:10; Isa. 19:1; Jer. 4:13; Ezek. 10:4; et al.). Thus, this "One like a Son of Man" appears to be a "God-man" (cf. Phil. 2:6-7).

³³⁷For similar descriptions of the Canaanite pantheon in Canaanite myth, see John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, p. 106.

The majority of both Jewish and Christian interpreters have understood this figure to be the Messiah.³³⁸ The fact that this figure refers to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, becomes clear later in the Gospels where Jesus used the title "Son of Man" more frequently of Himself than any other (cf. Mark 8:31; John 1:51; et al.). Other passages also describe Jesus Christ as coming in the clouds in the future (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Acts. 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7).

Because Jesus commonly used the title "Son of Man" to describe Himself, this is the most frequently quoted verse from Daniel in the New Testament. It is very significant that Jesus used this title above all others when describing Himself, some 31 times in Matthew alone.

"Although Messiah had already been named as God's 'Son' in previous prophetic utterances (cf. [2 Sam. 7:14;] Ps. 2:7, 12; Prov. 30:4), He is now given a name that emphasizes His true and total identification with mankind."³³⁹

Jesus' contemporaries used the title "Messiah" to describe a merely human leader who they believed would provide military liberation from their Roman oppressors. This limited understanding of Messiah's role made that title undesirable from Jesus' viewpoint, so He did not normally refer to himself as the Messiah. The title "Son of Man" should have taken Jesus' hearers back to Daniel 7:13, where clearly a God-man is in view.

Many of Jesus' contemporaries were willing to trust Him as their *Messiah*, but few were willing to acknowledge Him as the divine "Son of Man" (cf. Matt. 16:16; John 6:69). Jesus wanted them to believe that He was God—as well as man—and so preferred the title "Son of Man." This title was also the one by which God normally referred to the prophet Ezekiel. But Ezekiel was obviously not the Son of Man predicted here. This title, when used of Ezekiel, stressed his humanity in contrast to more glorious beings, especially God.

"It is no exaggeration to say that no other concept in the Old Testament, not even the Servant of the Lord, has elicited a more prolific literature. Of all the figures used in the Old Testament to designate the coming deliverer; king, priest, branch, servant, seed—none is more profound than 'Son of man'. Here there is a vision of man as he was intended to be, perfectly embodying all his potential in obedience to his Creator."³⁴⁰

³³⁸See Keil, p. 234. See the commentaries for refutations of the views that this "son of man" was an angel, or the Israelites, or just a normal man.

³³⁹Whitcomb, p. 99.

³⁴⁰Baldwin, p. 154.

"Thus the coming Messiah would not only be the true David, but He would also be the true Son of man, combining in His person the high calling of humanity and the position reserved alone for God."³⁴¹

7:14 Now this Son of Man became the prominent Person in the vision. He received dominion and glory and a kingdom from the Ancient of Days.

"This refers, not to his inherent sovereignty over the universe as God the Son (as consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit), but to his appointment as absolute Lord and Judge by virtue of his atoning ministry as God incarnate—the one who achieved a sinless life (Isa 53:9), paid the price for man's redemption (Isa 53:5-6), and was vindicated by his bodily resurrection as Judge of the entire human race (Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16)."³⁴²

God's intention in giving the Son of Man this authority (cf. Matt. 28:18) was that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. He was to have global rule over everyone. Furthermore His kingdom would last forever in contrast to the preceding four kingdoms. Succeeding kingdoms destroyed preceding kingdoms, but no kingdom will ever destroy His kingdom (cf. Ps. 2:6-9; 72:11; Isa. 11; Rev. 19:15-16; 20:1-6). This is a fifth kingdom, corresponding to the stone cut out without hands in chapter 2, that destroys the fourth kingdom and all preceding kingdoms.

Did Jesus' coming to the earth in the first century destroy the Roman Empire? We could only say yes if we interpreted the destruction of the fourth kingdom in a non-literal way. I choose not to do this because the destruction of the previous kingdoms was literal. It seems that we should also expect that the destruction of the fourth kingdom by the fifth kingdom will be literal. Therefore the second coming of Christ must be the initiation of the fifth kingdom and the final destruction of the fourth kingdom. If this is so, then the prophetic picture that Daniel saw did not include the present age in which we live (cf. Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19). This conclusion has seemed reasonable to some amillenarians as well as to premillenarians.³⁴³

4. The interpretation of the four beasts 7:15-18

7:15-16 Even though Daniel understood all kinds of visions and dreams (1:17), much of what he had just seen baffled and alarmed him (cf. 7:28). He now saw himself participating in the events of his vision. He evidently addressed his question to an angel (cf. 8:16; 9:21). The fourth beast, and particularly the little horn, were the parts of the vision that he could not understand and most interested him.

³⁴¹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 246.

³⁴²Archer, "Daniel," p. 91.

³⁴³See Leupold, pp. 313-14.

7:17 The interpreter gave Daniel a general answer to his question. He stressed that each of the four beasts represented a king (or kingdom, cf. v. 23). They arose from the earth's population, which is what the sea symbolized (v. 2; cf. Isa. 17:12-13; 57:20-21; Jer. 46:7-8).

"The 'four kings' obviously refer to four kingdoms, as the beasts represent both a king and a kingdom."³⁴⁴

7:18 The "saints of the Highest One" (vv. 22, 25, 27) probably refer to believers of all ages (v. 27).³⁴⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost wrote that they are believing Jews alive when Christ returns, "not believers of the Church age," since God did not reveal the church's existence in the Old Testament.³⁴⁶ They "will receive the (fifth) kingdom" and will "possess the kingdom forever."

Believers will have a share in the Son of Man's everlasting kingdom after He establishes it. This will involve reigning with Christ (cf. Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). This kingdom will begin with the return of Christ to the earth, continue for one thousand years on the earth, and then continue in the new heavens and new earth forever. This scenario corrects the objection of some that this kingdom cannot be millennial since the angel said it would last forever.³⁴⁷

"The reason for emphasizing the participation of God's people in the final kingdom seems to be that it is a literal, earthly kingdom, replacing the previous empires of men, rather than a spiritual domain, a sort of ideal kingdom of God consisting only of the Lord himself."³⁴⁸

5. Daniel's request for interpretation of the fourth beast 7:19-22

Daniel repeated the descriptions of the fourth beast and the little horn, and in doing so mentioned four previously unrevealed details about them. The beast had claws of bronze, stressing its fierce nature (v. 19). The little horn was more prominent than the other horns, accounting for its ability to rise in the place of three other horns (v. 20). The little horn waged war with the saints and overcame them, which explains one reason for God's final judgment of him (v. 21; cf. Rev. 11:7; 12:13-17; 13:7; 17:17). Daniel seems to have had particular concern about the fate of the saints whom the little horn overpowered. Finally, God passed judgment in favor of His saints, further indicating the importance of the saints in God's actions. "Ancient of Days" and "Highest One" appear to be two titles of God the Father, stressing His eternity and sovereignty, respectively.

³⁴⁴Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 172.

³⁴⁵Ibid.; Campbell, p. 85.

³⁴⁶Pentecost, p. 1352.

³⁴⁷E.g., Young, p. 157.

³⁴⁸Archer, "Daniel," p. 93.

6. The interpretation of the fourth beast 7:23-25

7:23 The interpreting angel now granted the prophet more insight about the fourth beast and particularly about the little horn. Here the dual identification of the beasts with kings and kingdoms becomes transparent. The fourth beast does not only represent a king (v. 17), but also a kingdom. The angel repeated the facts already revealed (v. 7), but clarified that the previous description referred to a kingdom.

The phrase "whole earth" does not necessarily mean the whole planet (cf. Luke 2:1). The Old Testament generally uses this term to refer "to the entire territory of the Near and Middle East that in any way relates to the Holy Land."³⁴⁹ Another view is that a "one-world government under a worldwide dictator" is in view.³⁵⁰ Later revelation seems to support the second view (Rev. 13).

7:24-25 One difference between the description of the little horn here and earlier (v. 8), is that here the little horn is a king, not a kingdom. Another is that he will be different from the previous 10 kings (cf. Rev. 13:1; 17:12). This eleventh king's boastful words will be against the Most High and His saints (v. 25). He will wear down the saints, evidently by persecution (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8-9; Rev. 12:13-17; 13:1-10, 16-17). He will also desire to make changes in times (the calendar?) and in law. Archer recorded an interesting account of an unsuccessful attempt during the French Revolution to replace the Christian (Gregorian) calendar with a Revolutionary calendar.³⁵¹

Someone, obviously the sovereign God, will allow this ruler to have his way for "a time, times, and half a time" ("they will be given into his [boastful king's] hand"; i.e., given by Someone, cf. 12:7). Even some liberal interpreters concede that this is a period of three and one-half years (cf. 4:16; Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6; 13:5).³⁵² Young took it to stand for a period of testing and judgment in a metaphorical sense without specifying its length.³⁵³ This three and one-half year period evidently refers to the last three and one-half years before the little horn's destruction and the return of Jesus Christ. This corresponds to the "Great Tribulation," the phrase Jesus used to describe the last half (three and one-half years) of the seven-year Tribulation (Matt. 24:21).

"When the hordes from the north conquered the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., they did not unite to form another empire. Instead individual nations emerged out of

³⁴⁹Ibid.

³⁵⁰Pentecost, p. 1354.

³⁵¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 94.

³⁵²E.g., Montgomery, p. 312.

³⁵³Young, p. 162. See also Keil, pp. 242-43.

the old Roman Empire. Some of those nations and others stemming from them have continued till the present day. The present Age, then, is the 10-horned era of the fourth beast. (Other premillenarians [as well as some amillenarians³⁵⁴], however, hold that the time of the 10 horns is yet future, that the present Church Age is not seen in this vision, and that 10 kings will coexist over a future revived [or evolved] Roman Empire.)"³⁵⁵

"The ten-nation confederacy of the future anticipated in these prophecies would naturally be considered a revival of the Roman Empire if for no other reason than that it is portrayed as an integral part of the fourth empire."³⁵⁶

"Our Lord ministered on earth three and a half years, and the Antichrist shall enact his Satanic ministry for the same length of time."³⁵⁷

Young also believed a literal Antichrist is in view in this passage.³⁵⁸

7. The end of the fourth beast and the beginning of the everlasting kingdom 7:26-28

7:26 The angel continued to explain that the heavenly court (v. 10) would pass judgment on the little horn, and God will remove his dominion and destroy it forever (v. 11; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).

7:27 The fifth kingdom, under the Son of Man's leadership (v. 14), will then commence. This fact argues for the normative dispensational interpretation, which understands the kingdom of God on earth as beginning with Christ's second coming, rather than with His first coming (cf. 2:44). The angel again stressed the role that the saints will have in this kingdom.

The phrase "the people of the saints of the Holy One" (NASB) is unusual. This may indicate a particular group of the saints (believers), probably the Jews who, according to other Scripture, will be God's focus of blessing during His earthly kingdom. However, the rendering "the saints, [namely,] the people of the Most High" (NIV) is a good translation. In this case it is the saints generally who are in view, not a special group of them.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴E.g., *ibid.*, p. 268.

³⁵⁵Pentecost, p. 1354.

³⁵⁶John F. Walvoord, "Revival of Rome," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126:504 (October-December 1969):317-28.

³⁵⁷Joseph A. Seiss, *Voices from Babylon: Or the Records of Daniel the Prophet*, p. 311.

³⁵⁸Young, p. 163.

³⁵⁹Cf. Barker, pp. 139-43.

The Son of Man's kingdom will be endless and worldwide.³⁶⁰ Notice that the titles "Highest One" (God the Father) and "His [the Son of Man's]" are interchangeable, pointing to the deity of the Son of Man. This verse also clarifies that the saints are not the same as the Son of Man, "saints" being plural and "His" and "Him" singular. The kingdom is not just the rule of the saints; it is the rule of the Son of Man in which the saints participate.

"It is not difficult to see that Daniel more than almost any other author is concerned with the kingdom theme."³⁶¹

7:28 Daniel indicated the end of the vision, and added that what he had seen and heard alarmed and terrified him. His pale face evidently resulted from his fear, as he contemplated the severe trials and persecutions awaiting his people. He originally kept this revelation to himself, perhaps because he realized that it might prove explosive if he announced it immediately.

There appear to be two specific sets of prophecies of the future in chapter 7, in addition to what would happen within Daniel's lifetime. First, there are prophecies that deal with coming world empires that appeared (to Daniel) as regular nations. Then there are the predictions about the end of the fourth kingdom and the beginning of the fifth kingdom, which are still future events from our standpoint in history. The gap between these times was undoubtedly unclear to Daniel (cf. Isa. 61:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:10-11).

Culver summarized the evidence for the premillennial understanding of chapter 7 as follows.

"(1) Messiah's kingdom follows Antichrist's appearance (here described in personal rather than institutional terms), and destruction. The person has not yet appeared. This appears to make post- and a-millennial schemes identifying the Church with the Kingdom unfeasible. (2) The kingdom of Messiah here follows the Gentile kingdoms; it is at no time contemporary with them. It must, therefore, be still future. (3) The kingdom of Christ succeeds a final form of Gentile dominion which has not yet appeared. (4) The Messianic kingdom is external in aspect here, not a kingdom in men's hearts, as Church-Kingdom theology require. (5) This kingdom is in some sense Israelitish (cf. vv. 7, 22, 25, 27 with 8:24). The 'saints' or holy people referred to here are Israel and no other. The Church is not a Jewish kingdom."³⁶²

³⁶⁰See McClain, ch. 17: "The Government in the Kingdom of Old Testament Prophecy," pp. 206-16.

³⁶¹Merrill, "Daniel as . . .," p. 225.

³⁶²Culver, "Daniel," p. 791.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN DANIEL 2 & 7	
Chapter 2	Chapter 7
Nebuchadnezzar's image	The four beasts
Given to Nebuchadnezzar	Given to Daniel
4 kingdoms + 1 in view	4 kingdoms + 1 in view
A 4-part image + a stone	4 beasts + the Son of Man
More general	More detailed
Daniel interpreted it.	An angel interpreted it.
Man's viewpoint	God's viewpoint

III. ISRAEL IN RELATION TO THE GENTILES: GOD'S PROGRAM FOR ISRAEL CHS. 8—12

Two things signal the beginning of a new section in the book here. These two things are: a return to the Hebrew language in the original text (cf. 1:1—2:3), and an emphasis on the nation Israel. Evidently Daniel wrote the remainder of this book in Hebrew because the revelation in it concerned his people particularly. The Book of Revelation, though written in only one language originally, reveals a similar structure. After an introduction (Rev. 1—3; cf. Dan. 1), a section dealing with worldwide judgments follows (Rev. 4—11; cf. Dan. 2—7). Then the prophecies deal more specifically with Israel (Rev. 12—20; cf. Dan. 8—12).

A. DANIEL'S VISION OF THE RAM AND THE GOAT CH. 8

Chapter 7 recorded the general history of "the times of the Gentiles," from the time Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews into captivity until the Son of Man's return to the earth. Chapter 8 reveals more detail about the second (Persian) and third (Greek) kingdoms, and especially how they relate to Israel.

"Chap. 8 is the last of the book's symbolic visions; the succeeding revelations are more verbal than visual and still cryptic but not symbolic."³⁶³

1. The setting of the vision 8:1

The third year of Belshazzar was about 551 B.C., two years after the vision in chapter 7 and about 12 years before the events of chapter 5. Daniel was then living within the kingdom of Neo-Babylonia, the first beast of chapter 7. Apparently this was not a dream combined with a vision (7:1), but just a vision. Probably it came to Daniel during the daytime. The vision that appeared to Daniel previously refers to the one in chapter 7.

³⁶³Goldingay, p. 208.

2. The ram 8:2-4

8:2 Evidently Daniel was in Babylon when he had this vision, but what he saw, including himself, was in "Susa" (Shushan, AV; cf. Ezek. 8:3; 40:1).³⁶⁴ Some commentators, however, believe that he was physically present in Susa. Daniel probably knew where he was in his vision because he had visited Susa. It is reasonable to assume that a man in Daniel's position in the Neo-Babylonian government would have visited Susa previously. Susa stood about 200 miles east of Babylon and approximately 150 miles due north of the top of the Persian Gulf. Archaeologists discovered the Code of Hammurabi there in 1901.³⁶⁵ The site of Susa is in modern Iran, whereas the site of Babylon is in modern Iraq.

"Elam" was the name of the province where Susa stood when Daniel wrote this book, not necessarily when he had this vision. When Medo-Persia overthrew Neo-Babylonia, Susa became the capital of the Persian Empire. Eighty years after Daniel had this vision, Susa became Esther's home. One hundred seven years later, it was the city from which Nehemiah departed to return to Palestine (Esth. 1:2; Neh. 1:1). The "citadel" was the palace, that housed the royal residence, and it had strong fortifications.

"The Ulai [Canal] can best be identified with an artificial canal which connected the rivers Choastes [or Choaspes, modern Kerkha] and Coprates [modern Abdizful] and ran close by Susa."³⁶⁶

8:3 The "ram" (male sheep) that Daniel saw standing before the canal represented Medo-Persia (v. 20). It corresponds to the lopsided bear in the chapter 7 vision (7:5). The two horns, representing power, symbolized Media and Persia, the two kingdoms that formed an alliance to create Medo-Persia. The longer horn stood for Persia, which had become more powerful in the alliance and had risen to displace Media in leadership after the two nations merged.³⁶⁷

The ram was an especially important symbol for the Persians. The guardian spirit of the Persian Empire was portrayed as a ram. When the Persian king went into battle, he carried the head of a ram.³⁶⁸ Also, in the ancient world, different zodiac signs represented various nations. Aries, the ram, stood for Persia, and Capricorn (Latin *caper*, goat, and *cornu*, horn) was Greece.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁴Montgomery, pp. 325-26.

³⁶⁵See *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Shushan," by Merrill F. Unger, pp. 1022-23.

³⁶⁶Montgomery, p. 327.

³⁶⁷See Walvoord, *The Nations . . .*, pp. 70-71, for a brief history of Medo-Persia, or Siegfried J. Schwantes, *A Short History of the Ancient Near East*, pp. 140-51.

³⁶⁸Keil, p. 290.

³⁶⁹F. Cumont, "La Plus Ancienne geographie astrologique," *Klio* 9 (1909):263-73.

8:4 Historically, the Medo-Persian Empire pushed its borders primarily in three directions. It went westward (into Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedonia), northward (toward the Caspian Mountains, the Oxus Valley, and Scythia), and southward (toward Babylonia, Palestine, and Egypt). Compare the three ribs in the mouth of the bear (7:5). These advances happened mainly under the leadership of Cyrus and Cambyses.³⁷⁰ Indeed, Medo-Persia had its own way for many years, and glorified itself.

"There is nothing inherently wrong about 'doing great things' . . .; but the expression is only used in an unequivocally good sense of God (1 Sam 12:24; Ps 126:2, 3); of human beings it tends to suggest arrogance (Jer 48:26; Joel 2:20; Zeph 2:10; Ps 35:26; Ps 55:13 [12]), or at least achievement at someone else's expense (Zeph 2:8; Lam 1:9)—here achievement that presages calamity. The expression has the foreboding ambiguity of the mouth speaking great things in 7:8, 20."³⁷¹

3. The goat 8:5-8

8:5 The text also identifies the male goat—goats are relatives of sheep—in this vision as representing Greece (v. 21). History has confirmed the identification. Alexander the Great is clearly the conspicuous horn. Normally goats have two horns, so this goat was unusual. Under Alexander, the Greek armies advanced quickly from the west against Persia.

"Alexander's conquest of the entire Near and Middle East within three years stands unique in military history and is appropriately portrayed by the lightning speed of this one-horned goat. Despite the immense numerical superiority of the Persian imperial forces and their possession of military equipment like war elephants, the tactical genius of young Alexander, with his disciplined Macedonian phalanx, proved decisive."³⁷²

8:6-7 Due to previous attacks by the Persians, the Greeks retaliated against these enemies with unusual vengeance. Alexander won two significant battles in Asia Minor in 334 B.C. and in 333, first at the Granicus River and then at Issus in Phrygia. Alexander finally subdued Persia with a victory at Gaugamela near Nineveh in 331 B.C.³⁷³

³⁷⁰Driver, p. 113.

³⁷¹Goldingay, p. 209.

³⁷²Archer, "Daniel," p. 97.

³⁷³Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 183. See the map in the introduction to these notes for locations.

8:8 Clearly this description corresponds to that of the third beast in 7:6. Alexander magnified himself exceedingly in two ways. He extended the borders of his empire after he conquered Medo-Persia even farther east, into modern Afghanistan and to the Indus Valley. Alexander's empire covered one and a half million square miles.³⁷⁴ He also became extremely arrogant. He regarded himself as divine and made his soldiers bow down before him. This resulted in his troops revolting.³⁷⁵

"Expositors, both liberal and conservative, have interpreted this verse as representing the untimely death of Alexander and the division of his empire into four major sections. Alexander, who had conquered more of the world than any previous ruler, was not able to conquer himself. Partly due to a strenuous exertion, his dissipated life, and a raging fever, Alexander died in a drunken debauch at Babylon, not yet thirty-three years of age. His death left a great conquest without an effective single leader, and it took about twenty years for the empire to be successfully divided."³⁷⁶

It is interesting that alcohol played a significant role in the fall of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greco-Macedonia. Alcohol is still a major problem today.³⁷⁷

As mentioned in my comments on 7:6, the most probable identifications of the four horns are Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy (cf. 11:4).³⁷⁸ Lysimachus ruled the northern part of Alexander's empire, Cassander the western part, Seleucus the eastern part, and Ptolemy the southern part.

4. The little horn on the goat 8:9-14

8:9 Daniel next saw a rather small horn (king, v. 23) grow out of one of the four horns (kingdoms, v. 22) that had replaced the single horn (the first king, Alexander, v. 21) on the goat (Greece, v. 21). This horn is quite clearly different from the little horn that came up among the 10 horns on the fourth beast in the previous vision (cf. 7:8, 11, 24-26).

". . . the little horn arising from the third kingdom serves as a prototype of the little horn of the fourth kingdom. The crisis destined to confront God's people in the time of the earlier little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes, will bear a strong

³⁷⁴Whitcomb, p. 111.

³⁷⁵Archer, "Daniel," p. 97.

³⁷⁶Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 184.

³⁷⁷See McGee, 3:579.

³⁷⁸Keil, p. 293; Young, p. 169; Leupold, p. 344; Montgomery, pp. 332-33; Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 184.

similarity to the crisis that will befall them in the eschatological or final phase of the fourth kingdom in the last days (as Christ himself foresaw in the Olivet Discourse [Matt 24:15])."³⁷⁹

This little horn grew very great to the south, the east, and "the beautiful." The first problem with this description is: What is the reference point for these directions? History has identified this little horn as Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), the eighth king of the Seleucid dynasty.³⁸⁰ He ruled Syria from 175 to 164 B.C. (cf. 1 Macc. 1:10; 6:16), and he conducted military campaigns in all of these directions (cf. 1 Macc. 1:20).³⁸¹ Therefore, the point of reference must be Syria.

The second problem is the identification of "the beautiful." This is quite evidently a reference to Palestine (cf. 11:16, 41, 45; Jer. 3:19; Ezek. 20:6, 15). Here the vision begins to focus on the future of Israel and the Jews. Antiochus was especially vengeful against the Jews, whom he persecuted brutally.

"He is . . . one of the greatest persecutors Israel has ever known."³⁸²

"In one assault on Jerusalem, 40,000 Jews were killed in three days and 10,000 more were carried into captivity."³⁸³

"This suppression came to a head in December 168 B.C., when Antiochus returned in frustration from Alexandria, where he had been turned back by the Roman commander Popilius Laenas, and vented his exasperation on the Jews. He sent his general, Apollonius, with twenty thousand troops under orders to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath. There he erected an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar by offering swine on it. This idol became known to the Jews as 'the abomination of desolation' (*hassiqqus mesomem*, 11:31), which served as a type of a future abomination that will be set up in the Jerusalem sanctuary to be built in the last days (cf. Christ's prediction in Matt 24:15)."³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹Archer, "Daniel," p. 99. Cf. Keil, p. 308.

³⁸⁰See Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 10:11:7.

³⁸¹Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 185.

³⁸²Whitcomb, p. 111. Cf. Heb. 11:35-38.

³⁸³Campbell, p. 95. The ancient sources of information about Antiochus' persecutions are 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus.

³⁸⁴Archer, "Daniel," p. 98.

Four years later, on December 25, 164 B.C., Judas Maccabaeus, a Jewish nationalist, led the Jews in rededicating the temple to Yahweh. This is the event that Jews have celebrated with Hanukkah ever since.

8:10 This little horn grew up to the host of heaven, caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and trampled on them. The stars probably refer to the children of Israel whom God predicted would be as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 37:9-10; cf. Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43; Enoch 46:7).³⁸⁵ They constitute His armies (cf. Exod. 7:4; 12:17, 51; Num. 33:1).

"If the world calls those men and women stars who excel in one or another department of human activity, why should not a similar statement be still more appropriate with reference to God's people?"³⁸⁶

Many scholars regard the stars and the host of heaven as synonymous: "the host *even* the stars" (cf. v. 13; Exod. 12:41).³⁸⁷ This is the appositional use of "and," which is quite common. Alternatively the host of heaven may be angels who have some connection with the Jews (the stars). The falling of the host to the earth then would picture Antiochus' victory over these angels, and his trampling the stars down would signify his persecution of the Jews. However, verse 12 seems to indicate that the horn really controlled the host, which would be impossible if they were angels.

8:11 By desecrating the temple, Antiochus Epiphanes (lit. illustrious one) effectively exalted himself to a position of superiority over Yahweh, the commander (or prince; cf. v. 25) of the host (the Jews). Pentecost interpreted this verse as indicating that the horn called himself the prince of the host.³⁸⁸ There may be some confirmation of this in history, but I have not been able to find it. Antiochus did take to himself the boastful name "Epiphanes," which means "[divine] manifestation." The Jews changed his name slightly to Epimanes, meaning "madman."

"An attack on the place set aside for worship of God is tantamount to an attack on God Himself."³⁸⁹

Antiochus temporarily terminated the constant sacrifices (Heb. *tamid*) in the temple, including the daily morning and evening sacrifices, thereby depriving Yahweh of His people's worship (cf. 1 Macc. 1:44-49, RSV).³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 185; Driver, p. 116.

³⁸⁶Leupold, p. 346.

³⁸⁷E.g., *ibid.*; Pentecost, p. 1355; Archer, "Daniel," p. 99.

³⁸⁸Pentecost, p. 1356.

³⁸⁹Baldwin, p. 157.

³⁹⁰Montgomery, pp. 335-36; Young, p. 172.

"Apparently Antiochus did not actually tear down the temple, although eventually he desecrated it to such a point that it was hardly fit for use [cf. 1 Macc. 4:48]."³⁹¹

"Its overthrowing consists in its being prevented from functioning as a place of worship of the true God."³⁹²

Some interpreters believe that this verse also previews another literal fulfillment of the destruction of the temple, which is still future (cf. 9:27).³⁹³ Antiochus' actions anticipated what the Antichrist, the little horn of chapter 7, will do in the future (cf. 7:8, 20).

8:12 God would give control of the host (the Jews) to the little horn (Antiochus) because of transgression. This verse makes identification of the host as the Jews—rather than angels—almost beyond doubt.

This verse may mean that God would use Antiochus as His instrument of discipline—as He had used so many other leaders and nations in Israel's past—because of Israel's transgression (cf. 1 Macc. 1:44-49, RSV).³⁹⁴ Another view is that God would give him control of the sacrifices so he would transgress against God.³⁹⁵ This second view has in its favor that the transgression in view in verse 13 is Antiochus' rather than the Jews'. Antiochus would terminate the sacrifices, disregard the truth (he destroyed the Torah scrolls, 1 Macc. 1:56), do as he chose, and succeed.

"Attacks on Israel are not the same as attacks on other peoples. Anti-Semitism has an extra dimension."³⁹⁶

8:13 The holy ones (Heb. *qados*) that Daniel heard conversing were evidently angels (cf. 4:17). Here the transgression in view seems to be that of Antiochus, not the Jews (cf. v. 12). It causes horror among the Jews because it involves desecration of the sanctuary (v. 11). The holy place is the temple, and the host is the Jews. The angel wanted to know how long the desecration of the sanctuary and the persecution of the Jews would last.

8:14 Another angel replied, but he replied to Daniel. The answer was primarily for his comfort and for the comfort of his people, the Jews. The angel said that the desecration would last 2,300 evenings and mornings. Many commentators take this as meaning 2,300 days (i.e., six years, four

³⁹¹Ibid.

³⁹²Goldingay, p. 211.

³⁹³E.g., Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, pp. 186-88.

³⁹⁴Archer, "Daniel," pp. 100-101.

³⁹⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 188; Pentecost, p. 1356.

³⁹⁶Goldingay, p. 220.

months, and 20 days) since the Jews described a 24-hour day as evening and morning (Gen. 1:5-31).³⁹⁷ Others believe it means a total of 2,300 evenings and mornings (1,150 of each), namely, 1,150 24-hour days (i.e., three years, two months, and 10 days). In this case, "2,300 evenings and mornings" may mean: 2,300 evening and morning *sacrifices*.

This period then may describe the duration of the period when Antiochus did his worst to the temple and the Jews (167-164 B.C.).³⁹⁸ I think 2,300 days are in view—the former view. The Jews followed a calendar that consisted of 30 days each month. This, of course, results in a year of 360 days, which is five and one quarter days short of a lunar year. They made up the remaining days every few years by inserting another month.³⁹⁹

Some interpreters view the 2,300 as a symbolic number.⁴⁰⁰ The problems with this approach are essentially two. First, the other similar numbers in Daniel appear to be literal. Second, arriving at the symbolic meaning of this number is extremely difficult and boils down to guessing. Other interpreters have tried to explain these days as years, but the connection with evenings and mornings probably limits them to days.⁴⁰¹

Seventh-Day Adventists take the days as years, and believe that Jesus did not enter the holiest in heaven until A.D. 1844, 2,300 years after Cyrus issued his decree to rebuild the temple.⁴⁰² Perhaps the figure is in days, rather than in months or years, to give the impression of a long, hard duration.

The temple would be restored after 2,300 days.

"Innumerable explanations have been attempted to make the twenty-three hundred days coincide with the history of Antiochus Epiphanes."⁴⁰³

One way to locate the fulfillment is to identify the end of the 2,300 days, and then work back. But did the angel mean that this period would end with the restoration of the holy place, or that the restoration of the holy place would follow sometime after the end of the 2,300 days? The text does not provide the answer, but the first Hanukkah in December of 164 B.C. may be the re-consecration that the angel predicted. Alternatively, the

³⁹⁷E.g., Walvoord, p. 190; Feinberg, p. 107; Whitcomb, p. 113; Campbell, p. 96; Young, p. 174; Leupold, p. 357; Goldingay, p. 213; and Ironside, p. 152.

³⁹⁸Archer, "Daniel," p. 103; Pentecost, p. 1358; Baldwin, p. 158; G. C. Aalders, *Daniel*, p. 165; Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 715; and Culver, "Daniel," p. 792.

³⁹⁹See *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Calendar" (in the OT), by D. J. Wiseman, pp. 176-79.

⁴⁰⁰E.g., Keil, pp. 306-7.

⁴⁰¹See *ibid.*, pp. 302-308.

⁴⁰²See Ironside, pp. 152-53.

⁴⁰³Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 189.

full restoration of all the sacrifices, and the religious independence of the Jews that came a few months later, may be in view. In either case, the year of restoration was probably 164 B.C., or shortly after that.

One literal view is that the 2,300 days ended with Antiochus' death in November-December of 164 B.C.⁴⁰⁴ However, the text seems to identify the 2,300 days specifically with the desecration of the temple and the persecution of the Jews. As far as we know, Antiochus did not take over six years to do those things. Antiochus began his reign in 175 B.C., and in 169 B.C. he first entered the temple.

Some who hold this view identify the beginning of this period as Antiochus' initial entrance into Jerusalem in 170 B.C. Others identify it with the murder of the Jewish high priest Onias III in 171 B.C. However, there was no abridgement of temple service at those early dates. Antiochus looted the temple in 170 B.C., but the abolition of the sacrifices did not begin until 167 B.C. First Maccabees 6:8-13 records Antiochus' comments, just before his death, about failing to destroy the Jews.

Walvoord considered 2,300 "obviously a round number."⁴⁰⁵ But other scholars have questioned why this is so obvious.

Regardless of how one solves the 2,300 evenings and mornings problem, there is general agreement among the scholars that Antiochus fulfilled this prophecy. I believe the 2,300 days was a period of persecution during his domination of the Jews, perhaps 167-164 B.C.

"A persecutor of the Jews in Russia asked a Jew what he thought the outcome would be if the wave of persecutions continued. The Jew answered, 'The result will be a feast! Pharaoh tried to destroy the Jews, but the result was the Passover. Haman attempted to destroy the Jews, but the result was the Feast of Purim. Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jews, but the result was the Feast of Dedication.'"⁴⁰⁶

5. The interpretation of this vision 8:15-26

8:15-16 As in the previous vision (7:16), Daniel needed help to understand what he had seen. He saw someone who looked like a man standing before him. Evidently this was an angel. Daniel also heard a voice that he could understand, possibly God's, instructing the angel by name to give Daniel understanding of the vision.

⁴⁰⁴Ibid., p. 190; Keil, p. 304; Wood, *A Commentary . . .*, p. 219.

⁴⁰⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 190.

⁴⁰⁶Campbell, p. 96.

"Gabriel" (lit. "God has shown Himself strong," "strong man of God," or "man of God") is one of only two angels, and the first, that the Bible identifies by name, the other being Michael (cf. 9:21; 10:13, 21; 12:1; Luke 1:19, 26). Daniel is the only Old Testament book that identifies angels by name, but see Luke 1:19, 26, and Jude 9. The use of Gabriel's proper name probably reflects the importance of this vision and its interpretation.

8:17-18 Gabriel's approach made Daniel so fearful that he prostrated himself on the ground (cf. 2:46; 10:9-10, 15; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 44:4; Rev. 1:17). The title "son of man" indicates humanity, and here, in contrast to Gabriel, it stressed Daniel's human weakness (cf. 7:13; Ezek. 2:1; et al.).

"It suggests both solemnly and encouragingly the awesomeness and the honor of an ordinary human being hearing this man of God address him . . ." ⁴⁰⁷

Gabriel introduced his interpretation by explaining that it concerned "the time of the end" or the end times (cf. v. 19). The vision dealt with events yet future from Daniel's viewpoint in history. "The time of the end" in Daniel is similar to future references to "the Day of the Lord" in the other prophets. It can refer to a more immediate future day, or to an eschatological day, depending on the context.

Daniel's response to Gabriel's awesome presence and words was that he fainted.⁴⁰⁸ The Hebrew word "denotes a coma-like state of deep sleep brought about by supernatural agency, especially in connection with visionary experiences . . ." ⁴⁰⁹ Gabriel proceeded to revive the prophet, and to prepare him to receive the remainder of the interpretation.

8:19 Gabriel clarified that what he was going to explain dealt with "the final period of the indignation" and "the appointed time of the end." Clearly this was future from Daniel's point in history. Yet does it refer to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes exclusively,⁴¹⁰ or does it refer to the end times before Jesus Christ returns,⁴¹¹ or both? Most premillennial interpreters believe that it refers to both in some sense, either as a double fulfillment⁴¹² or as a type and antitype.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁷Goldingay, p. 214.

⁴⁰⁸Montgomery, p. 345.

⁴⁰⁹Goldingay, pp. 214-15. Cf. 10:9.

⁴¹⁰Driver, pp. 99, 121; and Young, p. 288.

⁴¹¹G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning Israel and the Gentiles*, pp. 289-90; Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 165; and S. P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 82-83.

⁴¹²Louis T. Talbot, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 143; William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel*, p. 132; Nathaniel West, *Daniel's Great Prophecy*, p. 103; Seiss, p. 221; Pentecost, pp. 1359; idem, *Prophecy for Today*, pp. 82-83; idem, *Things to Come*, pp. 332-34; *The New Scofield . . .*, p. 911; and Campbell, p. 97.

⁴¹³Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, pp. 196-200; and Archer, "Daniel," pp. 104-105.

To me, the difference between the *double fulfillment* view and the *type and antitype* view is semantic. Both of these views see some fulfillment in Antiochus and some in the Antichrist. The conclusion that the prophecy relates to both times rests on what follows in verses 23-25 and on other uses of the phrase "the end" in Daniel (9:26; 11:6, 27, 35, 40, 45; 12:4, 6, 9, 13). Other examples of this double, or typological fulfillment, are Jesus fulfilling *what was prophesied* of Him—fulfilled to some degree earlier by Moses, the Israelites, and David.

8:20-22 Gabriel identified the ram with the two horns as Media and Persia (cf. vv. 3-4), not just Media as many liberal interpreters insist because of their second-century composition hypothesis. The goat, here further described as shaggy, represents Greece (cf. vv. 5-7), not Persia as many liberals contend. The large horn on the goat is the first king of Greece, namely, Alexander the Great. The four kingdoms that arose to replace Alexander when he died were Macedonia and Greece, Thrace and Asia Minor, Egypt and Palestine, and Syria and Persia (cf. v. 8).

"Most [conservative] expositors agree that verses 20-22 have been fulfilled completely in history in connection with the Medo-Persian and Greek empires and the four divisions following Alexander the Great. The exegetical problems arise in the passage which follows."⁴¹⁴

8:23-25 Almost all scholars recognize that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled what Gabriel predicted in these verses (cf. 1 Macc. 1:10).⁴¹⁵ He arose in the latter period of the Diacochi, the four kingdoms that came into existence after Alexander's death, following many transgressors of God's will. Antiochus Epiphanes was bold and deceptive. He was powerful because God allowed him to be so ("his power will be mighty, but not by his *own* power"). He did much damage ("destroy to an extraordinary degree"), especially to Jerusalem and the temple. He became prosperous and carried out his objectives ("prosper and perform his will").

Antiochus also destroyed powerful people ("will destroy mighty men and the holy people"), including the Jewish high priest, as well as many Jews. He fooled many people with his "shrewdness," some of whom were unsuspecting. He exalted himself ("magnify *himself* in his heart"), even to the extent of minting coins that bore his image and the inscription "God manifest" (Gr. *theos epiphanes*). He also "opposed" God, the "Prince of princes."

Many students of these verses have noticed striking similarities between Antiochus Epiphanes as described here and another political leader predicted to appear in the future (cf. 7:8, 11, 21-22, 24-26; 9:27; 11:36-45;

⁴¹⁴Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 197.

⁴¹⁵Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1359.

12:11; Matt. 24:5, 23-24, 26; Mark 13:6, 21-22; Luke 21:8; 2 Thess 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7; Rev. 13:1-10; 19:20; 20:10). Therefore they, and I, conclude that these verses are prophetic of the Antichrist as well as of Antiochus.

Another interpretation is that this is a prophecy of the Antichrist alone, with no reference to Antiochus. Whitcomb argued for the end-time fulfillment being the king of the north (11:45) rather than Antichrist.⁴¹⁶ It seems that Antiochus did on a smaller scale what Antichrist will do on a larger one. Apparently in the much later period of the rule of these kings, namely, the end times, transgressors will have run their course even more completely. The Antichrist will oppose the Prince of princes, God the Son, who will break him without human agency (Ps. 2; Rev. 19:19-20).

8:26 Another title for this vision is "the vision of the evenings and mornings" (cf. v. 14). The phrase describes the particular period when this prediction would find fulfillment, perhaps 167-164 B.C. Daniel needed to seal up the vision (NIV) in the sense of recording, finishing, and preserving it, not in the sense of making it secret (NASB, cf. 7:28; 12:9). It pertained to many days in the future, namely, four centuries later as well as beyond then. The NIV translation "distant future" unfortunately implies that it pertains only to the distant future from our point in history.

6. The result of this vision 8:27

As we sometimes feel exhausted after a night's sleep in which we have been very active in a dream, so Daniel felt worn out by what he had seen in his vision. This experience so drained him of energy that he was sick for several days and could not work. Probably the knowledge that severe persecution was in store for "the holy people" (v. 24) distressed him greatly.

"There is a price to be paid in physical terms for spiritual revelation."⁴¹⁷

In spite of Gabriel's interpretation, there were things that Daniel still did not understand about this vision (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12). He had to live with unanswered questions since God did not provide further help for him.

The emphasis in this chapter is on the little horn, as the emphasis in chapter 7 was on the little horn, though two different individuals are in view. The little horn in chapter 7 is Antichrist, and the little horn in chapter 8 is Antiochus in the short range and Antichrist in the long range. Chapter 8 focuses on the Jews as the target of Antiochus' antagonism in the short range. Chapter 7 focuses on believers generally as the target of Antichrist's opposition. However, there is some hint in both chapters that in the long range the Jews will be the objects of persecution.

⁴¹⁶Whitcomb, pp. 118.

⁴¹⁷Baldwin, p. 161.

"The times of the Gentiles, although not entirely a period of persecution of Israel, often resulted in great trial to them. Of the four great world empires anticipated by Daniel, only the Persian empire was relatively kind to the Jew. As Christ Himself indicated in Luke 21:24, the times of the Gentiles is characterized by the treading down of Jerusalem, and the subjugation and persecution of the people of Israel."⁴¹⁸

THE VISIONS OF DANIEL 2, 7, AND 8			
Chapter 2 Metals	Chapter 7 Animals	Chapter 8 Animals	Nations
Gold	Winged lion		Neo-Babylonia
Silver	Lopsided bear	Ram	Medo-Persia
Bronze	Winged leopard	Goat	Greece
Iron Iron and clay	Unique beast		Rome

B. DANIEL'S VISION OF THE 70 SEVENS CH. 9

This chapter records a third vision that Daniel received (cf. chs. 7, 8). The vision itself occupies only a small part of this chapter (vv. 24-27), but the verses that precede it prepare for it and connect with it.

"In many respects, this is the high point of the book of Daniel. Although previously Gentile history and prophecy recorded in Daniel was related to the people of Israel, the ninth chapter specifically takes up prophecy as it applies to the chosen people."⁴¹⁹

"Unless the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel is properly understood, the great prophetic discourse of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24—25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 will be misunderstood, as will the greater portion of the book of Revelation."⁴²⁰

"This prophecy is unique in Scripture in that it actually sets up a sort of time schedule of coming events. The nearest approach to it is Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years . . ."⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , pp.199-200.

⁴¹⁹Ibid., p. 201.

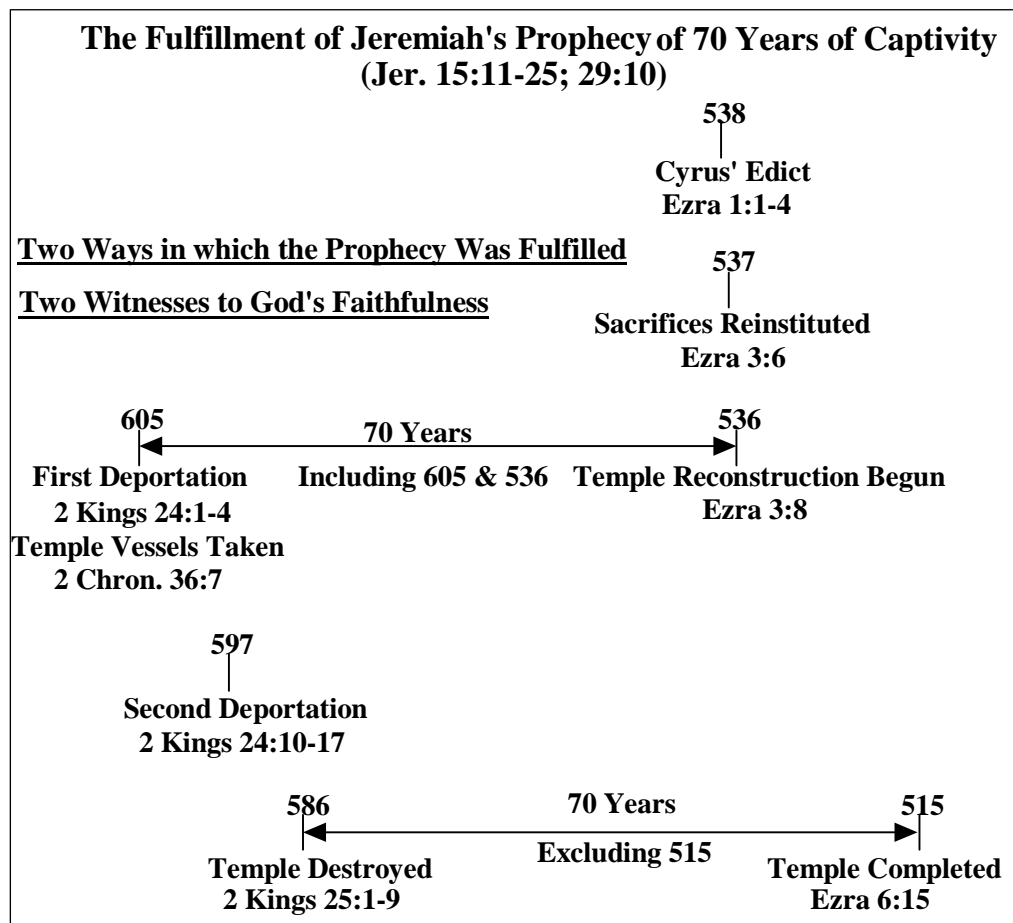
⁴²⁰Feinberg, p. 117.

⁴²¹Culver, "Daniel," p. 792.

1. Jeremiah's prophecy of Jerusalem's restoration and Daniel's response 9:1-3

9:1 What Daniel did and saw in this chapter dates from 538 B.C., the first year of Darius the Mede's (Cyrus') rule as king over the former Neo-Babylonian Empire (cf. Ezra 1:1).⁴²² This means that Belshazzar's feast (ch. 5) occurred between chapters 8 and 9. We cannot date Daniel's experience in the lions' den (ch. 6) as accurately. That may have happened before or after the events recorded here.

9:2 Somehow Daniel had obtained a copy of Jeremiah's prediction of the length of Jerusalem's desolation (cf. Jer. 36:23, 28). Jeremiah had revealed that the city would lie in ruins for 70 years and then God would destroy Babylonia (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10-14; cf. 2 Chron. 36:21). Daniel received this vision about 67 years after Nebuchadnezzar had deported the first group of exiles, including himself, in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in 586 B.C.



⁴²²See my comments on 5:31 and 6:1 for explanation of the identity of Darius the Mede.

The specific period of desolation in verse 2 probably refers to 586-515 B.C., since "the desolations of Jerusalem" are in view. Daniel may also have been aware of Isaiah's prophecy that God would raise up a king named Cyrus, who would order the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (Isa. 44:28; cf. 45:1-2, 4, 13). However, there is no mention of this in the Book of Daniel.

Daniel interpreted literally the "70 years" that Jeremiah predicted. As he saw the end of this period approaching, he prayed for the restoration of his people. Daniel's understanding of a literal fulfillment of numbers in prophecy helps us know how we should understand at least some of them. Notice also that he regarded Jeremiah's prophecy as "the word of the LORD."

9:3 Jeremiah had revealed that God would restore His people to their land when they prayed to Him wholeheartedly (Jer. 29:12-14). This revelation prompted Daniel to pray the prayer that follows (vv. 3-19). Daniel's prayer fulfills what Solomon anticipated in his prayer at the dedication of the temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:33-36). Daniel did not regard prayer as unnecessary in view of the certainty of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. He viewed prayer properly as one means that God uses to accomplish His will in human history (cf. 6:10). Through prayer we become partners with God in bringing His will to fruition in the world. Daniel's behavior, as well as his words, expressed the genuineness of his contrition.

"These verses show Daniel as a diligent student of Scripture who built his prayer life on the Word of God."⁴²³

"This verse teaches that biblical prophecy should bring us to our knees, as it did Daniel."⁴²⁴

"While God honors the briefest of prayers, as the experience of Nehemiah 2:4 indicates, effective prayer requires faith in the Word of God, proper attitude of mind and heart, privacy, and unhurried confession and petition. Daniel's humility, reverence, and earnestness are the hallmarks of effective prayer."⁴²⁵

2. Daniel's prayer of confession 9:4-14

Daniel's prayer (vv. 4-19) began with confession of sin and guilt (vv. 4-14), and ended with a plea for mercy and restoration (vv. 15-19). The confession part of the prayer (vv. 4-14) may be divided into two parts: the people's sin (vv. 4-10), and God's punishment (vv. 11-14).

⁴²³Archer, "Daniel," p. 107.

⁴²⁴Feinberg, p. 119.

⁴²⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 206.

The people's sin 9:4-10

9:4 This is only the second time in the book that Daniel used the name Yahweh for God (cf. vv. 2, 8, 10, 13, 14, 20). He also addressed God as Adonai (master) in verses 4 and 7. It is natural that he would do this, since this chapter describes the most intimate contact that Daniel enjoyed with his God, namely: through Bible study and prayer.

9:5-6 Daniel stressed God's transcendence and His loyal love (Heb. *hesed*) to Israel in his salutation (v. 4). He then proceeded to point out that, in contrast to Yahweh's faithfulness to Israel, Israel had been unfaithful to Him. The prophet identified with his people. Personally he had been faithful to God. Yet since he was an Israelite he partook of the blessings and curses that God sent Israel for her obedience and disobedience (cf. Deut. 28:48-57, 64-68).

"What made Daniel one of God's greatest saints was not his sinlessness but his sensitivity to the true depth of his sin."⁴²⁶

He listed several of Israel's sins first: positive transgressions (v. 5) and then negative omissions (v. 6). Note the progression in the description of sin in verse 5. Evidently Daniel wanted to confess all the nation's sins of every kind to their full extent.⁴²⁷ Especially sinful was the fact that all classes within Israel had disregarded God's words to them through His prophets (cf. 2 Chron. 30:10). To disregard God's Word is "the beginning of all moral disorders."⁴²⁸

9:7-10 Daniel proceeded to contrast the righteousness that belongs to God, with the guilt and shame that belonged to His people because they had sinned against Him (vv. 7-8). He also compared God's forgiveness and compassion with Israel's rebellion (v. 9). Daniel focused again on Israel's great sin of disregarding God's words to her.

God's punishment 9:11-14

9:11-14 All of this sin resulted in Israel's humiliation among the Gentile nations. God had poured out curses on His people because of these sins (v. 11b). He had done what He had promised He would do if Israel departed from Him (v. 12; cf. Deut. 28:15-68). Moses had warned the Israelites about departing from God, yet His people had not sought His favor by repenting (v. 13). Therefore, calamity had descended on them, since Yahweh is righteous in all His deeds. In contrast, Israel had disobeyed His voice

⁴²⁶Whitcomb, p. 123.

⁴²⁷Stuart, p. 258.

⁴²⁸Leupold, p. 384.

(v. 14). In this section of his prayer, the prophet glorified God for dealing justly with His people who, Daniel acknowledged, deserved all the punishment they had received.

"Suffering can involve punishment, but it usually is about learning the lessons God has for his people."⁴²⁹

3. Daniel's petition for restoration 9:15-19

Having laid a foundation for appeal in his confession (vv. 4-14), Daniel now proceeded to petition God to restore His people to the Promised Land.

9:15 He first referred to the Exodus, as a former demonstration of God's power and faithfulness for His people, when they found themselves in a situation similar to that of the Babylonian exiles. Again Daniel stressed God's reputation and Israel's unworthiness, clarifying the basis for his appeal (cf. vv. 4-5).

"The deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt is, in many respects, the Old Testament standard illustration of the power of God and His ability to deliver His people. By contrast in the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's standard of power (Eph 1:19-20). In the future millennial reign of Christ, the standard of power will be the regathering of Israel and their restoration to the land (Jer 16:14-15)."⁴³⁰

9:16-17 Now the prophet appealed to God as Adonai, stressing His sovereignty over His people, and as Elohim, the strong One. As God had righteously brought discipline on Israel for her past sins, Daniel asked Him to bring restoration righteously, since He had promised it, too. The answer would primarily glorify God, and secondarily, bless His people.

9:18-19 Daniel appealed repeatedly to God to hear and answer his prayer, not because the Israelites deserved it, but because God is compassionate (cf. Exod. 32:12-14). It is interesting that Daniel did not tell God what to do. Instead he asked God to hear, to see, and to act. This is a humble approach that does not dictate to God but leaves the answering up to Him. This magnificent prayer builds to an emotional, positive, logical climax in verse 19.

4. God's response to Daniel's prayer 9:20-23

God began responding to Daniel's prayer as soon as he began praying (cf. v. 19; Luke 11:10-13). Clearly, the prayer recorded in the preceding verses is only a summary of what the prophet prayed, since he prayed long and hard (v. 21).

⁴²⁹Bramer, p. 158.

⁴³⁰Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 211.

9:20-21 Daniel again saw Gabriel, whom he had met previously (8:16). He was obviously an angel. The description "the man Gabriel" is a play on words and probably means "the servant, the strong one of the strong God." The Hebrew word *ish* (man) often appears as a description of a servant.⁴³¹

"Note that the term *ha'is* ('the man') does not signify 'man' in contradistinction to angels or other spiritual powers residing in heaven; that would have been '*adam* or '*enos* in Hebrew. It rather indicates that this mighty archangel had appeared in a humanlike form and had spoken to Daniel intelligibly as one man speaks to another [cf. Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10]."⁴³²

Evidently Daniel had become weary because of his praying and fasting. The time of the evening offering was 3:00 p.m. The Jews were not able to offer the regular morning and evening sacrifices after the Babylonians destroyed their temple. However, pious Jews such as Daniel still prayed at these customary times (cf. 6:10).

9:22-23 Daniel's concern for God's reputation (vv. 4-14) doubtless made him special to God (v. 23). The vision that God had sent Gabriel to convey constituted an answer to Daniel's prayer. It revealed what would happen to the Jews.

"For the first time in the book Daniel's initiative occasions a revelation."⁴³³

5. The revelation of Israel's future in 70 sevens 9:24-27

"In the concluding four verses of Daniel 9, one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament is contained. The prophecy as a whole is presented in verse 24. The first sixty-nine sevens is described in verse 25. The events between the sixty-ninth seventh [*sic*, seven] and the seventieth seventh [*sic*, seven] are detailed in verse 26. The final period of the seventieth seventh [*sic*, seven] is described in verse 27."⁴³⁴

"The interpretations may be divided into three principal classes. 1. Most of the church fathers and the older orthodox interpreters find prophesied here the appearance of Christ in the flesh, His death, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. 2. The majority of the modern interpreters, on the other hand, refer the whole passage to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. 3. Finally, some of the church fathers and several modern

⁴³¹Leupold, p. 400.

⁴³²Archer, "Daniel," p. 111.

⁴³³Baldwin, p. 162.

⁴³⁴Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 216.

theologians have interpreted the prophecy eschatologically, as an announcement of the development of the kingdom of God from the end of the exile on to the perfecting of the kingdom by the second coming of Christ at the end of the days."⁴³⁵

I believe that the third of these interpretations is the correct one. Renald Showers demonstrated that these verses imply a pretribulation Rapture of the church.⁴³⁶

"Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (vv. 24-27) provides the chronological frame for Messianic prediction from Daniel to the establishment of the kingdom on earth and also a key to its interpretation."⁴³⁷

"Probably no single prophetic utterance is more crucial in the fields of Biblical Interpretation, Apologetics, and Eschatology."⁴³⁸

9:24 The Hebrew word translated "weeks" (*shabu'im*) literally means "sevens." It can refer to seven days (Gen. 29:27-28) or seven years, as verses 26 and 27 will show. The Jews observed a seven-year celebration (the sabbatical year), as well as a seven-day celebration (the Sabbath). Most scholars believe that this word ("weeks," "sevens," "units of seven") here represents seven-year periods.

Daniel had been thinking of God's program for Israel in terms of years. He had read Jeremiah's prophecy that the exile would last 70 years (vv. 1-2). It would have been normal then for him to interpret these sevens as *years*.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, the fulfillment of the first 69 sevens shows that these "sevens" *are* years. In addition, the last half of the seventieth seven is described elsewhere as consisting of three and one-half years, or 42 months, or 1,260 days.⁴⁴⁰

Seventy seven-year periods totals 490 years. As Jerusalem was suffering under the hand of Gentiles for 70 years (v. 2), so the Jews and Jerusalem would suffer under the hand of Gentiles for 490 years. "Your people" and "your holy city" are obvious references to the Jews and Jerusalem (cf. vv. 7, 11, 20). They do not refer to the church, which is a distinct entity from Israel (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32). However, as the following verses clarify, these

⁴³⁵Keil, p. 336. He cited, in a footnote, some advocates of each view.

⁴³⁶Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church*, pp. 230-44. See also Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies of the Seventy Weeks*, pp. 53-55.

⁴³⁷*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 913.

⁴³⁸McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies . . .*, p. 9.

⁴³⁹For defense of this view based on additional internal evidence in the Book of Daniel, see Otto Zöckler, "The Book of the Prophet Daniel," in Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 7:2:194. See also Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1361; and *The New Scofield . . .*, p. 913.

⁴⁴⁰For an example of how interpreting the numbers in this passage as both symbolic and literal leads to confusion, see Waltke, *An Old . . .*, pp. 549-50.

will not be uninterrupted years. Similarly, Israel's rule by Davidic monarchs has suffered interruption: the last king being Zedekiah—and the next, Messiah.

God had decreed these years. He had ordained them, and they were as certain to come as anything else that God had foreordained. This verse states that the purpose for God decreeing this period is six-fold. First, it will end rebellion against Him. Second, it will end human failure to obey God. Third, it will provide time for atonement that will cover human wickedness. Fourth, it will inaugurate a new society in which righteousness prevails. Fifth, it will bring in the fulfillment of the vision that God has for the earth. Sixth, it will result in the anointing of the most holy, probably a reference to a new and more glorious temple (cf. Ezek. 40—48).

God has already achieved some of these goals: specifically the third one, and to some extent the first two. However, other goals have not yet seen fulfillment. Therefore it is reasonable to look for a future fulfillment from our perspective in history.⁴⁴¹

"By the time these 490 years run their course, God will have completed six things for Israel. The first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all six will be realized by Israel at the Second Advent of Christ."⁴⁴²

Young believed Christ completed all six things for the church at His first coming.⁴⁴³

"This prophecy, it must be noted, concerns three deliverances. Daniel was greatly burdened about an early deliverance of the Jews from Babylon to return to Jerusalem. God was also interested in their deliverance from bondage to sin (at Christ's first advent) and in the final deliverance of the Jews from oppression (at Christ's second coming) . . ."⁴⁴⁴

"This vs. is a Divine revelation of the fact that a definite period of time has been decreed for the accomplishment of all that which is necessary for the true restoration of God's people from bondage."⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹Cf. Barker, pp. 143-46.

⁴⁴²Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1361.

⁴⁴³Young, p. 201.

⁴⁴⁴Campbell, p. 108. See also Wood, *A Commentary . . .*, p. 244.

⁴⁴⁵Young, p. 195.

9:25 There are four decrees concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem that Scripture records. The first was Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple in 538 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:2-5). The second was Darius I's decree in 512 B.C. confirming Cyrus' earlier one (Ezra 6:1, 6-12). The third was Artaxerxes' decree in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:11-26).⁴⁴⁶ The fourth was Artaxerxes' decree authorizing Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem in 444 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8). Chisholm suggested a fifth possibility, namely, that the decree in view was Jeremiah's prophecy, sometime between 597 and 586 B.C., that Jerusalem would be rebuilt (Jer. 30:18). He took the seventy weeks as symbolic of completeness.⁴⁴⁷

The first two of these decrees authorized the rebuilding of the temple, and the third provided for animal sacrifices in the temple. Only the fourth one gave the Jews permission to rebuild Jerusalem, and it seems to be the one in view here. The Jews encountered opposition as they sought to rebuild and refortify their ancient capital, as the Book of Nehemiah records. The date 444 B.C., then, probably marks the beginning of this 490-year period.

Seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens equals 483 years. Gabriel predicted that after 483 years, Messiah would be cut off. Detailed chronological studies have been done that show that Jesus Christ's death occurred then. If one calculates 483 years from 444 B.C., one might conclude that the date for Messiah being cut off is A.D. 39. However, both the Jews and the Babylonians observed years of 360, rather than 365 days per year. If one calculates the number of days involved in the Jewish and Babylonian calendar year, the year Messiah would be cut off comes out to A.D. 33 with a 365-day year, the modern Gregorian calendar year.

One scholar, Sir Robert Anderson, calculated that the day Jesus entered Jerusalem in His triumphal entry was precisely the last day of this long period.⁴⁴⁸ The Triumphal Entry was significant because it was the last public event during Jesus' first advent that demonstrated a positive popular reaction to Him. After it, the nation of Israel rejected Him. Whether or not the chronology is that exact, almost all expositors agree that the death of Christ is in view and that it occurred at the end of the sixty-ninth week. J. Paul Tanner showed that there was a strong consensus among the early Church fathers that this passage is messianic, though they varied greatly in their understanding of the details.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶See William H. Shea, "Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12:1 (Spring 2001):89-96.

⁴⁴⁷Chisholm, pp. 314-17.

⁴⁴⁸Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, p. 128. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies . . .*, pp. 25-26; and H. W. Hoehner, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132:525 (January-March 1975):64; came to the same conclusion.

⁴⁴⁹J. Paul Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166:662 (April-June 2009):181-200.

Even Young, a representative amillennialist, supported this basic chronology, though he held that the numbers (7 and 62) were symbolic, not literal numbers.⁴⁵⁰ He believed the decree in verse 24 was Cyrus' decree of 538 B.C., that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 occurred toward the end of the 70th week, and that the prince to come (v. 26) was Titus.

"Thus, in Daniel's prophecy, while the King's arrival is definitely clocked, the establishment of His Kingdom is left uncertain chronologically."⁴⁵¹

What happened after 49 years that justifies breaking this period of 69 weeks into two parts? Perhaps it was the end of the Old Testament revelation through the writing prophets.⁴⁵² Another, more probable view, is that it took seven weeks (49 years) to clear out all the debris from Jerusalem, and to restore it fully as a thriving city with streets and moat.⁴⁵³

"This perfectly describes the work of Nehemiah and under what difficult circumstances he performed his tasks."⁴⁵⁴

The reference to Jerusalem being rebuilt "with plaza and moat" (NASB), or "with streets and a trench" (NIV), has confused some readers, since Jerusalem never had a typical moat or trench around it. However, the valleys of Hinnom and Kidron, on Jerusalem's east, south and west sides, resemble a moat or trench around most of the city. In heavy rains they did and still do carry water and function as a moat or trench.

9:26 Most Christian interpreters have taken the cutting off of Messiah as a reference to Jesus Christ's death. He had nothing then in a very real sense.

The "prince who will (is to) come" seems to be a different person from the Messiah. A legitimate translation is "the people of a ruler who will come."⁴⁵⁵ His people, not he himself, would destroy the city. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman army under Titus leveled Jerusalem.

The "prince who will come," however, was evidently not Titus—but a future ruler, namely, the Antichrist (7:8). Titus made no covenant with the Jews (v. 27). However, Titus did initially what this prince will do ultimately. Jerusalem did not end because of a literal "flood" of water in

⁴⁵⁰Young, pp. 191-206, 220-21.

⁴⁵¹McClain, *The Greatness . . .*, p. 174.

⁴⁵²McGee, 3:588.

⁴⁵³Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 227; Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1363; Campbell, p. 110; Ironside, p. 165; J. Randall Price, "Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9 and Other Texts," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, pp. 151-52.

⁴⁵⁴Feinberg, p. 130.

⁴⁵⁵Archer, "Daniel," p. 116.

Titus' day, but Roman soldiers overwhelmed it *like a flood* (cf. 11:10, 22, 26, 40; Isa. 8:8). War preceded the destruction. Gabriel announced that God had determined the city's desolation (cf. Matt. 24:7-22).

Some interpreters believe that the end of this verse describes conditions that have followed Titus' destruction and continue even today.⁴⁵⁶ Others think it only describes what Titus did.⁴⁵⁷

9:27 "In contrast to the rather clear fulfillment of verses 25-26, verse 27 is an enigma as far as history is concerned; and only futuristic interpretation allows any literal fulfillment."⁴⁵⁸

The nearest antecedent of "he" is "the prince who is to come" (v. 26). Titus made no covenant with Israel, so who is in view? Apparently a future ruler of the revived or reorganized Roman Empire, the little horn of chapter 7, is in view. This seems preferable to taking the antecedent of "he" as Messiah, since Jesus Christ did not do the things predicted of the prince here. Young held that Christ is the prince, and He fulfilled what Daniel predicted, in that He put the covenant of grace into effect at the time of His death, and abolished the sacrifices of the old dispensation.⁴⁵⁹

If the little horn of chapter 7 is in view here, as seems preferable, this means that the seventieth week does not follow the sixty-ninth week immediately. Such a break in prophetic chronology has precedent in the predictions of Messiah's first and second advents (Isa. 61:1-2). Another evidence of a break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, is the fact that there was a 37-year gap, between Messiah's cutting off in A.D. 33, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Yet Daniel presented both of these events as *after* the sixty-ninth week, and *before* the seventieth week. Thus there must be a break in the chronology after the sixty-ninth week.⁴⁶⁰

This future ruler, according to Gabriel, will make a covenant with "the many" for one week (seven years). "The many" evidently refers to Daniel's people (v. 24), ethnic Jews (cf. 11:39; 12:2). After three and one-half years, this Antichrist will terminate the sacrifices and offerings that he permitted these Jews to offer. Their ability to offer these sacrifices indicates that they will be back in the land worshipping at a rebuilt temple.

⁴⁵⁶E.g., Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1364; and Archer, "Daniel," p. 117.

⁴⁵⁷E.g., Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 231.

⁴⁵⁸Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹Young, pp. 213-17, 220-21.

⁴⁶⁰See McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies . . .*, pp. 31-45, for additional proofs of a gap.

"The wing of abominations" may be a reference to a wing of the temple that is particularly abominable because of idolatry, possibly the pinnacle or summit of the temple.⁴⁶¹ Another interpretation takes "wing" figuratively, and sees Antichrist descending vulture-like on his prey.⁴⁶² Perhaps the simplest explanation is to take "on the wing of" in the sense of "with." Apparently the prince will appear in the Jerusalem temple when he ends the sacrifices.

Daniel 12:11 refers to a future stopping of the Jewish sacrifices, forty-two months before Messiah returns to the earth. Revelation 13:4-7 also describes this future ruler in harmony with what Gabriel revealed here. Jesus warned of him, too, in Matthew 24:15-28, as did the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and the Apostle John in 1 John 2:18. The complete destruction decreed by God and poured out on this prince will come, according to these passages, when Messiah returns to the earth.⁴⁶³

Students of this passage who do not take this verse as predicting future events usually adopt one of the following interpretations.⁴⁶⁴ Liberal commentators believe that the events in the seventieth seven, as well as those in the preceding sixty-nine sevens, happened in a loose sense after the Maccabean persecution of the second century B.C.⁴⁶⁵ Orthodox Jewish scholars usually take the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as the fulfillment of this verse.

Many amillennialists understand the seventieth week to represent what has happened since Jesus Christ's first advent, and what will continue until His second advent.⁴⁶⁶ Some amillennialists take the seventieth seven as seven literal years beginning with Jesus' public ministry and ending about three and one-half years after His death.⁴⁶⁷ Dwight Pentecost articulated the standard premillennial, pretribulation interpretation.

"This seven-year period will begin after the Rapture of the church (which will consummate God's program in this present Age). The 70th 'seven' will continue till the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Because Jesus said this will be a time of 'great distress' (Matt. 24:21), this period is often called the Tribulation."⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶¹Young, p. 218; Whitcomb, p. 134.

⁴⁶²Archer, "Daniel," p. 118.

⁴⁶³See Craig A. Blasing, "The Day of the Lord and the Seventieth Week of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169:674 (April-June 2012):131-42.

⁴⁶⁴See also Baldwin's additional note on some interpretations of the seventy sevens, pp. 172-78.

⁴⁶⁵E.g., Montgomery, pp. 400-401.

⁴⁶⁶E.g., Young, pp. 208-209; and Leupold, pp. 431-40.

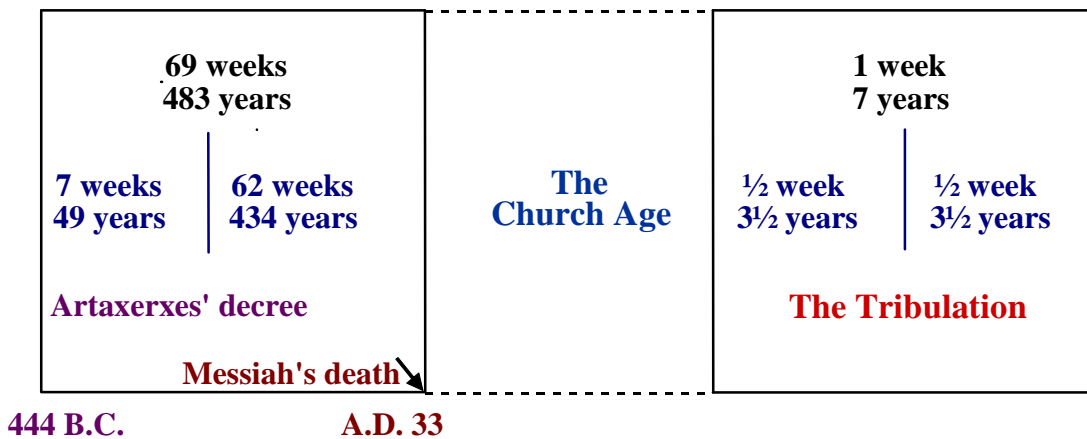
⁴⁶⁷E.g., Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁶⁸Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1364. See also *The New Scofield . . .*, p. 913.

The strongest argument for a literal fulfillment of the events predicted in verse 27, is that the events predicted in verses 24-26 were fulfilled literally.

"The 'abomination of desolation' set up by Antiochus is *not* the ultimate fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 because (a) Antiochus does not fit the time sequence given in that verse, and (b) long after the time of Antiochus, Jesus said Daniel's prophecy of the abomination of desolation was *still* future (Matt. 24:15-16)."⁴⁶⁹

**Daniel's Seventy Weeks
Dan. 9:24-27**



C. DANIEL'S MOST DETAILED VISION OF THE FUTURE CHS. 10—12

We have observed that God's method of revealing what He wanted Daniel to know and to communicate about the future follows good pedagogy. God first gave the prophet a general picture of the future, first about humanity generally and then about Israel. Then, after Daniel had had time to think about what God had told him, He filled in more detail. In other words, God went from the known to the unknown in teaching Daniel these things. In this final vision of the book, we have even more detail about the future, particularly about Israel's future.

"There is hardly anything in the Bible that is just like these chapters, especially like chapter 11. The word, the vision, and minute prediction are combined in a manner that is found nowhere else in the Scriptures."⁴⁷⁰

The first chapter (ch. 10) and verse 1 of chapter 11 introduce the vision that follows. There are two parts to this vision: the immediate future from Darius through Antiochus (11:2-35); and the distant future, namely: the seventieth seven (9:27), or the Tribulation Period (11:36—12:4). The rest of chapter 12 provides a conclusion to this revelation.

⁴⁶⁹Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 719.

⁴⁷⁰Leupold, p. 441.

1. Daniel's preparation to receive the vision 10:1—11:1

This section can be divided into seven parts.

The background of the vision 10:1

The third year of Cyrus' rule as king over Babylon was 536 B.C. Cyrus had begun ruling over Persia in 558 B.C., but Daniel's and the other biblical writers' interest in Cyrus was as ruler over Babylon, which he conquered in 539 B.C. (5:31). Cyrus had issued his decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild their temple in 538 B.C. Some of them had departed that same year under Zerubbabel's leadership.

The returned exiles had reinstated the sacrifices by 537 B.C. (Ezra 3:6), and by 536 B.C. they had begun to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:8). Daniel would have been in his 80s in 536 B.C., and his age may account for his not returning to the Promised Land. Daniel remained in government service until the first year of Cyrus (538 B.C., 1:21), but he remained in Babylon for several additional years, perhaps in "retirement."

Critics have attacked the Book of Daniel because, they claim, the title "Cyrus king of Persia" was not a contemporary way of referring to him.⁴⁷¹ However, this would have been a perfectly legitimate way of referring to this king unofficially, if not officially.⁴⁷² Perhaps Daniel's Babylonian name appears again here to assure the reader that this was the same Daniel whom we met in preceding chapters (cf. 1:7). He was the Daniel who had unusual skill in understanding visions and dreams (1:17).

The message that came to Daniel was a revelation from God that included a vision. The emphasis on "message" in this verse may indicate that, in contrast to the preceding visions, this one came primarily as a spoken message, perhaps again from an angel. Daniel claimed that the message was true and that it involved a revelation of great conflict to come. The AV translation "the time appointed was long" has less linguistic support, but the message did involve prophecy yet far distant in the future. Daniel apparently understood this vision better than he had some of the earlier ones (e.g., 8:27). This verse as a whole prepares the reader for the revelation itself, which has major significance.

"The revelation in the vision given to Daniel on this occasion shattered any hope the prophet might have had that Israel would enjoy her new freedom and peace for long."⁴⁷³

Daniel's personal preparations 10:2-3

The vision in chapter 9 came after Daniel had been praying and fasting (9:3). The vision that follows also came to him after he had been mourning, fasting, and undoubtedly praying, for three weeks (cf. 1:11-13). Obviously these were literal weeks of days.

⁴⁷¹E.g., Montgomery, p. 405.

⁴⁷²Young, p. 223. See also R. D. Wilson, "The Title 'King of Persia' in the Scriptures," *Princeton Theological Review* 15 (1917):90-145.

⁴⁷³Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1365.

Perhaps they were the days in which the Jewish Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were celebrated.⁴⁷⁴ Evidently, the previous revelations from God, and the welfare of the Jews—who had returned to Palestine but were encountering opposition, were the reasons for Daniel's grave concern (cf. Ezra 4:1-5, 24; Phil. 4:6-7). Even though many Israelites were returning to Palestine, God had already revealed that they would experience trouble there.

Daniel's vision of the man by the Tigris river 10:4-9

10:4 Daniel had gone to the Tigris (*Hiddekel*, AV; cf. Gen. 2:14) River, perhaps to pray for the exiles who had returned, and he had probably gone there with other godly Jews. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread fell on the fourteenth through the twenty-first days of the first month. The Jews did not observe these festivals in captivity as they had formerly in their own land. Three days after these important memorial days, God gave Daniel a vision that he alone saw (cf. 12:5).

10:5-6 The man whom Daniel saw in this vision was probably the Son of God.⁴⁷⁵ The Jewish interpreters and some modern Christian scholars preferred the view that he was an angel.⁴⁷⁶ The similarities between this man, and the one Ezekiel and the Apostle John saw, argue for his being divine (cf. Ezek. 1:26-28; Rev. 1:13-16; 2:18). However, what this man proceeded to say (esp. v. 13) has led some to prefer the view that he was an angel.

Expensive linen dress is what the priests in Israel wore, and it distinguished them as God's special servants. Likewise, the sash around this angel's waist, evidently embroidered with or made completely of the best gold, would have identified him as a special person. The meaning of "Uphaz" is uncertain. It may be the same as "Ophir," since the translators of the Syriac version of Jeremiah substituted "Ophir" for "Uphaz" in Jeremiah 10:9.

The location of Ophir is also uncertain. It may have been in southwestern or southeastern Arabia, on the northeast African coast, or in India.⁴⁷⁷ Alternatively, "Uphaz" may be a technical term for "refined gold."⁴⁷⁸ The personal descriptions of this man resemble what John saw on the island of Patmos, namely: the Son of God (Rev. 1:13-16; cf. Ezek. 1:13-14). All these features picture a person of great glory and splendor.

⁴⁷⁴*The Nelson . . .*, p. 1438.

⁴⁷⁵Keil, p. 409; Young, p. 225; McGee, 3:591; Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 243; Feinberg, p. 141; Whitcomb, p. 138; Campbell, p. 118; Merrill, "A Theology . . .," p. 388; Wiersbe, p. 297; Culver, "Daniel," p. 796.

⁴⁷⁶E.g., Leupold, pp. 447-48; Archer, "Daniel," p. 123; Pentecost, "Daniel," pp. 1365-66; Baldwin, p. 180; and Ironside, p. 174.

⁴⁷⁷*The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Ophir," by D. J. Wiseman, p. 911.

⁴⁷⁸*Ibid.*, s.v. "Uphaz," by D. J. Wiseman, p. 1304.

"The impression given to Daniel was that the entire body of the man in the vision was like a gigantic transparent jewel reflecting the glory of the rest of the vision."⁴⁷⁹

10:7-9 Daniel's companions, sensing that something awesome was happening (cf. Acts 9:7; 22:9), hid themselves while Daniel viewed what God showed him (v. 7). His personal reaction to this vision was also similar to the Apostle John's (v. 8; cf. 8:27; Rev. 1:17). The words of the person Daniel saw, along with his glorious appearance, caused the prophet to faint (v. 9).

The subject of the revelation 10:10-14

10:10-11 The "man" who touched Daniel and who proceeded to speak to him may have been the same one the prophet saw in the vision (vv. 5-6). Walvoord held, correctly I think, that the person in verses 5-6 was God, but the person in verses 10-21 was an angel.⁴⁸⁰ He might have been Gabriel, since God sent Gabriel to Daniel on other occasions (8:16; 9:21), but that is just speculation.⁴⁸¹

The angel described Daniel as a "man of high esteem" (cf. 9:23; 10:19). We know that Daniel enjoyed a good reputation among his contemporaries, but this title probably reflects God's estimate of him. The Hebrew words (*'ish hemudot*) literally mean "man of preciousness." Daniel was precious to God, not only because he was one of God's chosen people, but also because God had been precious to him.

". . . Daniel's privileged status as one especially precious to God resulted from his complete absorption in the will and glory of the Lord to whom he had yielded his heart."⁴⁸²

It was only appropriate for Daniel to "stand" in order to receive a message from this impressive messenger from God.

10:12 Still, it was an unnerving experience for Daniel to stand in the presence of such a glorious person. The angel realized how Daniel felt and encouraged him not to fear. The angel informed the prophet that God had heard his first prayer for understanding, and that what follows came in answer to that petition (cf. 9:23). Humbling himself before God involved taking the role of a learner before Him.

"This verse constitutes a great encouragement to those whose prayers are not answered immediately. The cause of

⁴⁷⁹Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 243.

⁴⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 243, 245.

⁴⁸¹McGee, 3:592.

⁴⁸²Archer, "Daniel," p. 124.

the delay may be something totally unknown to us; yet although the answer may be delayed, the prayer is always heard immediately."⁴⁸³

10:13 Someone had delayed the arrival of God's answer to Daniel's prayer. He was the "prince of Persia," evidently a fallen angel who, under Satan's authority, had a special responsibility for Persia (cf. v. 20; Eph. 2:2). Clearly, "prince" here refers to an angel, since Michael was also called a "prince" (vv. 13, 21).⁴⁸⁴ "The prince of Persia" must have been an evil angel since he opposed God's purpose. Angelic hostility in the unseen world had resulted in the 21-day delay of this good angel's arrival with God's message (cf. v. 2).

"The powers of evil apparently have the capacity to bring about hindrances and delays, even of the delivery of the answers to believers whose requests God is minded to answer. . . .

"While God can, of course, override the united resistance of all the forces of hell if he chooses to do so, he accords to demons certain limited powers of obstruction and rebellion somewhat like those he allows humans. In both cases the exercise of free will in opposition to the Lord of heaven is permitted by him when he sees fit. But as Job 1:12 and 2:6 indicate, the malignity of Satan is never allowed to go beyond the due limit set by God, who will not allow the believer to be tested beyond his limit (1 Cor 10:13)."⁴⁸⁵

It seems unlikely to me that the prince of Persia could have resisted the Son of God this way, if He were the person addressing Daniel. Moreover, God's messenger had received help from Michael, one of the chief princes (angels), so it seems unlikely that he was God Himself. Some angels have more authority and power than others do (Eph. 1:21).

It may be that a situation in the political life of Persia was the human occasion of this delay. Perhaps some human rulers in the Persian court were opposing legislation that favored the Jews.⁴⁸⁶

"Although the entire subject of the unseen struggle between the holy angels and the fallen angels is not clearly revealed in the Scriptures, from the rare glimpses which are afforded, as in this instance, it is plain that behind the

⁴⁸³Feinberg, p. 141.

⁴⁸⁴See Zöckler, 7:2:228, in Lange's commentary, for further support.

⁴⁸⁵Archer, "Daniel," pp. 124, 125.

⁴⁸⁶D[arby], p. 75.

political and social conditions of the world there is angelic influence—good on the part of the holy angels, evil on the part of the angels under satanic control. This is the struggle to which Paul referred in Ephesians 6:10-18."⁴⁸⁷

"Bad angels, called demons in the New Testament, are, without a doubt, referred to here. In the course of time, these demonic powers gained a very strong influence over certain nations and the government of these nations. They became the controlling power. They used whatever resources they could muster to hamper God's work and to thwart His purposes."⁴⁸⁸

Evidently the good angel who spoke to Daniel had performed some duty in Persia that involved the kings or rulers of that land. However, having received a commission from God to visit Daniel, he was not able to break away to deliver it because of the influence of the bad angel who exercised strong influence over Persia. Michael visited the good angel and helped him break away from this wicked angel's power so he could visit Daniel.

Keil projected this idea even further. His view is speculation.

"The plural [kings of Persia] denotes, that by the subjugation of the demon of the Persian kingdom, his influence not merely over Cyrus, but over all the following kings of Persia, was brought to an end, so that the whole of the Persian kings became accessible to the influence of the spirit proceeding from God and in advancing the welfare of Israel."⁴⁸⁹

There has been much interest in spiritual warfare in recent years among professing Christians.⁴⁹⁰ Certainly spiritual warfare is a biblical revelation, and we need to be aware of it and live accordingly. However, much that is being taught about spiritual warfare, and particularly about "territorial demons," goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. (The idea that there are "territorial demons" rests primarily on Daniel 10:13.)

For example, there is no biblical instruction or precedent that would justify praying against, and claiming victory over certain demons by name, as some are doing and advocating today. Clearly, Daniel did not know about this heavenly conflict between these angels. Michael's success was not due to Daniel's praying, for or against, certain angels or demons.

⁴⁸⁷Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 247.

⁴⁸⁸Leupold, pp. 457-58.

⁴⁸⁹Keil, p. 419.

⁴⁹⁰See the bibliography at the end of these notes for some titles.

"Daniel, while supporting the idea of territorial identification of certain angels especially in chap. 10, does not support any sort of human involvement in angelic warfare."⁴⁹¹

There may be hindrances to our praying—about which we know nothing—as we wonder why an answer to our prayer does not come. Nevertheless we should keep on praying (Luke 18:1-8). This incident reminds us of the importance of persisting in prayer. If Daniel had stopped praying on the twentieth day, he might not have received the great revelation of chapter 11 on the twenty-first day.

- 10:14 The good angel had come to explain to Daniel what would happen to the Jews in the latter days yet future. Daniel had already received some revelation about what lay ahead for the Jews (8:23-26; 9:24-27). It was evidently this revelation that puzzled him and led to his requesting clarification in prayer (v. 2). What follows in 11:2—12:4 is more information on this subject. As in 8:23-26 and 9:24-27, 11:2—12:4 contains information about Israel's fate relative to Antiochus Epiphanes, in the near future, and information about Israel's fate relative to Antichrist, in the distant future.

Daniel's continuing weakness 10:15-17

- 10:15 Apparently the angel's explanation about the angelic conflict was something about which Daniel had known nothing. His only reaction to this information, on top of the vision that he had just seen, was to bow his head and silently accept this revelation.
- 10:16-17 The one who resembled a human being was probably an angel who touched his lips and thereby enabled him to speak (cf. 7:16; 8:15-19; 9:21-22; Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9). The prophet proceeded to explain to the angel that the vision had caused him anxiety and had robbed him of his strength (cf. Isa. 6:5). He said he felt so inferior to the angel that he considered himself unworthy to talk to him.⁴⁹² Furthermore, he felt without sufficient strength and breath to do so.

Daniel's further strengthening 10:18-19

- 10:18 This is the third instance in this chapter, of Daniel receiving strength from an angel who touched him (vv. 10, 16; cf. Heb. 1:14). Compare Luke's record of an angel strengthening Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44). This human-appearing angel was probably the same one who

⁴⁹¹Gerry Breshears, "The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest, or King?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:1 (March 1994):14.

⁴⁹²R. H. Charles, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 116.

touched Daniel's lips (v. 16), but he is perhaps different from the angel who had helped him to his feet (v. 10).

10:19 The angel repeated the complimentary description "man of high esteem" (cf. v. 11; 9:23), which reassured Daniel. He also encouraged him not to fear, to feel at peace, to take courage, and to be courageous (v. 19; cf. Josh. 1:9). These words strengthened the aged prophet (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10), and he asked the angel to give him the rest of the revelation.

The total effect of these many verses that dwell on Daniel's felt weakness, and the strength that an angel or angels provided him, is to make the reader anticipate the following revelation. It is very important.

"This vision [in 11:2—12:4] contains the most detailed prophetic revelation in the Book of Daniel."⁴⁹³

The angel's explanation of his activity 10:20—11:1

10:20 The angel asked if Daniel knew why he had come to him. He apparently did this to focus the prophet's attention on the vision to follow, and since Daniel was quite weak.

The angel informed Daniel that he had to return to resume fighting against the demon who was influencing Persia (v. 13), and then battle the one that would be influencing Greece. The prince of Greece may be a reference to Alexander the Great.⁴⁹⁴ Persia and Greece, of course, are two of the kingdoms that have been the focus of prophecy in this book (chs. 2; 7; 8; 9; 11:2-4, 5-35).

"From this we can learn that, behind the many details of prophecy relating to the history of this period, there is the unseen struggle between angelic forces that the will of God may be accomplished."⁴⁹⁵

10:21 The "writing of truth" seems to refer to all that God has recorded as truth. This includes Scripture, but it also includes all that is true that God has not revealed. The angel would make *part* of what God had established as "truth" known to Daniel. The angel intended this revelation to encourage Daniel, in view of his having to leave the prophet to return to spiritual warfare.

Likewise, the fact that Michael *stood* with this angel in his warfare, would have encouraged Daniel—even though Michael was apparently his only other angelic comrade in battle. "Your prince" links Michael with Daniel,

⁴⁹³Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1366.

⁴⁹⁴Feinberg, p. 145.

⁴⁹⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 250.

and identifies Michael as the good angel whom God had commissioned to help him and his Jewish brethren (12:1; cf. Rev. 12:7; 20:2).

"It is encouraging for God's people to know that he has mighty champions among the holy angels whose task is to defend the saints against the attacks of the evil one."⁴⁹⁶

11:1 This verse actually concludes the tenth chapter. The NASB (1971 ed.), NIV, and NKJV translators have sought to clarify this fact by making this verse the last part of the parenthetical statement begun in 10:21. Without observing this, we might conclude that another reference to a king introduces a different incident from the one already introduced in 10:1 (cf. 1:1; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1).

The angel concluded his encouragement of Daniel, by adding that he had been responsible for encouraging and protecting Darius the Mede during the beginning of his reign over Babylon. Another, less likely interpretation, is that the antecedent of "him" is Michael rather than Darius. I think it is less likely in view of the apparent point of this verse explained below.

As mentioned previously (see my comment on 5:31), "Darius" was probably another name for Cyrus. The angel may have used it here because it was a title that Daniel preferred (cf. 5:31; 6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1). The first year of Darius in view was the first year of his reign as king of Babylon, namely, 539 B.C. Almost immediately, in 538 B.C., Darius (Cyrus) had issued his decree allowing the Jews to return from exile. Obviously this angel's ministry had been effective and had resulted in blessing for the Jews. This king had also issued a decree commanding everyone in his kingdom to honor Yahweh (6:26-27), assuming *that* incident happened before the events of chapters 10—12.

Thus, the point of this verse is that the good fortune that the Israelites now experienced, under Darius, had been the result of successful angelic warfare in the heavenly realms. This change for the better would encourage Daniel as he pondered the future revelation of Israel's fortunes that he was about to receive. Three antagonists of Israel would seek to implement the plan of Satan and his angels to eliminate the Jews: Haman, Antiochus, and Antichrist. Nevertheless holy angels, though invisible, would resist them effectively.

2. The near future 11:2-35

The interpreting angel now explained the long anticipated (since 10:1) revelation about the future that involved Daniel's people, the Jews. The first part of it concerns events

⁴⁹⁶Archer, "Daniel," p. 127. Cf. Heb. 1:14.

preceding Messiah's first advent (vv. 2-35), and the second part, events preceding Messiah's second advent (11:36—12:4).⁴⁹⁷

Four future Persian kings 11:2

This revelation begins at the same place as the vision of the ram and the goat in chapter 8. It begins with the second kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's image (ch. 2) and with the second of the four beasts (ch. 7), namely, Medo-Persia.

Daniel learned that three more Persian kings would arise after Darius (Cyrus, cf. 10:1). Historically, these proved to be Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis (also known as Gaumata and Bardiya), and Darius I. The fourth Persian king to appear *did become* stronger than his predecessors, and he attacked Greece—just as predicted. He was Xerxes I (Ahasuerus). Some conservative scholars do not count Pseudo-Smerdis, but identify the third king as Xerxes, and the fourth as Artaxerxes I (465-424, Ezra 7:11-26). However, Artaxerxes did not contend with Greece as Xerxes did. Xerxes attacked Greece in 480 B.C. with a huge army, but he suffered defeat and never recovered. This battle probably happened between chapters 1 and 2 of Esther.⁴⁹⁸

"After his [Xerxes'] great army (estimated by Herodotus at a million men) had subdued virtually all of Greece down to the Isthmus of Corinth and the city of Athens had been reduced to ashes, Xerxes' navy was thoroughly worsted by the united Greek fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. This unexpected setback prompted him to beat a hasty retreat to Asia. The one-hundred-thousand-man land army he left behind under the command of Mardonius was completely crushed in the following year by the allied forces of the Greeks at the battle of Plataea."⁴⁹⁹

The rise and fall of Alexander the Great 11:3-4

11:3 The mighty king who arose and did as he pleased proved to be Alexander the Great (cf. 2:32, 39b; 7:6; 8:5-8, 21). He was, of course, Greek. His invasion of the Persian Empire was in large part retaliation for Xerxes' attacks against his people. He first attacked the Persians at the Granicus River near Constantinople in 334 B.C., and finally overthrew the Persian yoke at Gaugamela near Nineveh in 331 B.C. His conquest of the ancient world took only five years (334-330 B.C.).

⁴⁹⁷The primary sources of information about Daniel's predicted events that preceded Messiah's first advent (vv. 2-35), apart from Daniel himself, are the second-century B.C. Greek historian Polybius, the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, the first-century B.C. writer Diodorus Siculus, the Roman historian Livy (ca. 59 B.C.-A.D. 17), Josephus, the second-century A.D. writer Appian, and the historian Porphyry, whom Jerome quoted. See Goldingay, p. 293; Baldwin, p. 190.

⁴⁹⁸See the chart of Persian Kings of the Restoration Period under my comments on 5:31 above.

⁴⁹⁹Archer, "Daniel," p. 128.

11:4 After conquering most of the ancient world, even farther east than the Persian Empire had extended, Alexander died prematurely in Babylon, his imperial capital, in 323 B.C. His two sons, Hercules and Alexander, were both murdered when they were very young, as was his uncle, Philip Arrhidaeus.

Consequently, Alexander's kingdom eventually was divided up between his four leading generals (cf. 7:6; 8:8, 22). Cassander ruled Macedonia-Greece, Lysimachus governed Thrace-Asia Minor, Seleucus took the rest of Asia except lower Syria and Palestine, and Ptolemy reigned over Egypt and Palestine. This Greek Empire following Alexander's demise did not retain the strength that it had previously under the centralized authority of Alexander.

Conflicts between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids 11:5-20

The angel now began describing the affairs of two kingdoms whose kings he called "the king of the South" and "the king of the North." These north and south directions are in relation to Palestine, the land of Daniel and his people. The nation to the south was Egypt (v. 8), which Ptolemy I and his descendants ruled. The kingdom to the north was what later became Syria, which Seleucus I and his heirs governed. Shortly after the division of Alexander's kingdom into four parts, this Syrian kingdom included much of Asia Minor in the West, and it extended into India in the East. The Holy Land stood between these two great powers, Egypt and Syria, and it became territory that each one coveted and tried to possess.

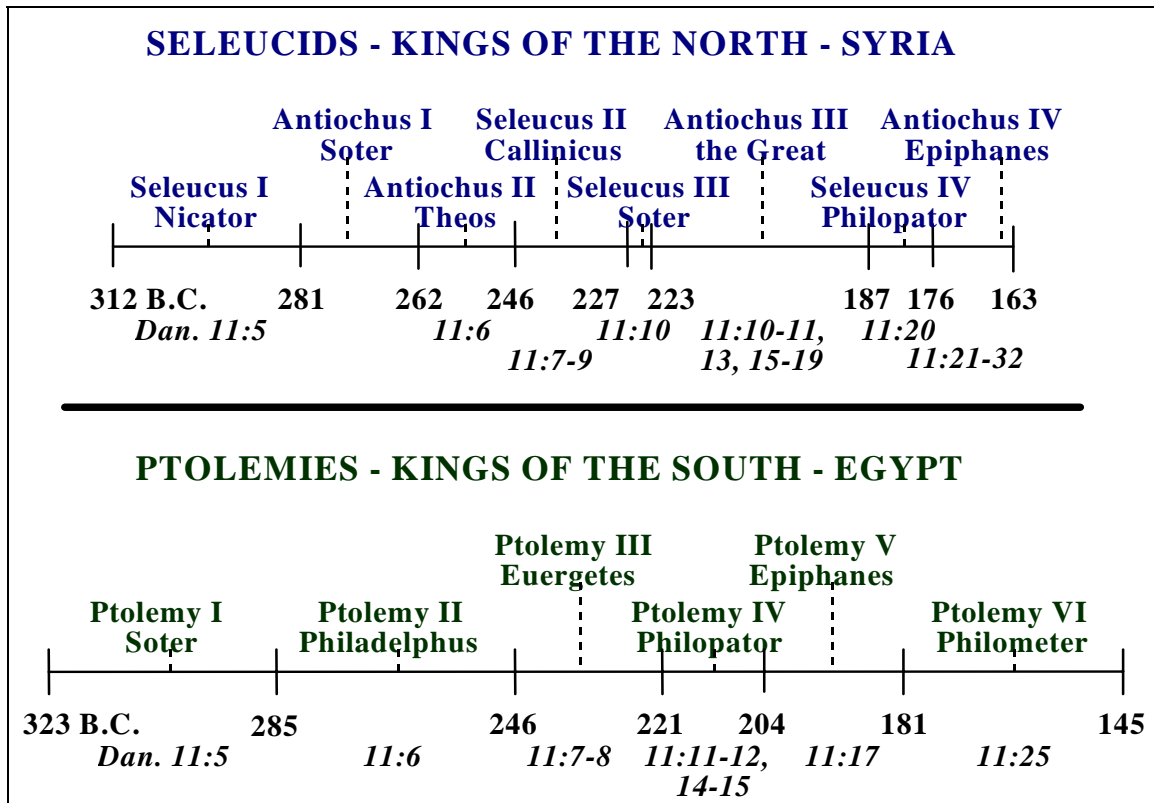
11:5 The king described in this verse proved to be Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.), one of Alexander's most powerful generals, who proclaimed himself king of Egypt in 304 B.C. He was an ambitious monarch who sought to extend his holdings north into Cyprus, Asia Minor, and Greece. His dynasty ruled Egypt until 30 B.C.

The "prince" under the king of the South, who would gain ascendancy over the king of the South, was Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 B.C.), another of Alexander's most prominent generals. He had gained authority to rule Babylon in 321 B.C. However, in 316 B.C., another of Alexander's generals, Antigonus, attacked Babylon. Seleucus sought help from Ptolemy I, and with Ptolemy's sponsorship and superior power was able to retain control of Babylon. He was in this sense Ptolemy's prince; he submitted to him to gain his military support against Antigonus.

Seleucus I eventually ruled all of Babylonia, Media, and Syria, a territory much larger than Ptolemy's. He assumed the title "king" in 305 B.C., and was "the king of the North" referred to in this verse. His dynasty lasted until 64 B.C.

11:6 In the South, Ptolemy I eventually died in 285 B.C., leaving his throne to his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.).⁵⁰⁰ Philadelphus was friendly toward the Jews and sponsored the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek.⁵⁰¹

In the North, Seleucus I was the victim of an assassin in 281 B.C., and his son, Antiochus I Soter (281-262 B.C.), began ruling in his place. Antiochus I died in 262 B.C. and left his son, Antiochus II, in power.



Ptolemy II of Egypt and Antiochus II of Syria were contemporaries. They were also bitter enemies. However, they finally made an alliance about 250 B.C., which they sealed with the marriage of Ptolemy II's daughter, Berenice, to Antiochus II. When Ptolemy II died in 246 B.C., Antiochus II took back his first wife, Laodice, whom Antiochus had divorced to marry Berenice. Laodice is the woman for whom the town of Laodicea in Asia Minor was named (Rev. 3:14; et al.). Similarly, the towns of Antioch, in Syria and in Asia Minor, received their names from this Antiochus. Antioch of Syria was the capital of Syria during the Selucid dynasty.

⁵⁰⁰Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:2:1.

⁵⁰¹See *ibid.*, 12:2:6, 13.

To gain revenge, Laodice had Berenice and her infant son by Antiochus murdered. Laodice also poisoned Antiochus and ruled in his place briefly. Her son, Seleucus II, then succeeded his father, Antiochus II, and ruled Syria beginning in 246 B.C. Berenice is the woman the angel referred to in this verse.

The NASB text says, "She [Berenice] will not retain her position of power [as queen of the North], but she will be given up [by her husband, Antiochus II], along with those who brought her in [perhaps the diplomats who arranged the marriage], and the one who sired her [her father, Ptolemy II], as well as he who supported her in those times [perhaps her supporting patron]."

- 11:7 Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III (246-222 B.C.), whose other name, "Euergetes," means "Benefactor," succeeded his father and determined to avenge Berenice's death. He attacked Seleucus II at Antioch in Syria and killed Laodice. He also conquered much adjacent territory and remained the foremost power in the region for the rest of his reign.
- 11:8 Ptolemy III returned to Egypt from Antioch with much spoil, including idols and precious vessels from the temples and treasure houses of Syria. He also signed a treaty with Seleucus II in 240 B.C. that resulted in peace between their two nations.
- 11:9 Evidently Seleucus II invaded Egypt later unsuccessfully, though I know of no record of this in secular history.
- 11:10 Seleucus II's son, Seleucus III Ceraunus (sometimes called Soter, 226-223 B.C.), succeeded his father upon his death in 227 B.C. However, Seleucus III himself died not many years later in 223 B.C., and his brother, Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.), became king of the North. Both of these sons of Seleucus II had sought to restore Syria's glory. Seleucus III invaded Asia Minor, and later Antiochus III attacked Egypt.

Though Antiochus III did not defeat Egypt, he was successful in gaining control of Israel during his campaign of 219-217 B.C. Egypt's northern border had until then been Syria, but Antiochus III drove the Egyptians, then led by Ptolemy IV, back to the southern borders of Israel. He earned the epithet "the Great" because of his military successes.

All of this prediction did not just prove that God can anticipate history by hundreds of years, an amazing fact in itself. It also set the stage for events in the Holy Land, which was the primary concern of this revelation to Daniel.

- 11:11 In an attempt to recapture his lost territory to the north, Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 B.C.) attacked Antiochus III on the southern borders of Israel, specifically at Raphia in 217 B.C. Initially he was successful.

"Antiochus lost his entire army and was almost captured as he fled to the desert."⁵⁰²

- 11:12 Ptolemy IV was proud and did not pursue his advantage, even though he killed many Syrians. He did acquire all of Palestine, however.
- 11:13 Antiochus III then proceeded to turn in other directions for conquests, specifically to his east and to his north. About 203 B.C., Antiochus III returned with a much larger army and repulsed the Egyptians, who were then under the rule of the child king, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.). Antiochus was able to retake Palestine as far south as Gaza.
- 11:14 The Macedonians under Philip V of Macedonia and the Jews living in Israel joined Antiochus III in opposing the Egyptians. Evidently some of the politically zealous Jews believed that they could gain more freedom if Antiochus III succeeded, but that did not happen.
- 11:15 The fortified city that Antiochus III besieged and took was Sidon, which he defeated about 200 B.C. There he forced the Egyptian General Scopas, whom he had recently defeated at Paneas (biblical Dan), near the headwaters of the Jordan River, to surrender. Three other Egyptian commanders tried to free Scopas from Sidon, but they failed. The king of the north in this instance was Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.).
- 11:16 Antiochus III continued to solidify Syrian control over Palestine without successful opposition from the Egyptians.
- "When Scopas finally surrendered to Antiochus III at Sidon, the Holy Land was permanently acquired by the Antioch [Syrian] government, to the exclusion of Egypt."⁵⁰³
- When Antiochus III entered Jerusalem, the populace welcomed him as a deliverer and benefactor.
- 11:17 Antiochus III, under threat from Rome, then initiated peace with Egypt and offered his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V in marriage to cement their alliance.⁵⁰⁴ He hoped that Cleopatra would remain pro-Syrian and that her loyalty to him would give him control over Egypt. This attempt failed, however. Cleopatra consistently sided with her husband against her father, even though Ptolemy V was then only a boy.
- 11:18 Antiochus III then turned his attention to the Aegean coast and sought to conquer Asia Minor and Greece. He had been contemptuous of Roman authority in Greece and had said the Romans had no business there.

⁵⁰²Jerome, p. 124.

⁵⁰³Archer, "Daniel," p. 132.

⁵⁰⁴Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:4:1.

Antiochus did not succeed completely because a Roman commander named Claudius Scipio resisted him effectively. He is the commander that fulfilled the prophecy in this verse.

- 11:19 Antiochus III returned to Antioch where he died a year later in 187 B.C. He had tried to reunite Alexander the Great's empire under his own authority, but he failed largely because he underestimated the power of the rising Roman Empire. Nevertheless Antiochus III, "the Great," was a brilliant and successful military leader.
- 11:20 Antiochus' elder son, Seleucus IV, succeeded his father. He taxed his people, including the Jews, so heavily to pay Rome that his Jewish tax collector, Heliodorus (2 Macc. 3:7), poisoned him. Heliodorus was evidently the oppressor that Seleucus sent through "the jewel of his kingdom," namely, Israel, collecting taxes. This assassination set the stage for the terrible persecutions of the Jews that followed. Thus Seleucus IV did not die because of mob violence, as his father had, or in battle, but from poison, as this verse predicted.

The great persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes 11:21-35

God gave more information about the following individual than He did about all the preceding ones combined. The reason is his devastating influence on the Jews. During his tenure as king, Syria was in decline and Rome gained power. Antiochus IV corresponds to the little horn of chapter 8 (8:9-12, 23-25), and he foreshadows the little horn of chapter 7 (7:8), Antichrist.

"The earlier kings are described to provide a background for Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), and he is given ample attention because he foreshadows Antichrist of the end times. The movement of the chapter is toward these two significant personages who dramatically affect the fate of the Jews."⁵⁰⁵

- 11:21 The Seleucid king who succeeded Seleucus IV was the younger son of Antiochus III, namely, Antiochus IV Epiphanes ("Illustrious One," 175-164 B.C.).⁵⁰⁶ Antiochus IV honored himself by taking on the name "Epiphanes." As mentioned previously, he linked "Epiphanes" with "Theos" on coins that he minted and so claimed to be "God manifest." However, he proved so untrustworthy that many people made a play on his name and called him "Epimanes" ("madman").

The Seleucid kingdom's throne rightly belonged to one of the sons of Seleucus IV, the former king and brother of Antiochus IV, but Antiochus IV seized it for himself and had himself proclaimed king. He persuaded

⁵⁰⁵Campbell, p. 127.

⁵⁰⁶Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:4:11.

the leaders of Syria to allow him to rule since Demetrius, the eldest son of Seleucus IV, was being held hostage in Rome. In this way, through scheming to gain power, he secured the throne for himself.

- 11:22 Antiochus IV was successful in battle against the Egyptians initially, which this verse describes as "flooding away" the overwhelming forces opposed to him. The Egyptian king was now Ptolemy VI, whom Antiochus deceived and then defeated.

"It was Epiphanes' policy to throw his intended victims off guard by offering them his friendship and alliance. Then he would maneuver for an advantageous position till he could catch them by surprise."⁵⁰⁷

Note the parallel strategy of Antichrist (9:27). Antiochus also swept away the Jewish high priest, Onias III, here called "the prince of the covenant," about 172 B.C. Another view is that Ptolemy VI was "the prince of the covenant" since Antiochus later made a treaty with him. However, the term "covenant" in this chapter seems to refer to the Jewish state (cf. vv. 28, 32).

- 11:23 This verse probably refers to the alliance that Antiochus made with Ptolemy VI in 170 B.C. This treaty was part of a plot to advance his own power in Egypt by siding with Ptolemy VI and against his rival for the Egyptian throne.
- 11:24 Antiochus craftily pillaged the treasures of his provinces, but not to grow rich himself as his predecessors had done. He used this wealth to bribe and manipulate other leaders to cooperate with his plans. In this way he enlarged his power base (cf. 1 Macc. 3:30).
- 11:25 After Antiochus had grown strong enough, he marched his army against Ptolemy VI in 170 B.C.⁵⁰⁸ This was his first campaign against Egypt. He was able to get all the way to the Nile Delta before the Egyptians discovered that he was approaching. He exercised much influence over Egypt, usually pretending to be an ally, and then using this enemy for his own advantage. Notice how the text highlights Antiochus' deceptiveness. We can see again how he was a forerunner of the future Antichrist.
- 11:26 Those who ate Ptolemy's choice food, those who should have supported him, plotted to destroy him. Eventually his army suffered defeat and many soldiers died (1 Macc. 1:16-19).

⁵⁰⁷Archer, "Daniel," p. 136.

⁵⁰⁸Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:5:2.

- 11:27 This battle was successful in part because Antiochus claimed to be fighting for Ptolemy against a usurper within Egypt. When the battle was over, Antiochus and Ptolemy sat down together at a banquet, pretending to want peace. Actually, each king was trying to make the most of the situation for his own advantage.
- 11:28 As a result of this "peace conference," Antiochus returned home with much plunder. Then his interests turned from Egypt to Israel.
- A Jew named Jason wanted to be high priest. Knowing Antiochus' reputation, Jason offered the king a bribe to depose the current high priest, Onias III. Antiochus cooperated. This state of affairs encouraged another pretender to the high priesthood, Menelaus, to try the same tactic against Jason. Antiochus cooperated again. Onias, whom the Jews respected, objected and lost his life for doing so.
- Antiochus executed certain individuals for their alleged roles in these maneuverings. However, he did not punish Jason or Menelaus, but instead scapegoated the people of Jerusalem—again in response to bribes. After Jason attempted a *coup de etat* thinking that Antiochus was dead, Antiochus entered Jerusalem, slew 80,000 men, and, accompanied by Menelaus, desecrated the temple. This happened in 168 B.C.⁵⁰⁹
- 11:29 In the same year, Antiochus decided to attack Egypt. When he arrived with his army, the Roman consul, Popillius Laenas, met him at Alexandria and prevented him from invading Egypt. Consequently he was not able to do what he wanted with Egypt as he had previously.
- 11:30 The ships from Kittim (Cyprus) that came against him belonged to Popillius Laenas and Rome. Antiochus had to return home, since to do otherwise would have meant declaring war on Rome, a foe he could not hope to defeat. He returned to Syria disappointed.
- Again he took out his frustration on the Jews in Jerusalem who observed the "holy covenant" (i.e., the Mosaic Law; cf. v. 28). He favored the renegade Jews who had abandoned the Mosaic Law (cf. 1 Macc. 2:18; 2 Macc. 6:1). Menelaus and his henchmen, for example, willingly abandoned their religious scruples, rather than oppose Antiochus who had put them in power.
- 11:31 Antiochus ordered his general, Apollonius, and a contingent of 22,000 soldiers, into Jerusalem on what he claimed was a peaceful mission. However, when they were inside the city, they attacked the Jews on a Sabbath, when the Jews were reluctant to exert themselves. Apollonius killed many Jews, took many Jewish women and children captive as

⁵⁰⁹Cf. *ibid.*, 12:5:3.

slaves, plundered the temple, and burned the city. Antiochus' objective was to exterminate Judaism and to Hellenize Palestine. Consequently he prohibited the Jews from following the Mosaic Law, and did away with the Jewish sacrifices, festivals, and circumcision (1 Macc. 1:44-54).⁵¹⁰ He even burned copies of their law. As a culminating measure, he installed an image of Zeus, his Greek god, in the temple and erected an altar to Zeus on the altar of burnt offerings (cf. 2 Macc. 6:2).

This was not the first time such a sacrilege had been committed. King Ahaz had set up an idolatrous altar (2 Kings 16:10-16), and King Manasseh had installed images of pagan gods (2 Kings 21:3-5), in the first temple. Then Antiochus sacrificed a pig, an unclean animal to the Jews, on the altar, and ordered the Jews to sacrifice swine's flesh on the altar.⁵¹¹ This happened on December 16, 168 B.C. The Jews referred to this act as "the abomination that caused desolation" (cf. 12:11), since it polluted their altar and made sacrifices to Yahweh on it impossible (cf. 8:23-25). Antiochus further ordered his Jewish subjects to celebrate his subsequent birthdays by offering a pig to Zeus on this altar.

Jesus Christ indicated that another, similar atrocity, would befall the Jews in the future (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). By the way, Jesus Christ's explicit reference to "the prophet Daniel" being the writer of this prophecy in these verses should be proof enough that Daniel, rather than a second-century writer, wrote this book. Jesus referred to the coming atrocity literally as "the abomination that causes desolation," the exact words used in the Septuagint version of this verse in Daniel.

Thus Antiochus' actions were a *preview* of similar atrocities that are yet to befall the Jews. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman general Titus has seemed to some interpreters to fulfill Jesus' prediction. However, Titus did not treat the Jews as Antiochus did. Furthermore the Book of Revelation, which dates after the destruction of Jerusalem, predicts the coming of a "beast" who will behave as Antiochus did, only on a larger scale (Rev. 13).⁵¹²

"Antiochus thus becomes a type of the future man of sin and his activities foreshadow the ultimate blasphemous persecution of Israel and the desecration of their temple."⁵¹³

"Just as the Saviour had Solomon and the other saints as types of His advent, so also we should believe that the

⁵¹⁰Cf. Josephus, *The Wars . . .*, 1:1:1.

⁵¹¹Cf. Idem, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:5:4; 12:7:6; idem, *The Wars . . .*, 1:1:2.

⁵¹²See Mark L. Hitchcock, "A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary), 2005, for defense of this date.

⁵¹³Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 268.

Antichrist very properly had as a type of himself the utterly wicked king, Antiochus, who persecuted the saints and defiled the Temple."⁵¹⁴

11:32 Antiochus deceived many Jews with his flattery and promises (cf. 1 Macc. 1:11-15). They participated in the worship of Zeus.

"This tyrant was a past master in manipulating Jewish leaders who were divided in their loyalties, winning them over to his cause by glowing promises of preferment and reward. As a matter of fact, Antiochus already had as partisans for his cause a considerable number of influential leaders in Jerusalem society and politics who were convinced of the expediency of a pro-Hellenic policy. . . .

"In some ways this defection of the would-be 'progressives' among the Jews themselves was an even more serious threat to the survival of Israel as a nation than the tyrannical measures of Antiochus. For it was the same kind of large-scale betrayal of their covenant obligations toward the Lord that had made inevitable the former destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity in the days of Jeremiah."⁵¹⁵

This most repulsive of all insults to the Jews precipitated the Maccabean revolt, in which thousands of Jews rebelled against Antiochus. Initiated by a priest named Mattathias from the town of Modein (Moden) in Ephraim, and led by three of his sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon (cf. 1 Macc. 2:23-28), this nationalistic movement eventually overthrew the Seleucids in Palestine.⁵¹⁶

The word "Maccabee" is the Greek form of the surname of Judas ben Mattathias (1 Macc. 2:4). The Jews applied this name to the whole family of Mattathias and to the party within Israel that his sons led. The word itself also meant "hammer" or "eradicator" as in "the terminator." Judas Maccabeus slew Antiochus' general, Apollonius, in battle.⁵¹⁷ Later, he and his brothers achieved many important victories that freed the Jews.⁵¹⁸

11:33 Antiochus' persecutions gave impetus to the Chassidim ("the godly, pious, loyal ones") movement that was already underway in Israel. The Chassidim advocated strict adherence to the Mosaic Law and the traditions

⁵¹⁴Jerome, p. 130.

⁵¹⁵Archer, "Daniel," p. 140.

⁵¹⁶Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 12:6:1; 13:1-2, 4-7.

⁵¹⁷Cf. *ibid.*, 12:7:1; *idem*, *The Wars . . .*, 1:1:3.

⁵¹⁸Cf. *idem*, *The Antiquities . . .*, 12:7-11; *idem*, *The Wars . . .*, 1:1:4; 1:2:2.

of Judaism. Even today, the strictest orthodox Jews refer to themselves as Hasidim. The Maccabean revolt likewise fueled this movement since it was a political and military manifestation of the Chassidim conservative philosophy. The Chassidim movement really resulted in the spiritual survival of Israel until Jesus' time.

Some of the Chassidim became the sect of the Pharisees ("separated ones"), which appears in the Gospels. Later a smaller group of Chassidim became the isolationist Essene community that lived at Qumran beside the Dead Sea. The Essenes repudiated the rationalism of the Sadducees and the materialism of the Pharisees. All these groups had their roots in "the people who know their God" (v. 32).

Antiochus retaliated with brutal force and killed tens of thousands of Israelites during the few years that followed his desecration of the temple. He died insane, in Persia, in 163 B.C.

11:34 The godly in Israel received little encouragement from their apostate pro-Hellenistic brethren at first. Even the Maccabean revolt started out small. As time went by and the Maccabees' effectiveness became apparent, more Jews joined their numbers, but many of them did so without abandoning their pro-Hellenistic convictions. They hypocritically joined the nationalists. Eventually the Maccabees had to purge their own ranks. They executed many of their fellow Jews.

11:35 Even though many godly Jews died, the struggle against the Syrians (Greeks) purified the Jews. John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon Maccabeus, eventually founded a strong Jewish kingdom. His son, Alexander Jannaeus, enlarged it to its fullest extent in the last part of the first century B.C.⁵¹⁹

Daniel received assurance that the predicted persecution would run its course and end. The purification of his people came eventually, though not completely, through the turmoil just described. There would be a final end later.

Mention of "the end time" (v. 35) prepares for the revelation to follow, which concerns events not yet fulfilled in history. "The appointed time" (vv. 27, 29, 35; 12:7) reminds the reader that all these predicted events would be the outworking of divine control and purpose, even though they would involve suffering for the Israelites.

"The amazingly detailed prophecies of the first thirty-five verses of this chapter, containing as they do approximately one hundred and thirty-five prophetic statements, all now fulfilled, constitute an impressive introduction to the events that are yet future, beginning in verse 36. . . .

⁵¹⁹See Anthony J. Tomasino, *Judaism Before Jesus*, for more detail of this "second temple period."

The fact is that there is no supported evidence which can contradict any statement made in these thirty-five verses. . . . From the divine viewpoint, the accuracy of this prophetic word is supporting evidence that prophecy yet unfulfilled will have the same precise fulfillment in the future."⁵²⁰

We can understand why critics who deny the possibility of predictive prophecy believe these verses must have been written after they occurred.

3. The distant future 11:36—12:4

In the revelation given to Daniel about the 70 sevens (9:24-27), we observed that what Gabriel told the prophet in verses 24-26 has already happened. Those verses described what would happen in the first 69 sevens. Verse 27 predicts things that have not happened yet. It reveals what will happen in the seventieth seven. There is a similar break between verses 35 and 36 of chapter 11. What was predicted in verses 2-35 has happened. What follows in this chapter has not happened.⁵²¹

Keil and Young also believed that the preceding verses describe Antiochus Epiphanes, but with verse 36, Antichrist becomes the subject.⁵²² Even liberal scholars, who believe that a second-century writer wrote the book as history rather than as prophecy, admit that all of what follows has had no literal fulfillment in the past.⁵²³ A few scholars, liberal and conservative, believe that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled some of these predictions, especially those in verses 36-39.⁵²⁴ However, I am not aware of anyone who believes that he fulfilled them all literally.

"No commentator claims to find precise fulfillment in the remainder of this chapter."⁵²⁵

In view of later revelation, in the Olivet Discourse and in the Book of Revelation particularly, what the angel told Daniel in these verses must refer to the last one of Daniel's seventy weeks. This is the last seven-year period before Jesus Christ returns to the earth to establish His kingdom. Jesus called the end of it a time of great tribulation (Matt. 24:21), and Daniel's angel called it the worst period of distress that the Jews have ever seen (12:1; cf. Jer. 30:7). Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that what follows will occur in that seven-year period, the Tribulation.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁰Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, pp. 269-70.

⁵²¹See Andrew E. Steinmann, "Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162:646 (April-June 2005):195-209.

⁵²²Keil, pp. 461, 469; Young, pp. 246-249.

⁵²³E.g., Montgomery, p. 465.

⁵²⁴E.g., *ibid.*, p. 461; R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, pp. 762-63; Goldingay, p. 304; Baldwin, p. 197; and Chisholm, p. 326.

⁵²⁵Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 270.

⁵²⁶Culver, "Daniel," p. 797, gave seven reasons for believing that the prophecy shifts from Antiochus to Antichrist at verse 36.

The coming ruler 11:36-39

11:36 "Then" signals a leap in time to the distant future, as the context indicates. "The king of the North will storm against him" (v. 40), so he cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes.

The predicted king will have the power to do as he pleases; apparently he will not be subject to a higher human authority (cf. 7:23; Rev. 13:1-10; 17:12). He will exalt himself higher than any other god; which implies that he will demand worship (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:11-18; 17:12-13). He will also repudiate the true God (cf. 7:25; Rev. 17:14). He will succeed for a time, until God's indignation against His people the Jews has run its course (cf. 8:19; Isa. 10:25; 26:20; Rev. 17:15-17). All of this will happen under the sovereign authority of God, however.

11:37 This verse gives more information about the ruler's religious convictions. The phrase "the gods of his fathers" is similar to one that occurs elsewhere in Scripture describing the God of the Jews (cf. 2:23; Exod. 3:15-16; 4:5; et al.). This has led some interpreters to conclude that this king will be a Jew.⁵²⁷ However, the phrase does not require this interpretation. The name "God" is "Elohim," the general word for God, rather than the covenant name "Yahweh," that God often used when stressing His relationship to His chosen people.

This word (Elohim) can have a plural translation (gods) or a singular one (God). Moreover, in the light of other revelation about this man, he seems to be a Roman (i.e., someone from Europe; 7:8, 24; Rev. 13:1-10). Of course, he could be a Jewish Roman, but the description of him in this verse does not identify him clearly as a Jew. Probably the angel meant that this king will abandon the religion of his past (or ancestry), whatever that religion may have been. He will do this because he will set himself up as the object of worship in place of all gods.

The identity of "the desire of women" is also problematic. It may be a reference to the Messiah.⁵²⁸ Supposedly the supreme desire of every godly Jewish woman in Daniel's day was that she bear the Messiah. Another view is that the reference is to Tammuz (Gr. Adonis), a pagan goddess in Daniel's day that women found very attractive.⁵²⁹ Others believe that the meaning is that this king will have no desire for women. Some even speculate that he will be abusive toward women. In other words, he will be devoid of natural affection.⁵³⁰ I tend to favor this third view.

⁵²⁷E.g., J. N. Darby, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 107-14; Gaebelein, pp. 180-95; Young, p. 249; Ironside, p. 218; and Culver, "Daniel," p. 797.

⁵²⁸Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1371; Gaebelein, p. 188; McGee, 3:600-601; Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, p. 274; Feinberg, p. 175; Ironside, p. 221; Wiersbe, p. 304.

⁵²⁹Montgomery, pp. 461-62; A. A. Bevan, *A Short Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, pp. 196-97.

⁵³⁰Keil, pp. 464-65; Young, 249; Archer, "Daniel," p. 144; Whitcomb, p. 155. Cf. Leupold, pp. 515-16.

11:38 What this king will really trust in is a "god" who he believes can give him military success. Evidently this is not a god in the religious sense. He will probably idolize power. His forefathers typically acknowledged some supreme being or some pagan god or gods. He will honor his "god" by spending money to build his military arsenal. In other words, he will be a materialist.

McGee believed that this god will be Satan, who controls the kingdoms of the world.⁵³¹ Feinberg and Ironside believed the god in view is the Roman beast (the political leader), whom they distinguished from the Antichrist.⁵³² They identified the Antichrist with the religious leader in Jerusalem. This is a minority view among premillennialists.

11:39 The foreign god referred to in this verse may be the god of military might mentioned in verse 38. Alternatively, it may be some other foreign god that he uses for his own ends, or it may even be himself. As Antiochus before him, this ruler will reward those who are loyal to him, and support them by bestowing honors and positions of authority on them. Perhaps he will also take bribes, as Antiochus did, and give land to those who pay him off. Another possibility is that he will reward with lands those who are faithful to him.

The attack against the ruler 11:40-45

11:40 Finally the very end time of the seventieth week will arrive (cf. vv. 27, 35; 12:4, 9). Then this king will be the focus of attack by the king of the South (cf. vv. 42-43), a power south of Palestine, and the king of the North, a force to its north. Evidently these two rulers will attack him simultaneously.

Apparently this other king is neither the king of the South nor the king of the North. In view of 9:26, he will probably be a western ruler, the little horn arising out of the Roman Empire (i.e., Antichrist; 7:8, 24).⁵³³ Other interpreters believe the king of the North is the Antichrist.⁵³⁴ Still others hold that this king was not the Antichrist but only a minor ruler.⁵³⁵ McGee believed that he will be a Russian ruler.⁵³⁶

The conflict will be great, but he, apparently the ruler described in verses 36-39 (i.e., Antichrist), will invade many countries, overwhelm them, and pass on to conquer others. The Nazis were able to do this early in World War II.

⁵³¹McGee, 3:601.

⁵³²Feinberg, pp. 175-76; Ironside, pp. 221-22.

⁵³³Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 279; Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1372; and Leupold, p. 521.

⁵³⁴Archer, "Daniel," p. 148; and Young, p. 251.

⁵³⁵E.g., Ironside, pp. 222-23.

⁵³⁶McGee, 3:602.

"Presumably the warfare will be carried on by armored vehicles and missiles such as are used in modern warfare—though in order to communicate with Daniel's generation, ancient equivalents of these are used here. Likewise, the ancient names of the countries or states occupying the region where the final conflict will be carried on are used in the prediction, though most of those political units will no longer bear these names in the last days."⁵³⁷

Ezekiel described a great military force descending on Israel from the far north in the future (Ezek. 38—39; 38:15). Ezekiel did not mention a power from the South. Part of the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy is probably the same invasion Daniel recorded here. I believe part of what Ezekiel prophesied to take place in his description of the battle of Gog and Magog will find fulfillment at the end of the Tribulation and part of it at the end of the Millennium. This aspect of the fulfillment will probably occur in the second half of the Tribulation, when Israel is suffering intense persecution.

One writer argued that this king of the North will be a ruler from the area that Assyria formerly occupied, not someone from farther north in the area of Russia. I believe "Gog" is a code name (meaning "Dark") describing two similar invaders who will descend on Israel at two different times: at the end of the Tribulation and at the end of the Millennium. The first of these invaders is called the King of the North here.⁵³⁸

11:41 The Antichrist will also enter Palestine (cf. 8:9), and many there will fall before his forces. He will also defeat other countries in addition to Israel. He will probably enter Palestine after he breaks his covenant with Israel, which would confirm that these events will happen in the last half of the Tribulation.

There will be a few areas that the Antichrist does not overpower, however, namely those in the former territories of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. These nations were to the east and south of Israel. Today Jordan occupies this region. The "foremost" of the sons of Ammon probably refers to the best part.⁵³⁹ Young believed the names of these nations are symbolic, but he confessed ignorance concerning the meaning of the symbols.⁵⁴⁰

11:42-43 This ruler will then press his attack and invade other countries, particularly Egypt. It will fall to his control. He will plunder the treasures of Egypt and will bring those living in the ancient territories of Libya and Ethiopia under his control. Libya lay to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to its south.

⁵³⁷Archer, "Daniel," p. 147.

⁵³⁸Carl Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120:477 (January-March 1963):50-55.

⁵³⁹Baldwin, p. 203.

⁵⁴⁰Young, p. 253.

11:44-45 Rumors of enemy armies from the East (cf. Rev. 9:13-21; 16:12) and from the North (cf. v. 40) will irritate him, resulting in his killing "many" more people (cf. Zech. 13:8). Compare the invasion sequence by Sennacherib (Isa. 37:7-8). He will also return to Palestine. His headquarters there will evidently be in Jerusalem. This city stands between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas.

The NIV translation "at the beautiful holy mountain" confirms this location, since Jerusalem stands on Mt. Moriah. It is evidently there that he will meet his match and suffer defeat. Later revelation says that Jesus Christ will return from heaven and destroy him (Rev. 19:19-20; cf. Zech. 14:1-4).

One writer summarized the revelation about Antichrist in verses 36-45 as follows. He will act in self-will (v. 36), will exalt himself (v. 36), and will magnify himself above every god (v. 36). He will blaspheme the true God (v. 36), will succeed for a limited period of time (v. 36), and will be an irreligious person (v. 37). He will also place confidence in military might (vv. 38-39), his military might will be challenged (v. 40), and he will be initially victorious in battle (vv. 40-43). However, he will face renewed conflict (v. 44), will establish his headquarters in Jerusalem (v. 45), and will finally come to an end (v. 45).⁵⁴¹

The deliverance of Israel 12:1-3

Whereas the previous verses have focused on the Antichrist, those in this pericope concern Israel. Here we learn that this "end time" will definitely be a time of intense persecution of Jews. This section constitutes the climax of this revelation (chs. 10—12), as well as the climax of the whole series of prophecies that this book records. It highlights God's faithfulness to His promises to His chosen people Israel.

12:1 At the time of the end (11:40), Michael, the angel responsible to protect Israel (cf. 10:13, 21), will arise in defense of this nation. This revelation focuses the reader's attention again on the invisible and supernatural dimension to the events that will take place. "Now at that time" introduces additional information about this end time; it does not introduce a chronologically subsequent event.

This period generally will be a time of extreme distress for the Jews, worse than any other time in their national history (cf. Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 6—19). Showers argued that the "Day of the Lord," the "Time of Jacob's Trouble," and the "Great Tribulation" are all terms that Scripture uses to describe a three and one-half year period of intense trouble yet future, namely, the last half of Daniel's seventieth week.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹Campbell, pp. 132-34.

⁵⁴²Showers, pp. 40-43.

I agree with that definition, except that the term "the Day of the Lord" refers to other periods as well (i.e., the seven-year Tribulation, the Millennium, both periods together, and other times at which God breaks into history dramatically). The repetition of "your people" in this verse clearly identifies the Jews, not all believers. They will be the focus of intense persecution, though many non-Jews will also suffer, and Israel's land will become an international battlefield (cf. Matt. 24:22).

Nevertheless, all those Jews whose names are in "the book" will experience rescue (cf. 7:18, 27). This is not a promise of spiritual regeneration; that comes only by faith in Jesus Christ for Jews living then. Rather it is a promise of national deliverance from human enemies (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:8-9; Rom. 11:26).

Archer and Ironside, however, took this as spiritual deliverance from the second death.⁵⁴³ "The book" probably contains the names of all the Jews living in that region then who will experience physical deliverance (cf. Rev. 12:13-17). The figure of a book connotes a divine record, written beforehand, that is the basis for this rescue. There are several books that God keeps (Rev. 20:12; cf. Exod. 32:33; Ps. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Luke 10:20; Rev. 20:15; et al.).⁵⁴⁴

12:2 Why did the angel say "many" will awake and not "all"? Apparently he did so to stress the fact that those Jews who die because of Antichrist's persecutions will experience resurrection at the end of this period (i.e., the Tribulation; cf. Rev. 20:4-6).⁵⁴⁵ He referred to the hope of those Jews in particular. Furthermore, this wording clarifies that not all will arise then. Some will experience resurrection at other times in history (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:4-6).⁵⁴⁶

The angel meant a physical resurrection, rather than just a renewal of the soul (cf. Isa. 26:19; Hos. 13:14). This seems clear since he specified that they will arise from "the dust of the ground." Some writers have taken this description as figurative for the national revival of Israel in that day, evidently to avoid confusing this resurrection with the one that will occur at the Rapture.⁵⁴⁷ Young took "the dust of the ground" as figurative for the grave.⁵⁴⁸ I agree with Young on this point.

"The OT's standard way of envisaging dying and coming back to life is by speaking of lying down and sleeping, then of waking and getting up. The former is an extreme form of

⁵⁴³Archer, "Daniel," p. 151; Ironside, p. 231.

⁵⁴⁴See Charles R. Smith, "The Book of Life," *Grace Theological Journal* 6:2 (Fall 1985):219-30.

⁵⁴⁵Young, p. 256.

⁵⁴⁶Bevan, p. 201.

⁵⁴⁷E.g., Gaebelien, p. 200, Kelly, pp. 225-26, and Ironside, pp. 231-32.

⁵⁴⁸Young, p. 256.

the latter, which thus provides the metaphor for it (2 Kgs 4:31; 13:21; Isa 26:19; Jer 51:39, 57; Job 14:12). Further, dying means lying down with one's ancestors in the family tomb, with its nonmaterial equivalent, Sheol; so coming back to life would mean leaving such a 'land of earth' (cf. also Pss 49; 73). The image presupposes a restoring to life of the whole person with its spiritual and material aspects."⁵⁴⁹

"The Bible never speaks of sleep in reference to the soul, for sleep is not an activity of the soul. Rather, the Bible always speaks of sleep as an activity of the body (see Matt. 9:18-25; Mark 5:35-42)."⁵⁵⁰

Some of these Jews will enter into everlasting life, namely, those of them that will be believers. Others will experience disgrace and everlasting contempt, because they do not believe on Christ (cf. Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29). Evidently, those martyred during the Tribulation and resurrected at this time, will reign with Christ during His millennial kingdom, which will begin with His return to earth at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4).

While this verse teaches that there will be a resurrection of the wicked, it does not say that this will occur at the end of the Tribulation. It only says that others will awake to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Revelation 20:12-14 make clear that the resurrection of the wicked will occur at the end of the Millennium, not at the end of the Tribulation. In the context of Daniel 12:2, the emphasis is on the hope of the Jews who will die in the Tribulation. The destiny of the wicked is brought in simply to clarify that they too will be raised, not to specify when.

This is the first mention in the Old Testament of a twofold resurrection. For this reason, and because this verse identifies the time of the physical resurrection of saved Jews (who lived outside the Church Age, cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-16), this is an extremely important verse.

"Those who argue simply on the basis of the concept of 'lifetime' or 'age' for only an age-long punishment in hell rather than one of endless duration must reckon with the many passages in the OT that apply *'olam* [everlasting] to the endless life and sovereignty of God himself. In other words, if hell is not eternal, neither is God; for the same Hebrew and Greek words are used for both in the Bible (cf. Rev 4:10; 20:10; 21:8). The corresponding Greek word

⁵⁴⁹Goldingay, p. 307.

⁵⁵⁰Feinberg, p. 181.

aion exactly parallels the Hebrew *'olam* in connotation and semantic development."⁵⁵¹

This is the first occurrence of the expression "eternal life" in the Old Testament.⁵⁵²

12:3 The emphasis on hope for the Jews living during this time continues in this verse. Rewards will follow resurrection. Those Jews who have insight into the importance of remaining faithful to God, and who do so, will receive glory (cf. 11:33, 35). Those who lead others to do right will too. Their glory will be similar to the glory of the sky above, and to the stars (cf. Matt. 13:43). The angel expressed this blessing in a beautiful parallelism. Their glory will involve the privilege of reigning with Jesus Christ during His millennial kingdom, and from then on—forever (cf. Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; Rev. 20:4).

"Verses 2-3, then, clearly affirm the doctrines of resurrection and of eternity beyond the grave. Even the most skeptical OT scholars concede the presence of these doctrines here . . ."⁵⁵³

Other Old Testament verses that teach these doctrines include Job 19:26; Psalms 16:11; 17:15; 73:23-24; and Isaiah 25:8 and 26:19.

The end of the vision 12:4

In conclusion, the angel instructed Daniel to close the record of this revelation. In the ancient Near East, people wrote official documents and then, after making a copy for reference, deposited the original in a safe place. The phrase "conceal these words" does not mean that Daniel should keep them to himself, but that he should preserve this revelation because it was important (cf. 8:26).

Also, it was customary for the scribe who recorded important documents, such as contractual promises, to run his cylinder-seal across the bottom to guarantee authenticity.⁵⁵⁴ That is what the angel instructed Daniel to do with this contractual promise. By sealing it, Daniel would certify that what stood written was exactly what God had revealed to him and had promised would happen (cf. Rev. 22:18-19).

Daniel was to preserve this revelation (i.e., the Book of Daniel⁵⁵⁵) until the end of time (or the "time of the end," the last half of the Tribulation,⁵⁵⁶) because much of what God had revealed to him concerned the far distant future. He confessed that he did not

⁵⁵¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 152.

⁵⁵²Young, p. 256.

⁵⁵³Archer, "Daniel," p. 153.

⁵⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 153-54.

⁵⁵⁵Keil, p. 485.

⁵⁵⁶*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 918.

understand much of it (v. 8), as we can appreciate, since most of it predicted things still future from his standpoint in history.

The last part of this verse probably refers to the attempts of people in the future to understand this revelation, in view of the context (cf. Amos 8:12).⁵⁵⁷ Attempting to understand these prophecies, people would search around and try to discover what they meant. As time passed and knowledge increased, they would understand these things better than Daniel could.

"Whether or not physical wandering and travel is involved, the implication is that attempts to understand the truth will require considerable effort."⁵⁵⁸

Even though Daniel and his people did not understand this book's prophecies as well as we do, simply because we have seen many of them fulfilled, these predictions did comfort them. They reassured them that Yahweh would ultimately deliver Israel from the hostile Gentiles, and thus fulfill His covenant promises.

4. The end of Israel's trials 12:5-13

Daniel continued to view things in the vision that he began describing in 10:5. The book ends with a question and answer session.

The first question 12:5-6

Daniel now saw two other individuals, undoubtedly angels, besides the one who had been addressing him since 10:11, standing on either side of the Tigris River (cf. 10:4). One of these angels asked a question of the man (Son of Man) dressed in linen (cf. 10:5-6) who was above the river. He wanted to know how long it would be until the end of the events just related (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12), namely, the things having to do with Israel's final persecution and deliverance (11:36—12:3).

The first answer 12:7

The "man" above the river swore by the eternal God that what he was about to say was true. Normally people who swore by God lifted one hand to heaven (cf. Deut. 32:40). This Person lifted both hands, thus stressing the truthfulness of what He was about to reveal.

"There must be a reason for the choice of the word translated *stream*. As already indicated, it is the common designation for the Nile river. Possibly, it is deliberately employed here to remind Dan. that just as the Lord had once stood over Egypt, the world-nation which was hostile to God's people, so now does He stand over the world kingdom, represented symbolically by the Nile stream, actually the Tigris, ready again to deliver His people."⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷Calvin, 2:379; Leupold, p. 534.

⁵⁵⁸Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 292. Cf. Young, p. 258.

⁵⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 259.

The meaning of "time, times, and half a time" is quite clearly three and one-half years (cf. 7:25).⁵⁶⁰

"The word for 'times' may originally have been intended as a dual (*mo'adayim*, 'two years')."⁵⁶¹

"Shattering" the power of "the holy people" refers to the terrible persecution of the Jews in the end times, previously revealed (11:36-45). This was good news for Daniel and his people. Even though the future enemy of the Jews would be in control for one week (seven years, 9:27), intense persecution would only be the Jews' lot for the last half of that period (cf. Zech. 14:2-3).

The second question 12:8

Daniel continued having trouble comprehending this revelation, so he respectfully asked the messenger how everything would end. He may have been particularly interested in receiving more information about the resurrection and rewards that had been mentioned briefly before (vv. 1-3).

The second answer 12:9-13

12:9 The Lord reminded Daniel that much of what he had received would remain obscure until the end time (cf. v. 4). Then people will be able to look back, marvel at the total fulfillment of prophecy, and glorify the sovereign Most High God.

"God in His infinite wisdom has revealed to us only that which it is needful for us to have in order that we may know what He requires of us. He does not reveal that which does not directly contribute toward this end. Scripture is not a body of esoteric mystery given to satisfy idle curiosity. It is given that we 'might not sin against Thee' (Ps. 119:11b). It is a thoroughly practical Book."⁵⁶²

12:10 The troubles coming on the earth, and especially on the Jews, will cause many to turn to the Lord and experience spiritual purification through faith. The "wicked," however, will continue to "act wickedly," and will not understand what is happening (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; Rev. 13:10). *The wise*, "who have insight" because they pay attention to divine revelation, will understand what is happening.

In the Old Testament, and in Scripture generally, a "wise person" is one who lives in the light of divine revelation, and a fool is one who ignores it. This verse provides motivation to pay attention to what God has revealed

⁵⁶⁰Montgomery, p. 475; et al.

⁵⁶¹Archer, "Daniel," p. 155.

⁵⁶²Young, pp. 260-61. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

and to study it carefully. It should also help us to avoid thinking, naïvely, that the passing of time and the fulfillment of prophecy will cause bad people to change their ways. Humankind will not get better and better, in spite of what postmillennialists and social evolutionists believe (2 Tim. 3:13).

12:11 Now the divine messenger conceded to Daniel's request and provided a little more information. However, as these things were unclear to Daniel, many of them *still are* for most interpreters today, including myself.

The Lord measured the time between the end, presumably the end of the Tribulation, and the time that the Antichrist will terminate Jewish sacrifices and desecrate the temple (cf. Matt. 24:15). It will be 1,290 days. This is 30 days longer than the three and one-half years previously mentioned (v. 7; cf. 7:25; Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Consequently, the extra month must involve time before the three and one-half years, after it, or both.

Perhaps Antichrist will terminate the sacrifices and desecrate the temple 30 days before the middle of the seventieth "week." This interpretation views the explanation in this verse as more specific and the one in 9:27 as a general description.⁵⁶³ A similar view is that the Antichrist may announce the termination of sacrifices and the setting up of the abomination 30 days before he carries out those acts.⁵⁶⁴

Another option is that there will be a 30-day period between the time when Antichrist abolishes the regular sacrifice and the time when he sets up the abomination of desolation. A fourth possibility is that the 30 days will extend beyond the last three and one-half years.⁵⁶⁵ It will include the cleansing of the temple and possibly the judgments of Israel and the nations that Christ will execute when He returns (Ezek. 20:34-38; Matt. 25:31-46).

12:12 The Lord said that those people will be blessed who keep waiting, presumably for God to rescue them (v. 1), and attain to the 1,335 days. Why did He mention this particular number of days, and when will this period end?

The 1,335-day period is 45 days (one and a half months) longer than the 1,290-day period just mentioned (v. 11). Evidently this period will end after the Tribulation has ended, namely, after the millennial reign of Christ has begun or at least after He has returned to earth. We can only speculate

⁵⁶³Cf. Archer, "Daniel," p. 156.

⁵⁶⁴Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1374.

⁵⁶⁵D[arby], p. 86; Walvoord, *Daniel* . . . , p. 295; Showers, pp. 57-58; Feinberg, pp. 186-87; Whitcomb, p. 168; Campbell, p. 142; Ironside, pp. 235-36; Dyer, in *The Old* . . . , p. 720; and Culver, "Daniel," p. 799.

about what these 45 days following the Tribulation will hold for people living on the earth then. One view is that Jesus Christ will appear in the clouds at the end of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:30), and 45 days later He will descend to the earth.⁵⁶⁶ A better option, I think, is that it may take 45 days for Jesus Christ to accomplish the necessary judgments and set up His kingdom after returning to the earth.⁵⁶⁷

Some interpreters favor the view that these 30 and 45-day periods reflect the use of different calendars from the one that earlier prescribed the length of the three and one-half years as a period of 1,260 days.⁵⁶⁸ Keil and Young took the numbers symbolically depicting a limited period of trouble.⁵⁶⁹ Whatever the explanation, clearly this verse will encourage believers living during the Tribulation to remain faithful to the Lord. It encourages us likewise.



12:13 The Lord then dismissed the aged prophet. He was to "go [his] way to the end." By "the end," the Lord may have had *the end of Daniel's life* in mind, or He may have meant that he should continue with his earthly lifetime's affairs, including dying, until the end of the age would come.

The first option seems preferable to me, since the Lord appears to have been viewing Daniel's life in sequence. First, Daniel would "rest," in death, then he would "rise again" (cf. v. 2), and finally he would receive his *reward* ("allotted portion") from God (cf. v. 3). In other words, there are two different "ends" described in the text, the first "end" being the end of Daniel's earthly life, and the second "end" being "the end of the age," when Old Testament believers are resurrected. Daniel's resurrection and recognition would occur at the end of the age, namely, at the end of the times of the Gentiles.

Thus this great book closes with a reminder that the present age of Gentile domination is not all that God has in store for humankind. There is another age coming, beyond the present one, in which Jesus Christ will reign in righteousness and holiness on the earth (cf. Isa. 11:9; Zech. 9:10). Christians should look forward to the beginning of this Messianic age and pray for its coming (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2).

⁵⁶⁶Pentecost, "Daniel," p. 1374.

⁵⁶⁷D[arby], pp. 86, 131; Archer, "Daniel," p. 156; Walvoord, *Daniel . . .*, pp. 295-96; Showers, p. 58; Feinberg, p. 187; Whitcomb, p. 168; Campbell, p. 143; Wood, *A Commentary . . .*, pp. 328-29; Culver, "Daniel," p. 799.

⁵⁶⁸Goldingay, pp. 309-10.

⁵⁶⁹Keil, p. 502; Young, p. 263.

Whereas this book would have encouraged the Jews of Daniel's day, it has become increasingly encouraging to God's people as history has unfolded. Today we can see, as never before, how God has fulfilled His predictions exactly in the past. This gives us great confidence as we anticipate His faithfulness to those promises that still remain unfulfilled.

What other practical effects should an understanding of Daniel's prophecies have on us today? We can understand how God will create history; we can know the "times and seasons" that are still future. This knowledge should make us feel the urgency of our commission (Matt. 28:19-20); it should spur us on to evangelism and discipleship. It should also give us a sense of peace as we go through trouble and hope that God will win the battle over evil. It should encourage us to inform God's people of what He has revealed so they can be informed and ready for what is coming. And it should cause us to live holy lives in view of the Lord's return.

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