

DANIEL

Faithful Discipleship in a Foreign Land

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapters	Page
1. Four Hebrew Youths in Babylon (Daniel 1)	1
2. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Interpretation (Daniel 2)	
3. The Fiery Furnace and the Lions' Den (Daniel 3 and 6)	18
4. Humbling the Proud (Daniel 4 and 5)	34
5. Four Beasts and the Son of Man (Daniel 7)	47
6. A Vision and a Mighty Prayer (Daniel 8 and 9:1-19)	65
7. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:20-27)	85
8. The Kings of the North and the South (Daniel 10:1-11:35)	100
9. Antichrist, Resurrection, and the Last Days (Daniel 11:36-12:13)	114
Appendix 1 The Medo- Persian Empire	124
Appendix 2 The Case for the Sixth Century Dating of Daniel	126
Appendix 3 Important Dates for the Book of Daniel	132
Appendix 4 The Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles	135
The Medes and Persians and a Return from Exile	139
References and Abbreviations	140

Daniel

Faithful Discipleship in a Foreign Land

Disciples need to study Daniel afresh.

The Book of Daniel is both familiar and mysterious. You find the stories of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and the Handwriting on the Wall. On the other hand, are visions of beasts and horns and kings that predict the future from Daniel's time all the way to the Second Coming of Christ.

Daniel is foundational to the New Testament for three reasons:

1. **The "Son of Man"** that Jesus takes as his own title, is drawn directly from Daniel 7:13-14. As you understand Daniel's prophecy, you begin to comprehend Jesus' origins, authority, self-understanding, and mission.
2. **Kingdom of God.** The coming of the all-encompassing Kingdom of God has strong roots in Daniel's visions. This Kingdom is at the very core of Jesus' teaching.
3. **Daniel's eschatology**, his visions of the End Time, are echoed in the predictions of Jesus himself, of Paul the Apostle, and in the Book of Revelation.

We'll look at the Book of Daniel in light of the New Testament revelation.

However, I must warn you that I don't have Daniel's visions of the Last Days all figured out, and I am leery of those who seem to be able to fit everything together perfectly. Daniel is like a jigsaw puzzle with some pieces missing. Though the main outlines are clear, some details can't be discerned at present. The task of this study is to help you understand what Daniel *does* teach, pros and cons of various interpretations of the key prophecies, to let you know where the author comes out and why, and to give you some sense of a level of certainty.

We'll study Daniel in nine lessons over the nine weeks. However, if you study this with a class or small group, you may want to go a bit slower.

10. Four Hebrew Youths in Babylon (Daniel 1)
11. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Interpretation (Daniel 2)
12. The Fiery Furnace and the Lions' Den (Daniel 3 and 6)
13. Humbling the Proud (Daniel 4 and 5)
14. Four Beasts and the Son of Man (Daniel 7)
15. A Vision and a Mighty Prayer (Daniel 8 and 9:1-19)



Peter Paul Reubens, detail from 'A Study of Two Heads' (c. 1608), oil on panel, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Four Hebrew Youths in Babylon

(Daniel 1)

The overriding theme of the Book of Daniel is that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of this world. One nation rises, another falls, but Yahweh is Lord of All. The Book of Daniel begins shortly after the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Babylonian Empire.

For the people of God who are exiled during this tumultuous time, it means being physically displaced and relocated in a completely foreign culture that doesn't honor the God of Israel, his law, or his people's customs. It is a time of learning to live faithful lives within a foreign culture and value system. That is the challenge we meet in chapter 1.



Daniel Refuses the King's Provisions, artist unknown, early 20th century illustration.

Nebuchadnezzar Conquers Jerusalem (1:1-2)

"¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord^[9] delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god." (1:1-2)

Daniel's story begins in a troubled period in Judah's life. In 609 BC, King Josiah (640-609 BC) has just been killed in a battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, a regional power that seeks to control the cities of Palestine and Judah. Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz, reigns only three months until Pharaoh Neco removes him (2 Kings 23:30-32), and replaces him with his brother Jehoiakim, who becomes a vassal of Egypt (2 Kings 23:34).

But Pharaoh Neco's influence in Judah is short-lived. Nebuchadnezzar, general of the armies of Babylon, defeats the combined forces of Egypt and

what is left of Assyria in the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, signaling the end of Assyrian might and Egyptian intervention. Nebuchadnezzar II then succeeds his father as king of Babylon and reigns 605-562 BC.

To consolidate his victory over Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar sends his troops south into Syria and Palestine to end Egyptian control of that region. Whether he actually besieges Jerusalem with his massive army, or only threatens to do so, is unclear. The bottom line is that Jerusalem seems to have surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar with minimal resistance. Jehoiakim now switches allegiance from Egypt to Babylon and becomes Babylon's vassal.



James J. Tissot, 'Daniel and the Young Men' (1896-1903), from gouache original, Jewish Museum, New York.

This is the first of three waves of exiles deported from Judah to Babylon. This first group includes Daniel and his friends (1:1). Jehoiakim also begins giving tribute to Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC (2 Kings 24:1). Babylonian troops remain in the area, invading Syria in 604, Ashkelon in 603, and clash with Pharaoh Neco on the borders of Egypt in 601.

Hebrew Youths Deported to Babylon (1:3-5)

Since Babylon forces Judah to become a vassal state, it is customary to extract tribute to be carried to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar takes plunder from the temple, and demands young men from the nobility and royal families to be deported to Babylon to be trained for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court. They probably also serve as hostages to ensure that Judah doesn't rebel against Babylon.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility^[10] -- ⁴ young men^[11] without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service." (1:3-5)

Wise rulers who seek to control the world don't rely only on their own wisdom. They seek counsel from those who understand the lands they have conquered, who can advise them and become part of their diplomatic corps. Ashpenaz is looking for men with the following qualifications:

1. Young men. We're not sure of the age, since the noun *yeled* is imprecise. They were perhaps around 15 or so, since Daniel lived through the entire period of the exile. Decades after this, Persian education began in the early teens and was completed by seventeen years of age.[\[12\]](#)
2. From royal families or nobility. This would help them mix well in a court setting.
3. Without any physical impediment.
4. Handsome.
5. Showing intellectual aptitude, well-informed, quick to understand.
6. Ability to function in a king's court.

Daniel and his friends were from the noble and royal families of Jerusalem, and fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah many years before:

"And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."
(Isaiah 39:7; 2 Kings 20:18)

Were they actually made eunuchs? Perhaps, but we don't know. The noun *sārîscan* mean either "eunuch" or, later, "official," depending on the context.[\[13\]](#) We do know, however, that in the ancient Near East, especially in Persia, eunuchs were considered to be more loyal servants to their master, since they had no families to support or in-laws to promote in court.

Names (1:6-7)

⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah.

⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishaël, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego." (1:6-7)

One of the elements imposed on these four Hebrew young men is the imposition of Babylonian names, several of which include the names of Babylonian gods. For the Babylonians this is a matter of convenience rather than ideology, but for the Hebrews, who believed a person's character and future could be prefigured by their names, it is probably very difficult.

Hebrew Name

Babylonian Name

Daniel, "God is my judge."

Belteshazzar, "Protect his life" or "Lady, protect the king." Belet was the wife of Bel, a Babylonian god (4:8).[\[14\]](#)

Hananiah, "Yahweh has been gracious."

Shadrach, "command of Aku" (Sumerian moon god) or "I am very fearful (of god)."

Mishael, "Who is what God is?"

Meshach, "I am of little account."

Azariah, "Yahweh has helped."

Abednego, "Servant of the shining one," perhaps a word play that includes the god Nabû.

Daniel Resolves Not to Defile Himself (1:8-10)

"⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.'" (1:8-10)

Daniel emerges as the leader of the four young men here. He is the one who comes to a firm conviction[\[15\]](#) concerning possible defilement, and the one who speaks to the official charged with their care.

Daniel and his friends have suffered deportation, change of their name, and education in the occult knowledge of Babylon. But when it comes to the food[\[16\]](#) they are given, Daniel balks. He is concerned with defilement.[\[17\]](#)

What defilement was Daniel concerned about? We aren't told, so there has been a lot of speculation. Here are the possibilities:

1. **Food offered to idols.**[\[18\]](#) Baldwin notes that food offered to idols is a New Testament controversy that wasn't mentioned in the Old Testament. Additionally, the Babylonians offered every other kind of food to idols.[\[19\]](#)

2. **Eating unclean animals**, such as pork or horse. Jewish law required draining of blood from meat (Leviticus 3:17; 11:1-47; 17:10-14). But, if this is the issue, why refrain from wine?
3. **Undue obligation to the king**. According to eastern practices, to eat someone's food was to commit oneself to friendship, of covenant significance. Baldwin sees the necessary clue in 11:26 -- "Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him...." So some believe Daniel was rejecting dependence upon the king.[\[20\]](#)
4. **Honoring God**. Longman suggests that Daniel is concerned to attribute good health to God, not to the king's excellent food.[\[21\]](#)
5. **Dietary guidelines**. Some suggest that Daniel's diet is to model the superiority of a vegetarian diet and abstinence from alcoholic beverage, though later in life Daniel seems to have eaten meat and drunk wine, except when fasting (10:3).

Scholars I respect advocate for positions 3 and 4, but I'm not convinced. I think either concern about food offered to idols, or perhaps the kind of meat being offered (or both) would best explain Daniel's petition to have an alternate diet for the Jewish young men.

The chief official is sympathetic towards Daniel and his friends, but is concerned for his life, so he declines Daniel's petition.

A Ten Day Test (1:11-16)

But Daniel doesn't give up. Notice the wisdom with which Daniel approaches this problem. He doesn't go on a hunger strike. Instead he proposes an experiment, a test.

"¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard[\[22\]](#) whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.' ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead." (1:11-16)

The steward or guard assigned to them agrees to give it a try for 10 days, and after the 10 days, the Hebrew young men look more robust than the other young men in training in the palace.

God-Given Insight (1:17)

Daniel and his friends are subjected to an intensive education. Their overseer is charged:

"... to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.... They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service." (1:4, 5)

When this course of instruction is complete, the young men are well-educated.

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature[23] and learning. And Daniel could understand[24]visions[25] and dreams[26] of all kinds." (1:17)

Notice that the narrator attributes their intellectual grasp and wisdom not to their education, but to God. "God gave knowledge and understanding...." I've personally spent many years in colleges and graduate schools. I've found that it is possible to educate people -- or indoctrinate them -- but it is not easy to teach them *wisdom*. The four Hebrew men are blessed with a command of all that the Babylonian empire can teach them, but they are also taught wisdom by God.

Daniel has all this plus a prophetic gift. He has the ability to "understand visions and dreams of all kinds." God gives him this ability so he can influence the kings he serves under, but also to see into the future to inform the Jewish people of what is to come, and to inform Christians concerning the Last Days, the resurrection, and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Hebrew Youths Begin their Service (1:18-21)

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.[27] ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus." (1:18-21)

The writer informs us that not only were they educated, but they "graduated at the top of their class." "Ten times better" is a way of saying that they greatly excelled their peers -- a fact that caused jealousy and persecution later (2:49; 3:8; 6:3-4).

All four Hebrew youths enter the king's service and became part of the palace court. But Daniel, the writer tells us, serves so long that he serves not only in the Babylonian court, but also under the Medo-Persian rulers as well, as we'll see in chapter 6.

Endnotes

[9] "Lord" is *ādôn*, "Lord, master, owner." To avoid the risk of taking God's name (YHWH) in vain, devout Jews began to substitute the word *ādōnā(y)* for the proper name itself (TWOT 13). The proper name YHWH (Yahweh) appears only in chapter 9, in verses 2, 4, 10, 13, 14, and 20. *Ādōnis* is the normal word we find for God in this book.

[10] *Partemîm*, "nobles," a loan word from Old Persian, found only in Daniel and Esther (TWOT #1839).

[11] *Yeled*, "child, son, youth," from *yālad*, "bear, beget." Generally used for very young children but may refer to adolescents and sometimes even young adults (TWOT #867b).

- [12] Longman, *Daniel*, p. 48, fn. 26, cites L.J. Wood, *Commentary on Daniel* (1973), who references Plato, *Alcibiades* 1:121, and Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 1.2.
- [13] R.D. Patterson, *sārîs*, TWOT #1545.
- [14] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 81, fn. 1, citing A.R. Millard, who draws on A.-R. Berger.
- [15] "Resolved" (NIV, NRSV, ESV) literally, "purposed in his heart" (KJV), using the verb *sûm*, "put, place, set, appoint, make." The basic root idea of this verb is "to put, place something somewhere" (Gary G. Cohen, TWOT #2243).
- [16] "Royal" (NIV), "royal rations" (NRSV), "portion" (KJV), is *pat bāg*, "portion (of food) for a king, delicacies" (TWOT #1851). It also occurs in 1:16 and 11:26.
- [17] "Defile" is the Hithpael stem of *gā'al*, "defile, pollute," from a similar Aramaic root, "abhor, loathe." The pollution specified is from any breach of moral or ceremonial law (R. Laird Harris, TWOT #301).
- [18] So Young, *Daniel*, p. 44, who cites Keil.
- [19] Baldwin, *Daniel*, pp. 82-83.
- [20] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 83.
- [21] So Longman, *Daniel*, pp. 52-54.
- [22] "Guard" (NIV, NRSV), "steward" (ESV), "Melzar" (KJV) is Hebrew *mešsar*, "guardian," a Babylonian title, whose meaning is uncertain.
- [23] "Literature" (NIV), "learning" (KJV) is *sēper*, "writing, book," related to *sōpēr*, "scribe" (R.D. Patterson, TWOT #1540a).
- [24] "Understand/have insight/have understanding" is *bîn*, "understand, consider, perceive." The Hiphil stem, as here, especially emphasizes ability to understand (Louis Goldberg, TWOT #239).
- [25] "Visions" is *ḥāzôn*, "vision," from *ḥāzâ*, "look, see, behold, prophesy" (TWOT 663a).
- [26] "Dreams" is *ḥalôm*. What Daniel is dealing with are revelatory dreams, in which God conveys information to mankind. In one sort of dreams the divine disclosure is through symbolic things, persons, and actions. The dreamer is puzzled and requires the aid of a human interpreter. The interpreter (prophet) is the primary agent of revelation, the dream being only the occasion (Robert D. Culver, TWOT 663a).
- [27] "Entered the king's service" (NIV), "were stationed in the king's court" (NRSV), "stood before the king" (ESV, KJV), reflect the extremely common verb *āmad*, "take one's stand, stand," here, "present oneself before in a palace" (as a retainer, courtier) (BDB 764, 1d).

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Interpretation (Daniel 2)

Chapter 1 concludes with Daniel serving the king. Chapter 2 illustrates just how well he served him. It shows us wisdom, well-honed human relations skills, great courage, and a glimpse at Daniel as he begins to exercise the powerful prophetic gift bestowed upon him by God.

Nebuchadnezzar Requires Wise Men to Tell His Dream (2:1-13)

"¹ In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. ² So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed." (2:1-2a)



William Brassey Hole (English artist, 1846-1917), detail from, 'Daniel Interprets the Dream of Nebuchadnezzar,' oil on canvas.

The second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, according to the Babylonian system of reckoning, would begin March/April 603 BC.[\[28\]](#) So Nebuchadnezzar's dream would have occurred before Daniel and his friends had even completed their three-year training program as "wise men," which (presumably) began in 605 BC or a bit later.

As an absolute monarch, the king has many advisors or "wise men" at his command, categorized by their specialty -- though with some of these we're not quite sure exactly what is meant.

- "Magicians" is *ḥarṭōm*, describes some variety of occultist in both Egypt and Babylon.[\[29\]](#)
- "Enchanters" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "astrologers" (KJV) is *'ashshāp*, some variety of occultist.[\[30\]](#)
- "Sorcerers" is the Piel of *kāshap*, "use witchcraft, practice sorcery."
- "Astrologers" (NIV), Chaldeans (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *kaśdīm*, either "Chaldean" by race, or as "learned," of the class of Magi.[\[31\]](#)

Most of these specialties would have been banned if this had taken place in Israel. The Law reads:

"Let no one be found among you ... who practices divination[\[32\]](#), or sorcery[\[33\]](#), interprets omens[\[34\]](#), engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the

LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you." (Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

The Israelites are to seek God for wisdom. One might ask concerning Daniel: What is a devout Hebrew young man doing in a place like this?

The Babylonians believed that what the gods planned in heaven was knowable by direct observation on earth. As Longman notes, the king's other advisors were diviners (*bārû*), not prophets or seers; they didn't receive revelation. The *bārû* was important in decision making at all levels, but especially for the king. No military campaign, building work, appointment of an official, or matters of the king's health would be undertaken without consulting the *bārû* or "observer."

To make a determination, the *barum* might resort to a variety of means.

Sheep lungs and livers. One of the most widespread means of prediction was the liver omen, in which a sheep was killed and its liver and lungs examined by a specialist priest, the *bārû*. He would ask a particular question and the answer would be supplied by the interpretation of individual markings or overall shape of the liver and lungs. One could then take steps to avoid danger.

Abnormal births (*šumma izbu*) such as monstrous or multiple births of infants or animals were considered omens. Physiological omens were derived from bodily characteristics, eccentricities, the color of hair or skin, location of moles, and mannerisms in speech or gait.



Old Babylonian clay model of sheep liver (c. 1900-1600 BC), probably from Sippar, southern Iraq. British Museum.

Astrology. Astrological omens were recorded on a series of seventy-seven tablets entitled *Enūma-Anu-Enlil* to be consulted for future events. The Babylonians were famed for their astrology.

Dreams sometimes came unsolicited, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream. At other times dreams may have been induced through incubation rites that involved sleeping in a sacred area with the intention of experiencing a divinely inspired [dream](#), as did Solomon at Gibeon in 1 Kings 3. The Babylonians kept extensive dream books that would help with interpretations.

Daniel had been trained in this esoteric knowledge. But for seeing God's revelation, it was worthless. Isaiah commented:

"All the counsel you have received has only worn you out!
Let your astrologers come forward,

those stargazers who make predictions month by month,
Let them save you from what is coming upon you.
Surely they are like stubble;
the fire will burn them up.
They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame.
Here are no coals to warm anyone;
here is no fire to sit by." (Isaiah 47:13-14)

The King Demands Interpretation of His Dream (2:2b-4)

Wise men from all these specialties are summoned before Nebuchadnezzar.

"When they came in and stood before the king, ³ he said to them, 'I have had a dream^[35] that troubles^[36] me and I want to know what it means.'
⁴ "Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.'" (2:2b-4)

Notice the mention of Aramaic in verse 4. From the middle of verse 4 through chapter 7, the Book of Daniel switches from Hebrew to Aramaic, the language commonly spoken in Babylon. Since Daniel is relating stories from the Babylonian court, it makes sense to relate them in Aramaic.

Nebuchadnezzar Demands to be Told What He Dreamed (2:5-13)

⁵ The king replied to the astrologers, 'This is what I have firmly decided:^[37] If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. ⁶ But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.'

⁷ Once more they replied, 'Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.'

⁸ Then the king answered, 'I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: ⁹ If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.'

¹⁰ The astrologers answered the king, 'There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. ¹¹ What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.'" (2:7-11)

Nebuchadnezzar doesn't trust his advisors. They will tell him whatever seems best for them, and he knows it. But he wants to have assurance that they actually know what they are doing, so he demands that they tell him the dream he had dreamed.

They reply, "What the king asks is too difficult." Wrong! Don't say "no" to an angry king!

¹² This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death." (2:12-13)

Kill them all, the king commands in a rage! Even though Daniel and his friends may not have been officially in the ranks of the wise men yet, they are considered guilty by association, and an officer is sent to place them under arrest.

Daniel and His Friends Seek God (2:14-16)

"¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men[38] of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.[39] ¹⁵ He asked the king's officer, 'Why did the king issue such a harsh[40] decree?' Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. ¹⁶ At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him." (2:14-16)

Notice Daniel's calm in the face of the king's rush to judgment. Choosing his words tactfully, Daniel asks Arioch why the king has made such a decree. Then Daniel apparently asks to see the king and is granted an audience, even though he is young and relatively inexperienced. Apparently, he promises the king that he will do as the king asks, but he needs time to seek his God. The king grants him some time.

Call for Urgent Prayer (2:17-18)

Now Daniel has to deliver on his promise.

"¹⁷ Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸ He urged them to plead[41] for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." (2:17-18)

Daniel knows that the only thing that will save them is God's direct revelation, and so he and his friends call upon God with great urgency.

God Reveals to Daniel in a Dream (2:19-23)

God answers the prayer, and that night reveals both the dream and the interpretation to Daniel. So Daniel offers a wonderful psalm of praise to God.

"¹⁹ During the night the mystery[42] was revealed to Daniel in a vision[43]. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰ and said:

'Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
wisdom and power are his.

²¹ He changes[44] times and seasons;
he sets up kings and deposes them.
He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the discerning.

²² He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what lies in darkness,
and light dwells with him.

²³ I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers:
You have given me wisdom and power,
you have made known to me what we asked of you,
you have made known to us the dream[45] of the king.'" (2:19-23)

Daniel Seeks Audience with Nebuchadnezzar (2:24-28)

²⁴ Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, 'Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.'

²⁵ Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, 'I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.'

²⁶ The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), 'Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?'

²⁷ Daniel replied, 'No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner^[46] can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind^[47] as you lay on your bed are these...." (2:24-28)

Daniel's humility before the king is clear. Though Arioch is quick to claim that he has found the dream interpreter (verse 25), Daniel takes no personal credit for the dream or its interpretation, but praises "God in heaven who reveals mysteries" (verse 27). Notice Daniel's humility! Daniel proceeds to tell the dream and its interpretation.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:29-35)

²⁹ As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. ³⁰ As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

³¹ You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue -- an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.

³⁴ While you were watching, a rock^[48] was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." (2:31-35)

Daniel's Interpretation (2:36-45)

Daniel now reveals that the parts of the statue represent kingdoms or empires.

³⁶ This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

³⁹ "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron -- for iron breaks and smashes everything -- and as iron breaks things to pieces,

so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

⁴⁴ In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands -- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy." (2:36-45)

Identifying the Empires

God shows Daniel the identity of the first and last empires. The first is Babylon and the last is the Kingdom of God. However, the identity of the others is much less clear. As Goldingay says, "The unspecificity of Daniel 2 means that the four regimes can only be identified on grounds external to it."^[49] Indeed, they have been linked to Nebuchadnezzar and his three Babylonian successors, with the rock being Cyrus (cf. Isaiah 45:1) -- and many other scenarios. Those who see Antiochus Epiphanes as the chief focus of Daniel's interpretations, see the sequence as Babylon, Media, Persia, with the fourth kingdom as Greece, the two legs as the main successors to Alexander the Great, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.

Since the identity of these intervening kingdoms isn't the focus of Daniel's interpretation in chapter 2, we won't spend a lot of time on that here. However, so you don't die of anticipation, here is what I believe is a probable interpretation of these kingdoms.

If you assume that the four beasts of Daniel 7 correspond to the four parts to the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 -- and that the ram and he-goat of Daniel 8 (identified as Medo-Persia and Greece respectively) are two of the four beasts, then you come up with the following sequence:

Chapter 2 ^[50]	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Interpretation
Gold	Lion		Babylon (2:38)
Silver	Bear	Ram	Medo-Persia (8:20)
Bronze	Leopard	He-goat	Greece (8:21)

Iron/Clay	Indescribable Beast		(Rome)
Supernatural Stone	Heavenly Court		God's Kingdom

We're given the identity of Medo-Persia in 8:20 as one of these primary empires. And Greece as another in 8:21. Thus I think a probable explanation of the four parts of the statue is: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (which, we know, followed Greece on the world stage and is alluded to in 11:18 and 11:30).

As I've indicated, the above interpretation requires us to make several assumptions that may or may not hold true, so it's important to be humble in our interpretations.

The Stone that Shatters Kingdoms (2:40, 44-45)

The focus of Daniel's interpretation, however, is not on the first three kingdoms, but the fourth, which is destroyed by the stone or rock that destroys it.

⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron -- for iron breaks and smashes everything -- and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others....

⁴⁴ In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up^[51] a kingdom that will never be destroyed^[52], nor will it be left to^[53] another people. It will crush^[54] all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands -- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces." (2:40, 44-45)

This Rock, of course, is God himself. Many times in the Old Testament we see God as the protector of his people with metaphors of a Shield, Fortress, Hiding Place, Keeper, Refuge, Rock, Shade, Shelter, and Stronghold. In particular, God is seen as a great Rock in which to hide, a hiding place, and a shade. The caves of the rocks are places where David and his men sought safety when they were being hunted by King Saul and his armies. Yahweh is called a Rock many times in Scripture.^[55] God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, is also given this title (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is the stone that the builders rejected (Matthew 21:42, referring to Isaiah 8:14), the stone that unbelievers will stumble over (Romans 9:32-33; 1 Peter 2:8).

While we wait to discuss the intervening kingdoms in Daniel's prophecies, it's important for us to study this prophecy of the Kingdom of God. We learn several things from verse 44.

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (2:44)

The coming Kingdom of God will be:

1. **Temporal.** The Kingdom of God will be set up or established in history, in the time period of the kingdoms described in the dream's interpretation. Jesus declared, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near." (Mark 1:15). Yes, it will be fully realized at Christ's coming, but it was established when he came to earth as Messiah.
2. **Divine.** God will set it up, not man.
3. **Eternal.** This kingdom will never be destroyed, or succeeded by another ("left to another people"), but will endure forever. Unlike all the kingdoms and empires that preceded it, it will not fall.
4. **Consuming.** It will eventually crush all other kingdoms and bring them to an end.

These thoughts are echoed throughout messianic prophecies -- especially, the Son of Man prophecy in Daniel 7:

"[The Son of Man] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is **an everlasting dominion that will not pass away**, and his kingdom is one that will **never be destroyed**." (Daniel 7:14)

Elsewhere we read:

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; **his kingdom will never end**." (Luke 1:32-33)

"Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. **For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet**." (1 Corinthians 15:24-25)

"The LORD said to me,
 "You are my Son;
 today I have begotten you.
 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
 and the ends of the earth your possession.
 You shall **break them with a rod of iron**
 and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:7-9, ESV)

It is clear that Jesus identified himself with this Kingdom. He says immediately after telling the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, a picture of Israel rejecting the Messiah:

⁴² Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:
 "The stone that the builders rejected
 has become the cornerstone;
 this was the Lord's doing,
 and it is amazing in our eyes"? [quoting Psalm 118:22-23]

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'" (Matthew 21:42-44)

In Matthew 21:44, Jesus says that this rejected cornerstone will be both

1. a stumbling block and

2. a stone that will crush whomever it falls upon.

The "stumbling block" passage Jesus refers to is found in Isaiah:

"He will become a sanctuary,
a stone one strikes against;
for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over --
a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (Isaiah 8:14)

The **crushing stone** Jesus refers to is clearly from our passage in Daniel, where the Kingdom of God is mentioned:

"⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom.... [that] will crush and break all the others.... ⁴⁴ In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom that will never be destroyed**, nor will it be left to another people. It will **crush** all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (4:40, 44)

Jesus himself is the Rock, the Divine Messiah, who at his Second Coming, will destroy all kingdoms and substitute his own:

"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet,
and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:
'The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and **he will reign for ever and ever.**'" (Revelation 11:15)

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah." (Revelation 12:10a)

Nebuchadnezzar Honors Daniel (2:46-49)

King Nebuchadnezzar was overcome by Daniel's interpretation.

"⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, 'Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.'

⁴⁸ Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. ⁴⁹ Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court." (2:46-49)

Imagine an absolute monarch, a dictator, an emperor falling prostrate before a young foreign wise man!

Daniel becomes ruler over the province of Babylon -- though not the empire that extended far beyond Babylon. He also is placed in charge of all the wise men. And, at Daniel's request, Nebuchadnezzar appoints his Hebrew countrymen as administrators -- a position that gets them in trouble with jealous courtiers, as we'll see in Daniel 3.

Endnotes

- [28] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 85.
- [29] Robert L. Alden, *ḥarṭōm*, TWOT #738b.
- [30] Robert L. Alden, *ʾashshāp*, TWOT #181.
- [31] *Kaśdīm*, BDB 109, 2.
- [32] "Divination" is *qesem*. Exactly what this involves isn't clear, but we see a hint in Ezekiel 21:21-23. Shaking or flinging down arrows, consulting seraphim, and hepatoscopy (looking at the liver) may be subcategories of *qesem* (Robert L. Alden, *qesem*, TWOT #2044a).
- [33] "Sorcery" (NIV), "soothsayer" (NRSV), "tells fortunes" (ESV), "an observer of times" (KJV) is *ānan*. The exact practice is unclear, though many ideas have been suggested (Robert L. Alden, *ānan*, TWOT #1656). The word may indicate something to do with observing clouds. We're not sure.
- [34] "Interprets omens" (NIV, ESV), "augur" (NRSV), "an enchanter" (KJV) is *nāḥash*, also unclear. It is associated with divination through a cup (Genesis 44:5, 15). "Because of the similarity of *nāḥash* to *nāḥāsh*, meaning 'snake,' some make a connection to snake charming" (Robert L. Alden, *nāḥash*, TWOT #1348).
- [35] "Dream" is *ḥalôm*, the only word for "dream" in the Old Testament, from the verb *ḥālam*, also used in this sentence ("to dream a dream") (TWOT #663a and #663).
- [36] "Troubles me" (NIV), "my spirit is troubled" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *rûaḥ*, "spirit, breath, wind" and the verb *pā'am* in the Niphal stem, "be disturbed" (BDB 823). Verse 1 has this in the Hithpael stem, with the meaning, "be disturbed."
- [37] Some have followed the KJV in taking *ʾazdā* in the sense "is gone from me," supposing that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his dream (so Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 87-88.). However, *ʾazdā* seems to be a Persian loanword meaning "(the word = command is) promulgated (by me)" (Holladay, p. 396), that is, "firmly decided" (NIV), "a public decree" (NRSV), "is firm" (ESV), a Persian loanword (*ʾazdā*, "sure, assured," BDB 107).
- [38] "Wise men" is *ḥakkīm*, "wise men." Used mostly of the court astrologers in Daniel (TWOT #2729a).
- [39] "Wisdom and tact" (NIV), "prudence and discretion" (NRSV, ESV), "counsel and wisdom" (KJV) are the two words, *ētâ*, "counsel," from *ye'at*, "advise, take counsel" (TWOT #2272b); and *te'ēm*, "understanding, good sense" (Holladay, p. 406).
- [40] "Harsh" (NIV), "urgent" (NRSV, ESV), "hasty" (KJV) is Haphel participle of *ḥaṣap*, "show insolence, harshness" (BDB), "harsh, severe" (Holladay, p. 406). Baldwin (*Daniel*, p. 89) cites Charles, *Daniel* (1929), p. 35 to support the translation of hastiness.
- [41] "Plead" (NIV), "seek" (NRSV, ESV), "desire" (KJV) is *be'â*, "ask, request" (BDB).
- [42] "Mystery" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "secret" (KJV) is *rāz*, "secret," a Persian loanword, translated in the Septuagint as *mysterion* (BDB).
- [43] "Vision" is *ḥezû*, "vision, appearance," Used similarly to the Hebrew *ḥizzāyôn*. From *ḥāzâ*, "see, behold" (BDB).
- [44] "Changes" is *shenâ* (Hafel stem), "change, alter" (BDB).
- [45] "The dream of the king" (NIV), "what the king ordered" (NRSV), is literally, "the king's matter" (ESV, KJV), using the noun *millâ*, "word, utterance," or "thing, affair, matter" (BDB 110), from *melal*, "speak, say."
- [46] Wise man (*ḥakkīm*), enchanter (*āshap*), magician (*ḥarṭōm*), or diviner (*gezar*). "Diviner" (NIV, NRSV), "astrologer" (ESV), "soothsayer" (KJV) is *gezar*, "astrologers" or those who consult livers (Latin *haruspices*). Others: "exorcists" (Holladay, p. 401). Found in Daniel 2:27; 4:4; 5:7, 11.
- [47] "Passed through your mind" (NIV) is more literally, "of your head" (NRSV, ESV, KJV).
- [48] "Rock" (NIV), "stone" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *eben*, "stone." It is found in this sense in 2:34, 35, 45.
- [49] Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 41.
- [50] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 161.
- [51] "Set up" in 44a is the Hafel stem of *qûm*, means literally to set up an image (3:1ff), then figuratively to set up or establish kings (2:21) and kingdoms (2:44) (BDB). It is also used in 44b in the Peal stem with the meaning "endure, continue" (Holladay, p. 419).
- [52] "Destroyed" is *ḥabal* in the Hithpael stem, "be destroyed" (BDB).
- [53] "Left" is the Hithpael stem of *shebaq*, "leave, let alone," here, "be left" (BDB); "be left to, pass on to (of sovereignty)" (Holladay, p. 422).
- [54] "Crush" (NIV, NRSV), "break in pieces" (ESV, KJV) is the Hafel stem of *deqaq*, "be shattered, fall to pieces" (BDB); "pulverize, crush" (Holladay, p. 403).
- [55] God is called a Rock in 1 Samuel 2:2; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:31; 28:1; 62:2, 6, 7; 89:26; 94:22; 144:1; Isaiah 26:4; 44:8; 51:1.

The Fiery Furnace and the Lions' Den (Daniel 3 and 6)

Being faithful to God unto death has been an important foundation for disciples throughout the ages. Nowhere else in the Bible are we taught these values so clearly as in the Book of Daniel. Because the themes are so similar, I've combined The Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3) with Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6), even though they are separated in time by many decades and aren't found together in the Scripture text. (If you're teaching these in a class or small group, however, feel free to treat them separately.) I hope that studying these accounts together will reinforce in your mind your intention to be faithful to Christ no matter what.

A. The Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3)

The story of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace has been beloved by believers throughout the ages. A fresco of this is found in the Catacomb of Priscilla from mid-third century Rome.

Both of the stories of the Hebrew Children and the Fiery Furnace and Daniel and the Lions' Den concern "court conflicts" that is, colleagues who are jealous that Jews have been promoted to higher positions in government, and the Jews' faithfulness to God is reported in order to get them out of the way (3:8; 6:13). Human nature hasn't changed all that much in 2,500 years.

As you recall, chapter two ended with the words:

"At Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court." (2:49)

That triggers the events in chapter 3. Remember the overarching theme of the Book of Daniel: In spite of appearances, God is in control. It shows up here also.



'The Fiery Furnace' (1981), stained glass, Ascension Episcopal Church, West Houston, Texas.

The Golden Image (3:1)

"King Nebuchadnezzar^[56] made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon." (3:1)

The location of the plain of Dura isn't clear, but perhaps it is to be found at Tulul Dura, a series of mounds or tells a few miles south of Babylon."^[57] The huge image was probably cast and constructed on the spot, for something that size would be difficult to move.

Herodotus tells of a statue of the god Bel in Babylon that was 18 feet tall.^[58] Two statues were included among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World -- the Colossus of Rhodes (98 feet or 30 meters high), and the statue of Zeus at Olympus (42 feet or 13 meters tall). These last two were constructed with an interior structure covered by plates. By comparison, the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor is 151 feet (46 meters) from its base to the top of the torch.

So I picture Nebuchadnezzar's statue made of gilded metal plates over an interior structure. It's not clear if it is a statue of a god or of the king himself as some kind of deity. Whatever the case, Daniel's friends were not willing to bow to it, since it violated the command not to worship a graven image.

Government Officials Commanded to Assemble (3:2-3)

But it was important to Nebuchadnezzar that all should come to the dedication of the image. His pride was at stake. Perhaps this involved a test of loyalty on the part of his officials.

² He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³ So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it." (3:2-3)

The list of officials runs the gamut of great to small. "Satraps" were probably governors over large territories which were part of the Babylonian Empire, perhaps from the royal family, practically vassal kings in their own right.^[59] "Prefects" were provincial rulers or governors.^[60] "Governors" were probably the next lower government official in a province.^[61] "Advisers" or "counselors" were the ones who advised the king on policies, part of his court.^[62] "Treasurers," of course, were responsible for the king's money and tribute from the empire's far flung provinces.^[63] "Judges" or "justices" presided over the legal system.^[64] "Magistrates" may have served as the police, law enforcement.^[65] Finally, Daniel includes all the other officials not mentioned above.^[66]

The point is that every kind of officer of the empire was expected to be present at the image's dedication^[67], probably to show their loyalty. This

may have been an attempt by the king "to solidify control over the diverse elements of his vast empire."[\[68\]](#)

Command to Fall Down and Worship the Image (3:4-7)

Once the crowd of officials was assembled, they were given orders.

"⁴ Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: ⁵ As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶ Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'

⁷ Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up." (3:4-7)

The key words here are "fall down" and "worship." Both words involve prostrating oneself to show homage.[\[69\]](#)

Hearing the music was the cue to bow down. Even today, we see music preceding the Muslim call to worship. A whole orchestra of instruments is listed here,[\[70\]](#)and then repeated in verses 5, 7, 10, and 15. The literary effect of the repetition is to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion, heighten the tension, and the feeling of danger towards the Jews who will refuse to comply.

The Burning Fiery Furnace

In the twenty-first century we may find burning in a blazing furnace hard to believe. But we only need to look for examples to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Consider the cruel killings attributed to China's Mao Zedong, North Korea's dictators, the Pol Pot regime, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and Uganda's Idi Amin. In 2015, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) burned to death a Jordanian pilot who had conducted a bombing raid on their military camps. Over history, many societies have used burning as a punishment for treason and rebellion. The Babylonian Hammurabi's Code (eighteenth century BC) specified burning as punishment for certain crimes.[\[71\]](#) Sadly, the list of countries that engaged in such brutal practices is very long indeed.

Nebuchadnezzar threatened those who did not bow down with being thrown into a "blazing furnace."[\[72\]](#) Nebuchadnezzar had used this punishment before to punish Israelites (Jeremiah 29:22). What was this? While no firm archaeological evidence exists for a furnace large enough to contain several men, it is clear that furnaces for metal smelting and brick kilns were common in the ancient Near East, and in the Holy Land.[\[73\]](#)

To find the source of such an oven, we need only turn to Nebuchadnezzar himself -- a great builder during his reign. Following the defeat of the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC, Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the city of Babylon on a grand scale. It has been estimated that 15 million baked bricks were used in the construction of official buildings. The British Museum has examples of such bricks stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's name. Sun-dried bricks were easy to make, but would disintegrate in a heavy rainfall, while bricks burned in a kiln were virtually indestructible.

Kilns to fire bricks on such a scale would have been close by to the city of Babylon, terrifying, and quite adequate to enclose several men.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Denounced (3:8-12)

No one seems to be monitoring compliance for this mass ritual of bowing to the image, but jealous government officials are watching the Jews, guessing that their religion won't allow them to bow to the image.

⁸ At this time some astrologers^[74] came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace.

¹² But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon -- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego -- who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.'" (3:8-12)

These government officials don't like "foreigners" getting better government positions than local, loyal citizens. So before the king they accuse^[75] the Jews of not bowing.

Nebuchadnezzar Demands the Jews to Worship His Statue (3:13-15)

When he hears this, the king is angry. He sees this as non-negotiable, an act of loyalty. He doesn't care whether or not this is against the Jews' religion. They must submit or pay the consequences. At least he gives them a second chance.

¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god^[76] will be able to rescue^[77] you from my hand?'" (3:13-15)

Notice the king's insult towards the God of the Jews at the end of verse 15. He knows this is a religious scruple, but doesn't care. He has no respect for their God -- even though at one point he had honored Daniel's God (2:47).

The Jews Refuse to Worship the Image (3:16-18)

The Jews' response to the king isn't very respectful. Instead of flattering the king, they flatly refuse to comply.

"¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves^[78] before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'" (3:16-18)

The Ten Commandments clearly state that Jews are not to bow down to or worship any other gods -- or even make a graven image.

"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **You shall not bow down to them or worship them**; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God," (Exodus 20:3-5)

Nebuchadnezzar may take bowing down as a non-negotiable, but so does Yahweh. The Jews dare not disobey their God. And so they answer bluntly: God is able to save^[79] us. But even if he doesn't, we refuse to bow down.

Notice how they state their determination:

1. **Faith in God's delivering power.** They state, "Our God is able to deliver us." Yahweh is the all-powerful God. Nothing is beyond his power or intervention. Nothing!
2. **Faith in God's ultimate plan.** "Even if he doesn't deliver us, we still won't bow before your image." If God doesn't deliver, he hasn't forgotten. Things don't have to end up the way we think they should. God knows better. As Job declares, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15, KJV).

So often we are willing to serve God so long as he blesses us and we get our way. But will we serve him even though things get bad for us. When we face death? Do we desire to avoid death than we desire to be faithful to God?

The Jews Are Thrown into the Fiery Furnace (3:19-23)

If the king was angry before, now his anger is out of control.

"¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious^[80] with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude^[81] toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound^[82] and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²² The king's command was so urgent^[83] and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³ and these three men, firmly tied^[84], fell^[85] into the blazing furnace." (3:19-23)

Seven times hotter is hyperbole, of course. There was no way to measure the temperature. But the reader is given one way to estimate. The fire is so hot that it kills those who throw the Jews into the furnace.

Note that the Latin Vulgate and Catholic Bibles (following Theodotion and some versions of the Septuagint) insert at 3:23 the Song of the Three Children and the Prayer of Azariah, but they aren't included in the Hebrew text.^[86]

Nebuchadnezzar Sees a Fourth Man in the Furnace (3:24-26a)

Nebuchadnezzar is watching, waiting to see the Jews burn. But he is amazed.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement^[87] and asked his advisers, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?'

'They replied, 'Certainly, O king.'

²⁵ He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound^[88] and unharmed^[89], and the fourth looks like^[90] a son of the gods^[91].'

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God^[92], come out! Come here!'" (3:24-26a)

"The Son of God" is capitalized in the King James Version, leading some to believe that Jesus was there with the Jews. However, it is better rendered "a son of the gods" (NIV, ESV), since in verse 28 the king refers to the being as an angel. "Son of God" is elsewhere used to describe heavenly beings such as angels (Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Notice Nebuchadnezzar's sudden respect for "servants of the Most High God."

The Jews Emerge Unscathed (3:26b-27)

^{26b} So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them." (3:26a-27)

Everyone crowds around the Jews, hardly able to believe that the fire had absolutely no effect on them or their clothing.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises their God (3:28-30)

"²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel^[93] and rescued^[94] his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against^[95] the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save^[96] in this way.' ³⁰ Then the king promoted^[97] Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon." (3:28-30)

Nebuchadnezzar sums up the faith and faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego:

"They trusted in [their God] and defied^[98] the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." (3:28b)

That, of course, is the lesson of this story. Faithful believers are willing to die rather than betray God. Are you? Am I? Do we compromise where we should have stood firm? Do we avoid an issue, when we should face it fairly and steadfastly?

The king rewards Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with a promotion and decrees that no one is to say anything against their God.

B. Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6)

The story of Daniel in the lions' den has captured the imagination of believers for thousands of years. Daniel's emergence from the lions' den is typological of Jesus death and resurrection, as in third century frescos found in at least three separate Roman catacombs.^[99]

This is the second time in Daniel that we see an account of Jews being sentenced to death for practicing their faith. In chapter 3 the Hebrew children are condemned to the fiery furnace, and in chapter 6, Daniel is thrown into the lions' den.

Both of these stories concern a "court conflict," that is, colleagues are jealous that Jews have been promoted to higher positions in government, and the Jews' faithfulness to God is reported in order to get them out of the way (3:8; 6:13).



Briton Rivière (British painter, 1840-1920), 'Daniel's Answer to the King' (1890), oil on canvas, 74x47-7/16 inches, Manchester Art Gallery, UK.

The Neo-Babylon Empire fell to the Medes and Persians in October 539 BC. It is now a few years later. The government of the now *Persian province* of Babylon is under Darius the Mede.

Darius the Mede (5:31)

"... and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two." (5:31)

Now we meet Darius the Mede, but who is he? The historicity of the Book of Daniel has been questioned, since (1) Darius the Mede is not found elsewhere in ancient history, and (2) it is clear from cuneiform sources that Cyrus II was the conqueror of Babylon, the immediate successor of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Many critical scholars have considered Darius an "historical construct."^[100] However, Daniel seems to be talking about an historical person here and in the next chapter.

"So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."
(6:28)

It is not uncommon in the Bible to have the same individual called by two names: Abram/Abraham, Jacob/Isaac, Daniel/Belteshazzar, Simon/Cephas/Peter, etc. Darius is likely a throne name for the person ruling in Babylon. But whom? Three explanations have been suggested. Darius the Mede is:

1. Gu/Ugbaru, the general to whom the Nabonidus Chronicle attributes the conquest of Babylon. He would be ruling as a sub-king at the whim of the ultimate ruler, Cyrus himself.^[101]
2. Cyrus the Persian himself. Daniel 6:28 could be translated: "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, namely the reign of Cyrus the Persian."^[102] Cyrus is known to have been related to the Medes, to have been called "king of the Medes," and to have been about 60 years old at the fall of Babylon.^[103]
3. Gubaru, the governor of Babylon and the region Beyond the River, exercising virtually royal powers in Babylon and hence not improperly called "king." (6:1).^[104]

Since the locus of the action seems to be in Babylon, not one of the capital cities of the Persian Empire (Susa, Ecbatana, Persepolis, etc.), I gather that Darius is a throne-name for the king or governor of the province of Babylon, rather than Cyrus himself.

Daniel Elevated by Darius (6:1-2)

¹ It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss." (6:1-2)

In the context, "the kingdom" seems to refer to Babylonia itself, rather than the entire Medo-Persian empire.^[105] A "satrap" (from an Old Persian word) was a ruler over a

portion of a kingdom.[106] Daniel, at an advanced age, has been appointed to a high position[107] in the new Persian government over the province of Babylon. He doesn't seem to be "first" among the three, as the KJV suggests, but "one" of the three.[108]

Daniel and his other two colleagues were to make sure that none of the satraps were corrupt or made themselves rich at government expense.

Daniel's Enemies (6:3-4)

"³ Now Daniel so distinguished himself[109] among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs[110], but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption[111] in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent." (6:3-4)

Daniel, who has been a wise and exceptional official under Nebuchadnezzar, shines brightly under Persian rule. When his rivals hear that the king is planning to put him in charge, they search for grounds on which to discredit him, but cannot find any. Daniel's record is spotless. He conducted the king's affairs in a proper and honest manner.

Notice the character qualities of this government official. Daniel is:

1. **Trustworthy.** He tells the truth and can be counted on to be faithful to his responsibilities.[112]
2. **Diligent.** He keeps up with all his duties and doesn't let anything slip.[113]
3. **Honest.** He doesn't take money or bribes from those trying to break the rules or be preferred over others. He hasn't been corrupted by how he might further his own interests while in office.[114]

In our day government workers and officials -- as well as managers or employees of private companies -- are sometimes accused of being lazy, incompetent, or corrupt. But Daniel was none of these. His enemies couldn't find anything in the performance of his duties by which they could accuse him. Daniel sets a high standard by which we can examine our own performance as employees.

Darius Makes a Decree Banning Prayer (6:5-9)

"⁵ Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'

⁶ So the administrators and the satraps went as a group[115] to the king and said: 'O King Darius, live forever! ⁷The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed[116] that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays[117] to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸ Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered -- in accordance with the laws of

the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.'⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing." (6:5-9)

The act is clearly designed to appeal to the pride of the king, and its only purpose is to find grounds to get rid of Daniel. But Daniel's enemies have lied to Nebuchadnezzar that the parties "have all agreed." Daniel, certainly, hasn't agreed to such an edict!

Daniel Prays Three Times a Day -- as Usual (6:10-11)

¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published^[118], he went home to his upstairs room^[119] where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.



Stephen Gjertson, 'The Prayer of Daniel the Prophet' (1998), Oil on canvas, 28-3/4 x 59-3/8 in, © Stephen Gjertson. Permission requested.

¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help." (6:10-11)

I think it is interesting to consider exactly what Daniel was doing.

1. Praying privately. Daniel went to his own house. Yes, he prayed with an open window, but he didn't pray in front of his colleagues for show, that is kneeling and lifting his hands as he probably did in private. I have no doubt, however, that he prayed silent prayers while at work in the king's court.

2. Praying toward Jerusalem. Daniel prayed in keeping with Solomon's plea four hundred years previously: "Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive" (1 Kings 8:30). To this day, Muslims pray towards Mecca, Jews pray towards Jerusalem, the Eastern Orthodox face east to pray, and most cathedrals are oriented towards the east.

3. Praying regularly, three times a day. David wrote: "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice" (Psalm 55:17). Observant Jews today practice three times of prayer each day: morning prayer (*shacharit*), afternoon prayer (*minchah*), and evening prayer (*arvith* or *maariv*). This is said to have been codified into Jewish law about the time of the return from Exile.

4. Praying while kneeling, humbling himself before God. Daniel probably lifted his hands to God in prayer as well: "... spreading out his hands toward this temple" (1 Kings 8:38).^[120]

5. Praying with bowed head. "Prayed" is *ṣelâ*, a generic Aramaic verb "to pray," originally, "bow in prayer."[\[121\]](#)

6. Praying giving thanks, praising.[\[122\]](#)

7. Praying and petitioning God.[\[123\]](#)

8. Praying seeking God's mercy.[\[124\]](#)

Daniel's Enemies Report Him to the King (6:12-13)

Daniel's enemies personally witness him praying. Now they report him.

¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: 'Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?' The king answered, 'The decree stands -- in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.'

¹³ Then they said to the king, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.'" (6:12-13)

Apparently, Medo-Persian practice didn't allow laws to be repealed (Esther 1:19; 8:8).[\[125\]](#) That's what Daniel's enemies were counting on.

Darius Seeks to Rescue Daniel (6:14-15)

¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. ¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, 'Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.'" (6:14-15)

The king realizes that he has been tricked. He values Daniel's wisdom and tries to undo his mistake but cannot.

The Lions' Den (6:16-17)

Execution by being thrown to the animals was not a common form of capital punishment in the ancient Near East. It wasn't made popular until it was introduced in the Roman Empire about the second century BC.[\[126\]](#)

Nevertheless, lions and big cats were greatly admired. Apart from being hunted for sport, lions were sometimes kept in captivity, and the den of lions into which Daniel was thrown was perhaps part of a royal zoo. The Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) is reported to have maintained a breeding farm for lions at Nimrud. Statues of winged lions were placed at the entrances of palaces and important public buildings in Assyria and Babylonia to bring the protection of magical forces to the structures and their occupants. Probably the most outstanding artistic representation of a lion is seen in the glazed brick

figures that decorated the Processional Street leading from the Ishtar Gate in Babylon (sixth century BC).[\[127\]](#)

King Darius is forced to execute the edict.

"¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!' ¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed." (6:16-17)

Notice that the king admires Daniel, and hopes that his God, "whom you serve[\[128\]](#) continually[\[129\]](#)" will rescue him. Daniel has the reputation in court of being very serious about his faith in God.

Baldwin says that the text implies that the lion-pit had two entrances, a ramp down which the animals would enter, and a hole in the roof by which the food would normally be fed to them. Whether Daniel was thrown in from the top or from the side there would be only one way out unless someone let down a rope.[\[130\]](#)

Daniel Is Delivered by an Angel (6:18-23)

The storyteller helps us see the king's anguish.

"¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. ¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰ When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?'

²¹ Daniel answered, 'O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel[\[131\]](#), and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent[\[132\]](#) in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong[\[133\]](#) before you, O king.'

²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." (6:18-23)

Just as the Hebrew children had no smell of smoke on them after leaving the fiery furnace (3:27), so Daniel has no wounds from lion bites, "because he had trusted in his God" (6:23b). Faith is the key. The writer of Hebrews comments on a long line of faithful men and women in the Old Testament:

"who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions...." (Hebrews 11:33)

Daniel's Accusers Executed (6:24)

Daniel's enemies are now held to account. They had falsely told the king that Daniel had agreed to the decree they had proposed (6:7). Thus they had committed fraud before the king. The king is furious at being used so to accomplish their ambitious schemes.

"At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones." (6:24)

The narrator includes verse 24 to demonstrate to the reader that the lions not eating Daniel wasn't due to lack of hunger, but of God's intervention. They were hungry enough when the enemies and their families were offered to them as a meal.

Darius's Proclamation (6:25-28)

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: 'May you prosper greatly!

²⁶ 'I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷ He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.'

²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." (Daniel 6:25-28)

The account concludes with a written decree published widely by King Darius, perhaps to undo the damage caused by his previous ill-considered decree. Notice how King Darius describes Daniel's God:

- The living God, who
- Endures forever, is
- Indestructible, ruling over a never-ending kingdom, a
- Rescuer and Savior, and
- Performs signs and wonders.

Specifically, he rescues Daniel. Hallelujah!

Endnotes

[56] The Septuagint of 3:1 places this event in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which would be about 587 BC.

[57] Akkadian *dûru* ("circuit, wall, walled place"), from which the name is derived, is a common element in Mesopotamian place names. It can indicate a circular enclosure or fortress ("Dura," ISBE 1:996).

[58] Herodotus, 1:183.

[59] "Satraps" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "princes" (KJV) is *'ahashdarpan*, a Persian loanword, used also in Ezra and Esther, referring to an official who ruled over a major division of the Persian empire. The title means "protector of the kingdom." Satraps were usually chosen from the Persian nobility, often from the royal family. The satrap was virtually a king; he had his own court and absolute civil authority, and he answered directly to the 'great king' (R.E. Hayden, "Satrap," ISBE 4:345).

[60] "Prefects" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "governors" (KJV) is *segan*, "prefect, governor," an Akkadian loanword also found in Hebrew (TWOT #2285). In 2:48, Daniel had been appointed ruler over the province of Babylon and "chief prefect" over all the wise men.

[61] "Governors" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "captains" (KJV) is *pehâ*, "governor," of Babylonian and Persian empires, an Akkadian loanword. In Ezra 5:14; 6:7 there is a governor of Judah.

- [62] "Advisers" (NIV), "counselors" (NRSV, ESV), "judges" (KJV) is *'adargāzar*, "counselor," a Persian loanword (TWOT #2561), used only here (Holladay, p. 396).
- [63] "Treasurers" is *gedābar*, "treasurer," a Persian loanword (TWOT #2653).
- [64] "Judges" (NIV), "justices" (NRSV, ESV), "counselors" (KJV) is *detābar*, "judge," Persian loanword (TWOT #2685).
- [65] "Magistrates" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "sheriffs" (KJV) is *tiptāy*, "police officer, magistrate," (Holladay, p. 425), the name of a provincial officer of unknown station (TWOT #3062).
- [66] "Officials" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "rulers" (KJV) is *shilōwn*, "ruler, official" (TWOT #3034c).
- [67] "Dedication" is *hanukkā*, "dedication," used in 3:2-3 and Ezra 6:16, similar to the Hebrew word from which we get our word "Hanukkah," from the rededication of the temple under Judas Maccabeus, after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes.
- [68] Longman, *Daniel*, p. 83.
- [69] "Fall down" is *nepal*, "fall down" and do homage (3:5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15) (BDB). "Worship" is *segid*, "do homage" (by prostration), of God, idols, and men (BDB; TWOT #2884). Nebuchadnezzar prostrates himself before Daniel in 2:46. The related Hebrew word *sāgad* means "to prostrate oneself in worship," and is the Arabic *masgid* means "mosque" (TWOT #1459).
- [70] "Horn" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "cornet" (KJV) is *qeren*, "horn," like Hebrew refers to the horn of an animal as well as the horn as a musical instrument (TWOT #2980). "Flute" (NIV, KJV), "pipe" (NRSV, ESV) is *mashrôqî*, "pipe" (TWOT #3049a). "Zither" (NIV), "lyre" (NRSV, ESV), "harp" (KJV) is *qatrôs*, "lyre, zither," a loan word from the Greek *kitharas* (TWOT #2972). "Lyre" (NIV), "trigon" (NRSV, ESV), "sackbut" (KJV) is *sabbekā*, "a type of lyre," evidently triangular, with 4 strings and a bright tone (Holladay, p. 421). The word "trigon" refers to "an ancient triangular harp of Oriental origin which had four strings and was often used for banquet music." "Harp" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "psaltry" (KJV) is *peçanêrîyn*, "a stringed instrument." This word is doubtless borrowed from the Greek *psalterion* which is often used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *nebel* "harp" (TWOT #2943). "Pipes" (NIV), "drum" (NRSV), "bagpipe" (ESV), "dulcimer" (KJV) is *sîppōneyā*, "wind instrument," borrowed from the Greek *symphonia* (whence English "symphony") and was long taken as a proof that Daniel was written in the Greek period after Alexander's conquests. It is now generally recognized that since there were many earlier contacts between the Greeks and Persians, this name of a musical instrument could well be found along with the instrument at the Persian court (TWOT #2887).
- [71] Ruler Rim-Sin I, king of Larsa, a city near Ur (c. 1750 BC, a contemporary of Hammurabi): "Because they threw a young slave into an oven, throw ye a slave into a furnace." Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 100, who cites John B. Alexander, "New Light on the Fiery Furnace," *Journal of Biblical Literature*(1950), 69, pp. 375f.
- [72] "Blazing furnace" (NIV), "furnace of blazing fire" (NRSV), "burning fiery furnace" (ESV, KJV) is three words: "Furnace" is *attûn*, "furnace," an Akkadian loanword meaning "oven," for baking bricks or smelting metals" (WA Shell, "furnace," ISBE 2:371). "Fire/fiery" is *nûr*, "fire." "Burning/blazing" is the verb *yeqad*, "to burn" (TWOT #2774).
- [73] Genesis 19:28; Exodus 19:18; Deuteronomy 4:20; Revelation 9:2.
- [74] "Astrologers" (NIV) is probably better "Chaldeans" (NRSV, ESV, KJV), members of the tribe local to Babylon. The word is *kašdāy*. The word can be used of a class of astrologers, or of members of the tribe of Chaldeans which were in power in the province of Babylon (BDB).
- [75] "Denounced" (NIV, NRSV), "maliciously accused" (ESV), "accused" (KJV) is *qeraš*, "accuse maliciously" (BDB), "slander" (Holladay, p. 420), from an idiom to "eat pieces of," similar to the English word, "backbite."
- [76] "God" is *'elāh*, the normal word for God in Biblical Aramaic. The plural is "gods"; there is no plural of majesty in Aramaic as in Hebrew (TOWT #2576).
- [77] "Rescue" (NIV), "deliver" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *shêzib*, "deliver, rescue, save" a loanword, but understood as *šafel*. (Holladay, p. 422; TWOT #3027).
- [78] "Defend ourselves" (NIV), "present a defense" (NRSV), "answer" (ESV, KJV) is the Hafelel stem of *tûb*, "return" (accusative of answer, etc.) (BDB), "answer" (Holladay, p. 424).
- [79] Both "save" and "rescue" (NIV) in verse 17, as well as "deliver" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) are *shêzib*, "deliver, rescue, save," which we saw in 3:15 and see in 3:28. "Able" is the Peal stem of *yekil*, "be able" (TWOT #2769).
- [80] "Furious" (NIV) is literally "filled with fury" (ESV). "Fury" is *hamâ*, "rage" (BDB).
- [81] "Attitude changed" (NIV), "his face was distorted" (NRSV), is literally "the expression of his face was changed" (ESV) with the Itpaal stem of the verb *shānâ*, "change" (TWOT #2419).
- [82] "Bound" is *kepat*, "bind" (TWOT #2798).
- [83] "Urgent" is the Hafelel participle of *hašap* which we saw in 2:16: "show insolence, harshness" (BDB), "harsh, severe" (Holladay, p. 406).
- [84] "Bound" is *kepat*, "bind" (TWOT #2798).

- [85] "Fell/fell down" is the Pael stem of *nepal*, "fall" (BDB).
- [86] In the common Septuagint version we have today, there are only minor differences from the Hebrew text. However the Greek translation of Theodotion included major apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel that were included in the Latin Vulgate and Catholic Bibles today. The Septuagint adds the clause, "... and walked in the midst of the flame, singing praise to God, and blessing the Lord."
- [87] "In amazement" (NIV), "was astonished" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *tewah*, "be startled, alarmed" (BDB).
- [88] "Unbound" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "loosed" (KJV) is *sherā*, "loosen" (BDB).
- [89] "Unharmful" (NIV), "not hurt" (NRSV, ESV) is the negative particle and *ḥabāl*, "hurt, injury" (BDB).
- [90] "Looks like" (NIV), "appearance" (NRSV, ESV), "form" (KJV) is *rēw*, "appearance" (TWOT #2990).
- [91] "A son of the gods" (NIV, ESV), "a god" (NRSV), "the Son of God" (KJV). There is no article "the" in the Hebrew text. *ʿElāh*, "god" is in the plural.
- [92] "Most High God" is literally, "God, the most high, the most high," using a double (for emphasis) of *ʿillāy*, "the highest, the Most High" (TWOT 2909d) and the particle *ā*, "the."
- [93] "Angel" is *malʿak*, "angel" (TWOT #2827), with usage paralleling the related Hebrew *malʿāk*, "messenger, representative, courtier, angel" (TWOT #1068a).
- [94] "Rescued" (NIV), "delivered" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *shēzib*, "deliver, rescue, save," which we saw in 3:15 and 3:17 above.
- [95] "Say anything against" (NIV, cf. ESV), "utters blasphemy against" (NRSV), "speak anything amiss against" (KJV) is *amar*, "say" plus a doubling (for emphasis) of *shāʾû*, "neglect, remissness, negligence" (BDB, Holladay, p. 422); plus the preposition *al*, "against" (BDB).
- [96] "Save" (NIV), "deliver" (NRSV, KJV), "rescue" (ESV) is *nešal*, "rescue, deliver" (BDB).
- [97] "Promoted" is the Hafelel stem of *selah*, "cause to prosper" (BDB).
- [98] "Defied" (NIV), "disobeyed" (NRSV), "set aside" (ESV), "changed" (KJV) is *shenâ*, "change" = "frustrate" in our verse (BDB).
- [99] One rendering of Daniel in the Lions' Den is found in the Catacomb of the Giordani, a second is in the Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, and a third is in the Jordanian Catacomb.
- [100] Goldingay (*Daniel*, pp. 111-112) mentions the various possibilities without seeming to suggest which is most likely. He also notes that "critical scholarship has regarded [Darius] as an imaginary construct built up from various separate historical and scriptural elements."
- [101] Longman (*Daniel*, p. 142) cites W. H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 51-67, 99-128; 10 (1972): 88-117.
- [102] The particle usually translated "and" is sometimes used as an explicative, as in 1:3 and 6:9-10. David J.A. Clines ("Darius," ISBE 1:867) cites D. J. Wiseman, *et al.*, *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), pp. 9-16; and J. M. Bulman, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 35 (1973), 247-267.
- [103] Baldwin, *Daniel*, pp. 26-28; D.J. Wiseman, "Darius," *New Bible Dictionary* (Second Edition; Eerdmans, 1982, p. 265). However, we read, "In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom...." (9:1). Who this Xerxes is we don't know. There was a Xerxes I, satrap of Babylon 498-486 BC, and reigned over the Persian empire 486-465 BC who was son of Darius the Great, but the Xerxes mentioned in 9:1 cannot be this person.
- [104] J. C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).
- [105] Longman, *Daniel*, p. 144.
- [106] The title "satrap" comes from the Old Persian *Xšašapāvā*, describing an official who ruled over a major division of the Persian empire (R.E. Hayden, "Satrap," ISBE 4:345).
- [107] "Administrators" (NIV), "presidents" (NRSV, KJV), "high officials" (ESV) is *sārak*, "chief, overseer" probably a loanword from Persian *sar*, "head" (BDB). "(High) official" (Holladay, p. 415).
- [108] "One" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "first" (KJV) is *ḥad*, "one."
- [109] "Distinguished" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "was preferred" (KJV) is the verb *nešah*, "distinguish oneself" (Holladay, p. 414).
- [110] "Conduct of government affairs" (NIV) is more literally, "in connection with/regard to/concerning the kingdom" (NRSV, ESV, KJV).
- [111] "Corruption" (NIV), "grounds for complaint" (NRSV, ESV), "occasion nor fault" (KJV) is the participle of *sheḥat*, "corrupt" (TWOT #3026), "spoil," here as a noun, "mischief" (Holladay, p. 422).
- [112] "Trustworthy" (NIV), "faithful" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *ʾaman*, "trustworthy" (Holladay, p. 397).
- [113] "Corrupt/ion" (NIV, NRSV), "error" (ESV, KJV) is *shāʾû*, "neglect, remissness" (BDB), "negligence" (Holladay, p. 423).

- [114] "Negligent/ence" (NIV, NRSV), "fault" (ESV, KJV) is *sheḥat*, "corrupt" (BDB), "spoil" (Holladay, p. 422).
- [115] "Went as a group" (NIV), "conspired and went" (NRSV), "came by agreement" (ESV), "assembled together to" (KJV) is *regash*, "be in tumult" (BDB), "storm in" (Holladay, p. 420), in the English Bible at 6:6, 11, 15. The exact meaning is difficult. Goldingay (*Daniel*, p. 121) discusses the issues and sees the sense as, "a group acting by agreement, but with the bustle that a crowd inevitably makes."
- [116] "Agreed" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "have consulted together" (KJV) is *ye'at*, "advise," here, in the Itpaal stem, "take counsel together, deliberate" (Holladay, p. 408).
- [117] "Prays" (NIV, NRSV), "makes petition" (ESV), "ask a petition" (KJV) is the verb *be'â*, "seek, request" with the noun *bā'û*, "petition, prayer" (Holladay, p. 400), literally, "to pray a prayer."
- [118] "Published" (NIV), "signed" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *resham*, "inscribe, sign" (BDB).
- [119] "Upstairs room" (NIV), "upper room/chamber" (NRSV, ESV), "chamber" (KJV) is *'illi*, "roof chamber" (BDB), from the verb *'âlâ*, "go up, climb."
- [120] See also kneeling in 1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Psalm 95:6; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5; Ephesians 3:14.
- [121] *Selâ*, BDB.
- [122] "Gave/giving thanks" (NIV, ESV, KJV), "praise" (NRSV) is *yedâ*, "praise, give thanks." As in the case of the Hebrew cognate *yādâ*, there is difference of opinion as to whether this root means "give thanks" or "praise" (TWOT #2764).
- [123] "Praying" (NIV, NRSV, KJV), "making petition" (ESV) is the Peal participle of *be'â*, "search for," here, the word describes the requesting of compassion and grace from God (= praying) in a situation of real crisis (Charles B. Isbell, TWOT #2635).
- [124] "Asking God for help" (NIV), "seeking mercy" (NRSV), "making ... plea" (ESV), "making supplication" (KJV) is *ḥanan*, "show mercy," but here in the Hithpael participle it means, "implore favor" (BDB).
- [125] Also Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 17.30.6 -- "All his royal power was not able to undo what was done."
- [126] *Damnatio ad bestias* (Latin for "condemnation to beasts") was a form of capital punishment in which the condemned were maimed on the circus arena or thrown to a cage with wild animals, often lions. It was brought to ancient Rome around the second century BC. In Rome, *damnatio ad bestias* was used as entertainment and was part of the inaugural games of the Flavian Amphitheatre. From the first to third centuries AD, this penalty was mainly applied to the worst criminals, slaves, and early Christians.
- [127] R.K. Harrison, "Lion," ISBE 3:141-142.
- [128] "Serve" is *peleh*, "pay reverence to, serve (deity)" (BDB). The original meaning of the root was "to cleave [open]" or "divide in two." From this meaning was derived (in Aramaic, not in Hebrew) the idea of cultivating a field and ultimately of cultivating (i.e. working hard at) the worship of a deity, hence the idea of service or worship of a deity (Charles D. Isbell, TWOT #2940).
- [129] "Continually" (NIV, ESV, KJV), "faithfully" (NRSV) is *tedîr*, "continuance," from *dûr*, "to dwell" (TWOT #2669d). "Circling, duration," here, "continually" (Holladay, p. 424). Also found in verse 20.
- [130] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 130.
- [131] "Angel" is *mal'ak*, "angel" (TWOT #2827).
- [132] "Innocent" (NIV), "blameless" (ESV, NRSV), "innocency" (KJV) is *zākû*, "purity, innocence" (BDB).
- [133] "Wrong" (NIV, NRSV), "harm" (ESV), "hurt" (KJV) is *ḥabûlâ*, "hurtful act, crime, wrong" (BDB).

Humbling the Proud (Daniel 4-5)

The next stories from Daniel's ministry occur some years later than the incident of the fiery furnace. In this lesson we are combining two stories, since they both deal with arrogance and humbling. One takes place during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The second takes place years later during the reign of a successor -- Belshazzar.

A. Nebuchadnezzar's Mental Illness (Daniel 4)

Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness took place twelve months after the king had a dream that Daniel interpreted. Apparently, it followed the extensive building enterprise that had engaged the king for some time (4:30), though we're not sure of the date. The Babylonian Chronicles end with the eleventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (594 BC), and only resume briefly at the reign of a successor. The form is as a kind of open letter of confession.



William Blake, 'Nebuchadnezzar' (1795), monotype with watercolor, 43 x 53 cm., Tate Britain, London.

Baldwin observes the poetic nature of the phrasing and notes that "the work of a skilled writer has gone into the text."^[134] Kings and high government officials don't usually write their own speeches and documents, but amend and approve what their servants and speech-writers have written for them.

There is no contemporary corroboration of Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness outside the Bible. But this shouldn't surprise us. It isn't the kind of thing that chroniclers would say to build national pride.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (4:1-10a)

The letter begins with an introduction.

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly! ² It is my pleasure to tell you about the

miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented[135] and prosperous.[136]

⁵ I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images[137] and visions[138] that passed through my mind terrified me. ⁶ So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. ⁷ When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me." (4:1-7)

Others can't interpret the dream, so Daniel is summoned.

⁸ Finally, Daniel came into my presence[139] and I told him the dream[140]. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy[141] gods is in him.) ⁹ I said, 'Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. ¹⁰ These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed:'" (4:8-10a)

The Vigorous Tree Is Stripped (4:10b-17)

What follows is Nebuchadnezzar's account of his dream.

^{10b} I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

¹³ In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger[142], a holy one, coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called in a loud voice:

'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. Let him be drenched[143] with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed[144] from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

¹⁷ The decision[145] is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict,[146] so that the living may know[147] that the Most High is sovereign[148] over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest[149] of men." (4:10b-17)

Daniel Hesitates to Interpret the Dream (4:18-20)

¹⁸ 'This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.'

¹⁹ Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.' Belteshazzar answered, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!'" (4:18-19)

Once Daniel hears the dream and God reveals to him its meaning, he is concerned with what to do. He is "greatly perplexed"[\[150\]](#) and "terrified."[\[151\]](#) Those who bring bad news to an absolute monarch often suffer "kill-the-messenger" consequences. Daniel is also concerned because he may have become fond of the king, and wonders what will happen to the kingdom -- and to his own fortunes -- when the king is incapacitated.

The king must have noticed Daniel's shock, so he reassures him and encourages him to tell the interpretation of the dream.

You Are the Tree (4:20-26)

Daniel begins:

²⁰ The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, ²¹ with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air -- ²² you, O king, are that tree!

You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth." (4:20-22)

The first part, that the king is like a giant tree that creates an ecosystem of nourishment to the whole earth, is a kind way to begin. We see hints of this symbolism in Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Assyria (Ezekiel 31:3) and Jesus' Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32).

Daniel has interpreted the meaning of the tree. Now he interprets the angel's message.

²³ You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'

²⁴ This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree[\[152\]](#) the Most High has issued against[\[153\]](#) my lord the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven.

Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. ²⁶ The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven[\[154\]](#)rules." (4:23-26)

The tree (the king) will be cut down, will be humbled. He will live a solitary life out-of-doors for "seven times" (4:25, 32). Whether these are years or months or an indefinite time (seven is the symbolic number of completeness in the Bible), we're not told. Verse 36 begins simply, "At the end of that time...."

Nebuchadnezzar's sin is his pride -- his pride towards all others and especially towards God. He doesn't "acknowledge"[\[155\]](#) or understand and accept that "the Most High is sovereign," not himself. He probably believes that he is king because of his own personal qualities of greatness, while the truth is that God is the one who lifts people up and puts them down, who "gives [the kingdoms of men] to anyone he wishes" (4:25b).

Daniel's Counsel (4:27)

Daniel is not only the king's chief interpreter. He is also his counselor, his advisor. And so he takes courage to exhort the king to repent.

"Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice[\[156\]](#): Renounce[\[157\]](#) your sins by doing what is right[\[158\]](#), and your wickedness by being kind[\[159\]](#) to the oppressed[\[160\]](#). It may be that then your prosperity[\[161\]](#) will continue.[\[162\]](#)" (4:27)

"Renounce" (NIV) is probably better "break off" (ESV, KJV). Repentance and renunciation are primarily verbal, at least initially. But the king must do more than offer verbal assurances, he must stop sinning and begin doing what is right, in particular, by being kind to the poor and needy, who were often forgotten in the ancient Near East. Daniel suggests that if the king will repent and humble himself and acknowledge the sovereignty of God, then God may relent in his punishment. Since our God is a merciful God, his decrees are sometimes conditional upon our response (for example, 1 Kings 21:29; Joel 2:14; Zephaniah 2:2-3).

The Dream's Fulfillment (4:28-33; 5:18-21)

But Nebuchadnezzar does not change his ways. He is still obsessed with pride in himself and his achievements (4:30). God gives him twelve months to repent, and then the hammer falls.

²⁸ All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, 'Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?'

³¹ The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, 'This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away[\[163\]](#) from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.'

³³ Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird." (4:28-33)

Daniel reminds Belshazzar of this incident in chapter 5, that we'll study later in this lesson. It was well known in Babylon what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel sharply warns Belshazzar:

¹⁸ "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. ¹⁹ Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes." (5:18-21)

Nebuchadnezzar's experience causes us to reflect on the overweening pride that consumes him. See how it is described both in 4:30 and 5:19-20.

- **Pride in his achievements** -- the self-made man complex. "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (4:30)
- **Pride in his terrible power**, that everyone feared him, and didn't dare to challenge him (5:19a). This isolated him from truth, and made him more vulnerable to believe that whatever he thought was right.
- **Pride in his absolute authority** to condemn and execute, to promote, and to humble at his own whim (5:19b).
- **Pride that hardens his heart** (5:20a). Pride distorts our perception of reality.

God has had to humble me on a number of occasions. I've struggled with pride all my life. Pride has a way of inflating our own sense of worth, believing we are better than other people, blinding us to correction and truth, and hardening our hearts both towards God and people. Pride might be considered the original temptation that Satan threw at Eve, that she might be like God and able to disobey even God's express command with impunity (Genesis 3:1-6). God warns his people against arrogance in the Pentateuch:

"Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today." (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

Satan tempts Jesus with pride in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). Pride is characteristic of the world system we live in:

"For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does -- comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:16)

There is a good kind of pride that is self-confidence born of experience. We try to encourage that in our children. Confidence allows children to walk, to run, to climb trees, and to try new things. That is good. That is the way God made it to be. But pride out of control is a terrible thing that hurts others and becomes hard towards God.

Nebuchadnezzar learns that kings are not great in themselves with some so-called "divine right of kings." Rather they can be "the lowliest of men" (4:17).

Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges God (4:34-35)

³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised^[164] the Most High; I honored^[165] and glorified^[166] him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" (4:34-35)

After the time of humbling, Nebuchadnezzar is blessed with a new perspective on himself and a new appreciation of God, whom he calls "the Most High." He has probably been influenced by Daniel to come to some of these insights.

Previously, Nebuchadnezzar believed himself to almost be a god, but now he learns things about God.

1. **God is eternal.** Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God himself is eternal (4:34a).
2. **God's kingdom never ends.** God's kingdom is eternal as well (4:34b), not one that must be maintained by constant warfare and protected from every threat.
3. **God cannot be compared with human beings.** Nebuchadnezzar thought of himself as great; now he acknowledges that human beings are "as nothing" compared with God (4:35a).
4. **God is sovereign.** As Daniel related to Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar has killed, humbled, or promoted whomever he pleases (5:19). Now he acknowledges that God "does as He pleases" (4:35b).
5. **God is the "King of heaven"** (4:37). Yahweh is not just a god among gods, he is the God of gods, he is King of kings, he is King of heaven.

6. **God is accountable to none.** As an absolute monarch, Nebuchadnezzar has felt he didn't need to answer to anyone, but now he discovers that he has to answer to God's humbling. Only God has no need for accountability (4:35c). God doesn't have to explain himself to us when we are angry at what we perceive he has done. As God said to Job:

"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!' Then Job answered the LORD: 'I am unworthy -- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer -- twice, but I will say no more.'" (Job 40:2-5)

Nebuchadnezzar's Sanity Restored (4:36-37)

Nebuchadnezzar was exceedingly blessed. Most kings who are mentally ill and out of the palace for any length of time would have been overthrown by an ambitious royal relative or general. But Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is restored to him.

"At the same time that my sanity was restored^[167], my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." (4:36-37)

Nebuchadnezzar has learned well that "the King of heaven" is able to humble "those who walk in pride."

B. The Handwriting on the Wall (Daniel 5)

If the incident of Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness took place half-way through his reign, then we must move forward 45 to 50 years until the close of the reign of Nabonidus (556-539 BC), last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Since Nabonidus was away from the capital for much of his reign, from about 553 to 539 BC his son Belshazzar reigned in Babylon as co-regent, acting as supreme king, except perhaps in a few areas.



Rembrandt, 'Belshazzar's Feast' (1635), oil on canvas, 66 x 82 in, National Gallery, London.

By this time, Daniel is an old man, perhaps 80 years old (if he had been 15 when exiled from Jerusalem in 605 BC). He is retired, and as we'll see from 5:10-12, Daniel's service has been forgotten by most.

The Growing Persian Threat

King Belshazzar, on the other hand is younger and arrogant, having served as co-regent with his father for the past 14 years or so.

The year is 539 BC, and though Babylon might feel secure, it is not. All around the Neo-Babylonian empire, cities are falling to the mighty armies of the Medes and Persians.

Cyrus II ("the Great"), king of Persia began as a vassal of his grandfather, the king of the huge empire of the Medes, which stretched from Asia Minor to the Indus River. But in 553 BC Cyrus rebelled. He won a decisive victory over his grandfather in 550 BC, and became king himself of the mighty Medo-Persian Empire -- which he continued to expand.

Though the Medes had once allied with the Babylonians to bring down the Assyrian Empire (616 BC), now the Medes and the Persians turned their armies against Babylonia. In 539 BC, Cyrus invaded Babylonia. In June, the city of Opis (Baghdad) fell, and within days Sippar surrendered. King Nabonidus fled to Babylon and went into hiding. Medo-Persian troops were moving toward the capital at Babylon. Yet Belshazzar, who is charged with the defense of Babylon, is throwing a party for a thousand of his friends in his palace. Maybe he feels there is no use defending against the advancing Persian army -- or maybe he is just foolish.

Drinking from the Temple Goblets (5:1-4)

¹ King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. ² While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone." (5:1-4)

Belshazzar (whose name may contain the god "Bel," Hebrew *Baal*) is irreverent. He takes the holy vessels looted from the Jerusalem temple decades before, and serves wine to his guests in them. As they drink they are praising false gods! The true God has had enough!

The Handwriting on the Wall (5:5-6)

The laughter and merriment are hushed as a hand begins to write on the wall.

⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face

turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way." (5:5-6)

No One Can Interpret the Writing (5:7-9)

"⁷ The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'⁸ Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant.⁹ So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled." (5:7-9)

The king calls for someone to interpret the words, but none is able. He is second in the kingdom (co-regent), after his father, the king. So he offers a reward to whoever can read the words to be third highest ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel Is Summoned (5:10-16)

But the queen -- or perhaps queen mother, who is from a previous generation -- remembers Daniel, and tells the king about Daniel's abilities.

"¹⁰ The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. 'O king, live forever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale!' ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father -- your father the king, I say -- appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. ¹² This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'" (5:10-12)

So Daniel is summoned before the king. He enters the hall slowly, because he is very old.

"¹³ So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, 'Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?' ¹⁴ I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. ¹⁵ The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. ¹⁶ Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'" (5:13-16)

Daniel Answers Belshazzar (5:17)

Daniel showed deference to Nebuchadnezzar, but none to Belshazzar.

"Then Daniel answered the king, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.'" (5:17)

To refuse the king's gifts -- even before performing the required service -- is clearly an insult. Daniel is an old man and doesn't care. He despises Belshazzar for desecrating the golden goblets from Yahweh's house. And he knows that by the next day any reward he is given will be meaningless.

Daniel Recalls Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation (5:18-21)

Daniel begins to remind Belshazzar of the story of how God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, which we studied earlier in this lesson (Daniel 4). Of course, Nebuchadnezzar is not Belshazzar's biological father. Nor is he a biological ancestor, but he is a greatly renowned royal predecessor who sat upon the throne of Babylon not so long previous to Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar is "father" in that sense.

You, Belshazzar, Have Not Humbled Yourself (5:22-24)

Daniel the Prophet rebukes the king for his pride and sacrilege.

"²² But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. ²⁴ Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription." (5:22-24)

Daniel speaks with courage as Yahweh's prophet no matter what the personal consequence to him may be.

Belshazzar, and Nebuchadnezzar before him, had been irreverent towards God in the way that they handled the holy things of God. Though Christian churches do not have the same standard of holiness as the Wilderness Tabernacle or the Jerusalem Temple, nevertheless, they and all their furnishings have been dedicated to God. The money donated has been given to God. The Lord's Table and elements have been dedicated to God. We must show a proper attitude towards the things of God, not legalistically but with respect.

Belshazzar's problem is the same as Nebuchadnezzar's -- pride. And he will be humbled! I wonder how many of us need to be humbled from our selfish pride that resists God?

Notice Daniel's description of "the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways" (5:24).[\[168\]](#) We owe God our lives, but so often we resist him in the arrogant belief that we think we can act more wisely than God. How foolish!

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin (5:25-28)

After this rebuke, Daniel interprets the inscription for the king.

"²⁵ This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN ²⁶ 'This is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an

end.²⁷ *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.²⁸ *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided^[169] and given to the Medes and Persians." (5:25-28)

Daniel's interpretation includes word plays on these Aramaic words. *Mene* is probably a word play on *mānâ*, 'to number.'^[170] *Tekel* is from *teqal*, "to weigh."^[171] *Parsin* (*perēs*) is probably a word play on a Persian word.^[172] The words can be interpreted as a mina, a shekel, and a half-shekel, though it's difficult to make sense out of that.

The point is: Belshazzar has been judged and God is ending his kingdom and giving it to the Medes and the Persians.

Babylon Falls to the Medes and Persians (5:29-31)

Belshazzar makes good on his promise, but it is an empty gesture.

"²⁹ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain,³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two." (5:29-31)

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent. But Belshazzar has only a few hours before the judgment is carried out.

Darius the Mede is probably the person Cyrus put in charge of the Persian province of Babylon. We'll discuss the historicity of Darius in [Appendix 3. The Case for a Sixth Century Dating of Daniel](#).

Key Verses

"Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue." (Daniel 4:27, NIV)

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." (Daniel 4:37, NIV)

"You did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways." (Daniel 5:23b, NIV)

"This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. This is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:26-28a)

Endnotes

[134] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 107.

[135] "Contented" (NIV), "at ease" (NRSV, ESV), "at rest" (KJV) is the adjective *shelēh*, "at ease" (BDB).

- [136] "Prosperous/prospering" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "flourishing" (KJV) is *raʿanan*, "prosperous, flourishing" (Holladay, p. 421).
- [137] "Images" (NIV), "fantasies" (NRSV), "fancies" (ESV), "thoughts" (KJV) is *harhōr*, "dream-fantasies" (Holladay, p. 404), "image, mental picture" (TWOT #2700).
- [138] "Visions" is *hezû*, "vision" (as mode of revelation) (BDB), from *hazâ*, "to see."
- [139] "Into my presence" (NIV), "before me" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *qodām*, a spatial preposition, "before, in front of" the king (Holladay, p. 419, 1).
- [140] "Dream" is *hēlem*, "dream," here dream as a vehicle of revelation (BDB).
- [141] "Holy" is *qaddīsh*, "holy," used of gods (4:8-9, 18, 23; 5:11), angels (4:13, 17, 23), and saints, God's "holy ones" (7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27) -- employing the verse structure of the English Bible.
- [142] "Messenger" (NIV), "watcher" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is the noun *ʾīr*, "awake, wakeful one, watcher," that is, "angel" (BDB; Holladay, p. 416).
- [143] "Drenched" (NIV), "bathed" (NRSV), "be wet" (ESV, KJV) is *šebaʿ*, "dip, wet," related to Hebrew *šābaʿ*, "to dye" (TWOT #2954; BDB).
- [144] "Changed" is the Peal stem of *shenâ*, "change, transform" (Holladay, p. 423).
- [145] "Decision" (NIV), "sentence" (NRSV, ESV), "matter" (KJV) is *pitgām*, "command, word, affair" (BDB), Persian loanword, "decree" (Holladay, p. 418, 2).
- [146] "Verdict" (NIV), "decision" (NRSV, ESV), "demand" (KJV) is *she ʿēlâ*, "affair" (weakened from "question, inquiry"; BDB); "question" (Holladay, p. 422).
- [147] "Acknowledge" (NIV), "have learned" (NRSV), "know" (ESV, KJV), in verses 17, 25, 26, and 32 is the Peal stem of *yedaʿ*, "know," here probably, "understand" (Holladay, p. 407).
- [148] "Is sovereign" (NIV, NRSV), "rules" (ESV, KJV) is *shallîṭ*, "having, exercising, mastery" (BDB 1a). The Arabic form gives rise to the title "sultan." (TWOT #3034b).
- [149] "Lowliest" is *shepal*, "low in station," from *shāpēl*, "be low" (BDB).
- [150] "Perplexed" (NIV), "distressed" (NRSV), "dismayed" (ESV), "astonied" (KJV) is the verb *shemam* in the Itpoel stem: "be appalled" (BDB), "stiffen with fright" (Holladay, p. 423).
- [151] "Terrified" (NIV, NRSV), "alarmed" (ESV, KJV) is the Pael stem of *behal*, "alarm, dismay" (BDB), "frighten" (Holladay, p. 399), found twice in verse 19.
- [152] "Decree" is *gezerâ*, "decree," from *gezar*, "cut, determine" (BDB).
- [153] "Issued against" (NIV), "come upon" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is the Peal stem of *metâ*, "reach, attain," here, "come upon, befall" (BDB, 2).
- [154] Here "Heaven" is used as a substitute for "God," as is common among the Jews, who tried to avoid using the name of God lest they break the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7). You see this especially in Matthew's Gospel.
- [155] "Acknowledge" (NIV), "have learned" (NRSV), "know" (ESV, KJV), in verses 17, 25, 26, and 32 is the Peal stem of the very common verb *yedaʿ*, "know," here probably, "understand" (Holladay, p. 407).
- [156] "Advice" (NIV), "counsel" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *melak*, "counsel, advice" (BDB).
- [157] "Renounce" (NIV), "atone for" (NRSV), "break off" (ESV, KJV) is the Peal stem of *peraq*, "tear away, break off" (BDB), "unloose, abolish" (Holladay, p. 418).
- [158] "What is right" (NIV), "righteousness" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *šidqâ*, "right doing, righteousness" (BDB, TWOT #2957), "right action, beneficence" (Holladay, p. 418). This is the only instance in Biblical Aramaic of this common Hebrew root.
- [159] "Being kind" (NIV), is the Peal stem of *hanan*, "show favor" (BDB), "show mercy" (Holladay, p. 406).
- [160] "The oppressed" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "poor" (KJV) is *ʿanēh*, "poor, needy" (BDB), "miserable" (Holladay, p. 417).
- [161] "Prosperity" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "tranquility" (KJV) is *shelēwâ*, "ease, prosperity" (BDB), "prosperity, fortune" (Holladay, p. 423).
- [162] "Continue" (NIV), "be prolonged" (NRSV), "be a lengthening" (ESV, KJV) is *ʾarkâ*, "lengthening, prolonging" (BDB), "length(ening), prolongation" (Holladay, p. 398).
- [163] "Driven away" (NIV), "be driven" (NRSV, ESV), "drive" (KJV) in verses 25, 32, and 33 is the Peal stem of *terad*, "chase away" (BDB), "drive away" (Holladay, p. 407). It is used in the passive in 4:33 and 5:21.
- [164] "Praised" (NIV), "blessed" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *berak*, "kneel, bless" (BDB).
- [165] "Honored" (NIV), "praised" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *shebah*, "laud, praise" (BDB).
- [166] "Glorified" (NIV), "honored" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *hadar*, "glorify" (BDB).

[167] "Sanity was restored" (NIV), "reason returned" (NRSV, ESV), "understanding/reason returned" (KJV) in verses 34 and 36. The noun is *manda*, "understanding" (Holladay, p. 412), also at 5:12. The verb is the Peal stem of *tûb*, "restore, return" (BDB).

[168] Similar thoughts are found in Job 12:10; Acts 17:25, 28; Job 31:4; Psalm 139:3; Proverbs 20:24; Jeremiah 10:23; Hebrews 4:13.

[169] "Divided" is *perēs*, "break in two, divide" (TWOT #2945).

[170] *Mene* (*menē*) is *maneh* or *mina*, an amount of money. Usually fifty shekels made a mina. This is probably a word play on *mānâ* 'to number.' (TWOT #2835).

[171] *Tekel* (*teqēl*) is *shekel*, from *teqal*, "to weigh" (TWOT #3063).

[172] *Parsin* (*perēs*) is probably half-mina (KB, half-shekel). The word is probably used as a word play in Daniel 5:25, in the handwriting on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." The words can be taken to mean a mine, a shekel, and a half mine (or half shekel). This makes little sense and Daniel interpreted it as the verbs number, weigh, and divide. The last verb may have a double word play in its similarity to Persia, which was about to conquer Belshazzar. The word *upharsin* is the conjunction "and" plus the plural of *peres* (TWOT #2945a).

Four Beasts and the Son of Man (Daniel 7)

Up until now, we have seen primarily "court stories" about Daniel and his friends concerning their quest to be faithful to God while serving in the court of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors.

But now we shift from what has been primarily narrative to a series of visions that Daniel has seen. Just as the court stories in chapters 1 through 6 appeared in chronological order, so do the visions. In the first six chapters we have seen that God is in control of the evil forces of the day. In the final chapters we see visions of the ultimate liberation of God's people by the God who is in control of all history. The accounts of God being with Daniel in the earlier chapters establish his credentials to prophecy of the future.



Rembrandt, 'Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts' (1655) in Menasseh ben Israel's *Piedra Gloriosa* (1655).

Many believe that Daniel 7 is the most important chapter in the Book of Daniel. Walvoord maintains that Daniel 7 "provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament."[\[173\]](#) It prophesies the direction of four major empires, culminating in the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

I am afraid that this is a long lesson, since I am trying to give adequate treatment to this important chapter of Daniel. Please bear with me. I'll talk about its relevance to us disciples at the end of the lesson.

Apocalyptic

These visions in chapters 7-12, and Daniel's interpretation of dreams in chapters 2 and 4, belong to a the genre of prophecy termed "apocalyptic." The word comes from the Greek *apokalypsis*, "revelation, making fully known," literally, "take the cover off," from *apo*, "from" + *kaluptō*, "to cover."

Daniel seems to be the one of the earliest apocalypses, followed by a whole genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature written between 200 BC and 100 AD in imitation of Daniel.^[174] Apocalyptic literature is full of symbols that are seen in dreams and visions. For example, think of the rich symbolism in the Book of Revelation. Another characteristic is a deterministic view -- that history must run its course, but the end is predetermined by God. The end of history will be a violent in-breaking by God to establish his kingdom. Other examples of apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament include Zechariah and parts of Ezekiel.^[175]

Longman writes:

"Apocalyptic is a metaphor-rich genre. In this regard it is like poetry. Metaphors and similes teach by analogy. They throw light on difficult concepts and things by relating them to something we know from common experience. As such, images speak truly and accurately, but not precisely. We often do not know where the analogy stops."^[176]

The symbols are designed to communicate not just facts, but also emotional feelings. It is important not to over-interpret these apocalyptic images. The pages of history are littered with hundreds of dogmatic interpretations of Daniel and the Book of Revelation that, in hindsight, look overworked and bizarre. Let's be careful not to push too far in our zeal to understand fully and make everything "fit."

The Four Great Beasts (7:1-8)

With that introduction, let's consider Daniel's vision in chapter 7.

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream." (7:1)

This vision is dated to the time when Belshazzar began his co-regency with his father Nabonidus, perhaps 553 BC, or a bit later.

Daniel begins to tell his vision of beasts that arise from a turbulent sea. I think the best way to approach this passage is first an overview of Daniel's vision in verses 2-8. We'll spend some time considering Daniel's vision of the heavenly courtroom with the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. Then we'll examine the vision of the four beasts in detail with the interpretation of each beast in the latter part of the lesson.

² Daniel said: 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. ³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.' (7:2-3)

For the Hebrews, the sea was a place of chaos, evil, and danger. We might think of the Mediterranean as an inland sea, but it can be violent and deadly, as the Apostle Paul found

on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27). The image of beasts coming out of the sea would be perceived by Daniel's readers as arising from dangerous evil.

⁴ The first was like a **lion**, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

⁵ And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a **bear**. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

⁶ After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a **leopard**. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

⁷ After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a **fourth beast** -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

⁸ While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was **another horn, a little one**, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully." (7:4-8)

I conclude that these four beasts represent the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, respectively (though this conclusion, is hotly disputed by some). We'll consider the rationale for this when we consider the interpretation in 7:16-27.

The Ancient of Days (7:9-10)

Daniel has seen the vicious beasts rising from the evil sea and a "little horn" that uproots others. Now he sees a vision of God in his heavenly courtroom. God is in control, and far above the beasts and powers of the earth and sea.

⁹ As I looked, thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.
His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The court was seated,
and the books were opened." (7:9-10)

The expression "Ancient of Days[177]" (7:9, 13, 22) draws upon the ideas of advanced age, white hair to represent the wisdom of age, as well as the purity and holiness represented by the white garments (Matthew 17:2; 1 Timothy 6:16). The Ancient of Days, of course, is the Eternal God, Yahweh, the Most High God, whom Jesus called "Father."

"Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Psalm 90:2)

We're given the scene of the awesome court of the Almighty God, the Ancient of Days. His throne shoots forth flames and the wheels by which it is moved are also blazing. Consuming fire is a theme of God's holiness from the time of His appearance to Moses and the people of God in the wilderness (Exodus 3:2; 24:17; Hebrews 12:29). His throne is the place of awesome justice. Flowing from him is a "river of fire."

"Fire goes before him
and consumes his foes on every side." (Psalm 97:3)

His court of advisors and the servants who wait on him number in the millions (Revelation 5:11). This is no earthly court. It is the court of the Heavenly King. His chief advisors are seated on the thrones that have been placed, and "the books were opened" for judgment to take place according to what is written concerning the kingdoms represented by the beasts. They literally "sit in judgment" (7:10).

The books are the records of what people have done for good or ill. We see this scene reflected in Revelation also:

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." (Revelation 20:12)

The presidents and prime ministers and princes of world empires may think that they are accountable to no one, but in Daniel 7 we glimpse the awesome judgment of these seemingly invincible powers.

The Beast Is Slain and Thrown into the Fire (7:11-12)

With the perspective of the heavenly court of judgment before him, now Daniel watches while the "little horn" continues to speak boastfully.

¹¹ Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)" (7:11-12)

Finally, the fourth beast is destroyed and its body thrown into the blazing fire. This can't help but remind us of verses in Revelation concerning the Antichrist and the False Prophet:

"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies...." (Revelation 13:5)

"But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet.... The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur." (Revelation 19:20)

The Heavenly Son of Man (7:13-14)

Now we come to one of the most important passages in the Book of Daniel for Christians, since it is the source of Jesus' own self-title as "Son of Man" and underlies Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God, one of the major themes of his ministry. This Son of Man who reigns over the Kingdom of God is also the climax of Daniel's vision of the destruction of the beast-nation.

"¹³ In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

Let's consider each aspect of this important vision.

One Like a Son of Man (7:13a)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was **one like a son of man....**" (7:13a)

It is clear in the Old Testament that the term "son of man" is a Hebraic way of saying "human being." It occurs 107 times in the Hebrew Bible, mostly in the Book of Ezekiel as God's way of addressing Ezekiel as a man. For example:

"[God] said to me, 'Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.'" (Ezekiel 2:1)

We see it in Psalms.

"What is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:4)

It is also used this way in the Book of Daniel, as God addresses Daniel:

"'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.'" (8:17)

However, Jesus uses it in a different sense. He commonly referred to himself with the title of "the Son of Man," and only rarely as the "Son of God."[\[178\]](#) Why is this? I see two main reasons:

1. **Accurate.** Son of Man, drawn directly from the imagery of Daniel 7:13-14 is an accurate description of who he really was and is.

2. **Ambiguous.** "Son of Man" is ambiguous enough that his enemies aren't able to seize on the title as blasphemy. Son of Man wasn't laden with religious or political baggage. If, on the other hand, he had openly called himself Messiah or Son of God, his ministry would have been cut short by his enemies.

Though "son of man" may seem ambiguous, as we'll see in 7:13-14, it is actually a title full of divinity and glory and power. In 7:13, Daniel sees one who looks human ("like a son of man") but is actually the divine heir of the Kingdom of God. By taking the title "Son of Man," Jesus is saying, "I am the Son of Man spoken of in Daniel's prophecy!" And he confirms this in his trial before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:64).

Coming with the Clouds of Heaven (7:13b)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, **coming with the clouds of heaven.**" (7:13b)

After the judgment of the beast-kingdoms comes one before the Ancient of Days who appears to be human, but is "coming with the clouds." As Longman puts it, "he is riding the cloud chariot, which is the prerogative of God alone."[\[179\]](#) See, for example, the following verses:

"Sing to God, sing praise to his name,
extol him who **rides on the clouds** --
his name is the LORD --
and rejoice before him." (Psalm 68:4)

He **makes the clouds his chariot**
and rides on the wings of the wind." (Psalm 104:3b)

"See, the LORD **rides on a swift cloud**
and is coming to Egypt." (Isaiah 19:1a)

No one else in the Bible but Yahweh himself "comes with the clouds." This is an earmark of divinity!

Later, Jesus mentions "coming on the clouds" as an earmark of his own Second Coming, nearly always using the title "Son of Man," which ties it to Daniel's prophecy in 7:13-14.

"They will see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven**, with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30b; Mark 13:26; cf. Luke 21:27)

"You will see the **Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and **coming on the clouds of heaven.**" (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62)

"Look, he is **coming with the clouds**, and every eye will see him...." (Revelation 1:7a)

"I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and **seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man'** with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand." (Revelation 14:14a)

Approached the Ancient of Days (7:13c)

"He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence." (7:13c)

As we saw in 7:9, "Ancient of Days" carries the ideas of eternity, with the wisdom of the ages.^[180] This is clearly Yahweh the King, seated on a flaming throne, waited on in his court by myriad attendants, books open, judgment rendered. He is seated in all his glory, much like Isaiah saw him:

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" (Isaiah 6:1-3)

The Son of Man appears before the Most High God in all his glory and power.

Given Authority, Glory, and Sovereign power (7:14a)

"He was given authority^[181], glory^[182] and sovereign power.^[183]" (7:14a)

The awesome Yahweh, Most High God, the holder of all authority, glory, and sovereign power gives these very prerogatives of divinity to this "one like a son of man." Just before his ascension, Jesus told his disciples:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...." (Matthew 28:18b-19a)

As Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room after his resurrection:

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

The Son of Man who has been given all authority to accomplish his Father's mission, now speaks to us with this authority and sends us to complete the work.

All Peoples Worshiped Him (7:14b)

"All peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him." (7:14b)

He is to be the object of worship of everyone on earth. "Worshiped" (NIV), "should serve" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *pelah*, "pay reverence to, serve."^[184] From the original meaning of plowing a field came the concept here of working hard at worship or service to a deity.^[185] Only a deity is worthy of this kind of worship. The implication is that this "one like a son of man" is divine.

An Everlasting, Indestructible Kingdom (7:14c)

"His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (7:14c)

The context of Daniel 7 is that kingdoms of men rise and fall; their end is destruction. However, the dominion[186] or kingdom[187] given to "one like a son of man" is different. This sentence emphasizes the eternal nature of the kingdom in three ways.

1. **Everlasting.**[188] This kingdom will last in perpetuity, for eternity.
2. **Will not pass away.**[189] Other kingdoms pass from sight and vanish, but not this one.
3. **Will never be destroyed.**[190] Other kingdoms, even great empires, meet destruction before the next great empire. But this kingdom, the final kingdom, is the great rock that destroys them all and will never itself be destroyed.

This is the kingdom spoken of in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that **will never be destroyed**, nor will it be left to another people. It **will crush all those kingdoms** and bring them to an end, but it **will itself endure forever.**" (2:44)

How Jesus Spoke of the Son of Man

After studying 7:13-14, it's useful to see how Jesus saw himself as Son of Man.

1. The Son of Man came from heaven.

"No one has ever gone into heaven except **the one who came from heaven** -- the Son of Man." (John 3:12-13)

"Then what if you were to see the Son of Man **ascending to where he was before?**" (John 6:62)

2. The Son of Man is judge of all.

"And he has given him **authority to judge** because he is the Son of Man." (John 5:27)

3. The Son of Man is to be glorified.

"The hour is come, that the Son of man should **be glorified.**" (John 12:23)

"Now is the Son of man **glorified....**" (John 13:31)

"When [Judas] was gone, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man **glorified** and God is **glorified** in him. If God is **glorified** in him, God will **glorify** the Son in himself, and will **glorify** him at once.'" (John 13:31-32)

4. The Son of Man is to be lifted up -- both in glory and as the object of faith on the cross, which is his ultimate glory.

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man **must be lifted up**, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)

"When you have **lifted up** the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me." (John 8:28)

5. The Son of Man comes to save as an atoning sacrifice for sin (Isaiah 53).

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom** for many." (Mark 10:45)

6. The Son of Man returns in glory.

"For the Son of Man is going to **come in his Father's glory** with his angels...." (Matthew 16:27)

"They will see the Son of Man **coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.**" (Matthew 24:30b)

"When the Son of Man **comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, he will **sit on his throne in heavenly glory.**" (Matthew 25:31)

Because Jesus is both the heavenly Son of Man and the divine Son of God, he has all authority.

"... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

Hallelujah!

A Summary of the Vision (7:15-18)

We've put a lot of focus on verses 13 and 14, and rightly so, but now it's time to return to the interpretation of the vision -- a vision that troubled and disturbed Daniel greatly.

¹⁵ I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever -- yes, for ever and ever." (7:15-18)

Daniel has been given some clues to interpretation in this brief summary of the vision. The four beasts in 7:4-8 are four earthly kingdoms, probably what we would call world empires -- a large territory made up of many

kingdoms, ruled over by an emperor or king of kings. They oppress the people of God, but the final Kingdom will not be controlled by evil rulers, but by God's holy people. I'll discuss the phrase "the saints of the Most High" below in verses 21-22 and 26-27, where the angel spells this out more completely.

Observe that in Daniel 7, the four kingdoms aren't identified with specific nations, only described. In the same way, in chapter 2, Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a great statue, the parts are described, but not identified with specific nations. With some clues given in Daniel 8.20-21, it is possible to identify the empires as follows (though some dispute this).

1. Lion with wings of an eagle (7:4) = Neo-Babylon Empire.
2. Bear with three ribs in its mouth (7:5) = Medo-Persian Empire.
3. Leopard with Wings of a Bird (7:6) = Greek Empires.
4. The Beast with Iron Teeth, Bronze Claws, and Ten Horns = Roman Empire (7:4-8).

I know that it may confuse you, but now I want to go back to verses 4-8, which earlier we skipped over rather quickly, and look at them more closely, particularly since in verses 19-25, the angel provides greater detail about the fourth empire, which I take to be the Roman Empire.

1. The Lion with Wings of an Eagle (7:4) -- Babylon

"The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it." (7:4)

The first kingdom is represented by a lion that has the wings of an eagle. A lion was a dangerous beast that lived throughout the ancient Near East. Babylon especially was decorated with lions on the glazed bricks on the famous Ishtar Gate and the Processional Street leading to it.

The wings of an eagle add the idea of swiftness to the image. Near Eastern languages didn't differentiate between eagles (birds of prey) and vultures (birds that feed on carrion). But the soaring wings of these mighty birds captured the imagination. Especially in Assyria and Babylon, archaeologists have found statues of winged lions (or



Vittore Carpaccio, 'The Lion of St. Mark' (1516), tempera on canvas, 130 x 368 cm, Palazzo Ducale, Venice. A winged lion is the symbol of St. Mark the Evangelist.

sometimes bulls) placed as protectors at the entrances of palaces and important public buildings.

Probably, the winged lion refers to the Babylonian empire, which was still strong when Daniel was given this vision about 550 BC. Just as the head of gold in the figure in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented Babylon, so this first beast probably represents Babylon as well.

The lion's wings being torn off may refer to Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, while receiving a human heart may refer to his humanitarian rule after his insanity, though that is just speculation.[\[191\]](#)

2. Bear with Three Ribs in Its Mouth (7:5) -- Medo-Persia

"And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'" (7:5)

The second beast looked like a bear. Like the lion, the bear was regarded as a particularly ferocious predator in ancient times. The bear probably represents the Medo-Persian Empire (otherwise known as the Achaemenid Empire or First Persian Empire) that replaced the Neo-Babylonian Empire when Babylon fell in 539 BC.[\[192\]](#) The Medo-Persian Empire existed for another 200 years until it fell to Alexander the Great in 330 BC. (See [Appendix 2. The Medo-Persian Empire.](#))

That the bear was devouring an animal shows its ferocity. The three bones may refer to Medo-Persia's three major conquests -- Lydia (546 BC), Babylon (539 BC), and Egypt (525 BC), though again, this is speculation.[\[193\]](#)

3. Leopard with Wings of a Bird (7:6) -- Greece

"After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule." (7:6)

In ancient times the leopard was found in Africa, Asia Minor, Palestine, and south Asia. It is named among other the ferocious animals of the Bible (Hosea 13:7; Isaiah 11:6; Jeremiah 5:6), known for its spots (Jeremiah 13:23), and especially for its speed (Habakkuk 1:3). The wings add additional swiftness to an already extremely fast cat.

If the Neo-Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires are the first two beasts, then this would represent the next empire to rise, the Greek or Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great -- and later the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings.

The four wings may refer to the four corners of the earth, signifying world domination.[\[194\]](#)

The four heads probably refer to the four generals who succeeded Alexander the Great and divided up the empire -- (1) Ptolemy I Soter, (2) Seleucus I Nicator, (3) Lysimachus, and (4) Antigonus I Monophthalmus (the "One-Eyed"). We'll read more about Alexander and the division of his empire in [Lesson 6A](#)(Daniel 8).

4. The Beast with Iron Teeth, Bronze Claws, and Ten Horns (7:4-8) -- Rome

Daniel's vision gives special emphasis to the fourth beast, both in the description of the vision and its interpretation. Here again is the original vision in verses 7-8:

⁷ After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

⁸ While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully." (Daniel 7:7-8)

Here is the interpretation in verses 19-20:

¹⁹ ... Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws -- the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. ²⁰ I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell -- the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully." (7:19-20)

The basic type of animal represented by the fourth beast isn't given. However, its deadly weapons are described. This beast is considered the "most terrifying" of all.

- a. **Large iron teeth** would crush and devour its victims. The remaining carcasses were trampled under its feet (7:19).
- b. **Bronze claws** would rip and tear at its victims until they were lacerated, bleeding, and ready to kill with its teeth.
- c. **Ten horns.** Rams and bulls fight for their mates with massive horns. So the horn became a symbol of strength and military prowess throughout the ancient Near East. It often represents pride and honor. The "up-lifted horn" towards God (Psalm 75:4-5) represents overweening, rebellious pride. We

can imagine an animal with two horns, but not ten. But these ten horns represent ten kings (7:24).

The Little Horn (7:8, 20)

"There before me was **another horn, a little one**, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully." (7:8)

"I also wanted to know ... about **the other horn** that came up, before which three of them fell -- **the horn that looked more imposing** than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully." (7:19-20)

The term "little horn" refers to the size of the horn at the beginning. But later it grew in power. There are two popular views of who the "little horn" (7:8) and the "more imposing" horn (7:20) represent.

1. **Antiochus Epiphanes**, a Greek king who oppressed the Jewish People in 168-165 BC. [\[195\]](#) You can read more about him in [Lesson 6A](#) (Daniel 8). This view is held primarily by scholars who believe that Daniel's prophecies were only pseudo-prophecies, written in the Maccabean period (168-165 BC), after the kings they describe had already reigned and who see the Greek Empire as the *fourth* beast, not the third.
2. **The Antichrist**. It seems to me that the fourth kingdom must be Rome, which superseded the Greek kingdoms by the second century BC. In this case, the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms that arise from Rome. Roman domination will be followed by the Antichrist, as spelled out in several New Testament passages that are given below. [\[196\]](#) It seems likely that this fourth beast with ten horns (7:24) corresponds to the fourth part of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which had feet of a mixture of iron and clay, and which, we presume, had ten toes (2:42).

Is the Fourth Kingdom Greece or Rome?

Before we continue I want to consider which kingdom is the fourth kingdom: Greece or Rome? Thus far in this lesson I have assumed the interpretation that Rome is the fourth kingdom. Now let's examine the basis for this interpretation. Here are the two most common positions.

Greece is 4th Kingdom

1. Babylon
2. Media
3. Persia
4. Greece

Rome is the 4th Kingdom

1. Babylon
2. Medo-Persia
3. Greece
4. Rome

Frankly, there isn't enough information in either the vision or its interpretation to absolutely affix a certain beast to a certain kingdom. Therefore, the identity of the kingdoms is based on assumptions made by the interpreter based on other criteria. I'll outline what I believe these are, though this is purely my own judgment.

Assumptions of interpreters who see Greece as the 4th Kingdom

There may be more assumptions, but these are primary.

1. The prophecies in Daniel were written after the fact during the Maccabean period from about 168 to 165 BC as a kind of pseudo-prophecy, with the purpose of encouraging God's people in a time of very difficult persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, a Greek king.
2. Babylon is probably the first beast-kingdom, since the vision was purported to have been given while Babylon was still dominant.
3. The Book of Daniel is primarily about Antiochus Epiphanes, thus the "little horn" *must* refer to him.
4. Media was a great empire on its own before it became Medo-Persia. (See [Appendix 2. Medo-Persia.](#)) Thus it should be considered as one of the beasts, not lumped together with Persia.
5. The writer of Daniel was mistaken about God intervening to destroy the Seleucid Kingdom and set up the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, these interpreters conclude that the fourth kingdom must be Greece, from which Antiochus Epiphanes sprang.

Assumptions of Interpreters who see Rome as the 4th Kingdom

There are other reasons for this identification, but these assumptions are primary.

1. The prophecies in Daniel were written during Daniel's lifetime in the sixth century as indicated in the text. They are actual prophecies of the future.

2. Babylon is probably the first beast-kingdom, since the vision was given while Babylon was still dominant, and is the first empire in the four-empire interpretation of 2:36-37.
3. The four-kingdom scheme in both chapters 2 and 7 end with the intervention of the Kingdom of God, so they probably speak of the same kingdoms.
4. The Book of Daniel certainly speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes, for example in 8:9-12 and 11:21-35. However, this doesn't limit Daniel from speaking about later oppressors of God's people.
5. In Daniel's vision of a ram and a goat in chapter 8, Medo-Persia is clearly identified as the two-horned ram (8:20). Since Medo-Persia is considered as one major empire there, it is likely that Medo-Persia should be considered together as a single beast rather than separately in Daniel's vision of the beasts in chapter 7. And the writer is clear that the Medo-Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian empire (6:8, 12, 15).
6. We know from history that the Greek Empires are ultimately conquered by the Roman Empire. Antiochus III is defeated in the Battle of Thermopylae (191 BC) and in the Battle of Magnesia (190 BC), culminating in the Battle of Corinth (146 BC), after which Greece comes under direct Roman rule. Syria is finally annexed as a Roman province in 64 BC. By the second century BC, Rome has superseded Greece as the dominant world power. We also know that Roman power is seen in Daniel's prophecy in 11:18 and 11:30.

I believe that the case for Rome as the fourth kingdom is substantially stronger than the case for Greece as the fourth kingdom, since it is derived from the Book of Daniel itself and doesn't rely on assumptions that the Book of Daniel is a pseudo-prophecy.

The Horn Wages War against the Saints (7:21-22)

Whatever the "little horn" refers to, the four kingdoms represent evil kingdoms. Though the "little horn" is powerful, he is ultimately defeated by the intervention of God, who will set up his own kingdom which shall have no end.

²¹ As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them,
²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom." (7:21-22)

"The saints of the Most High" needs interpretation. Elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Daniel, the phrase refers to angelic beings (4:13; 8:13). Some see the meaning in verses 18, 21, 22, and 25 as angelic beings also.

However, I take "the saints" in 18, 21, 22, and 25 to refer to the same "holy people" as indicated in 7:27 -- where it clearly refers to people -- "the saints, the people of the Most High" (NIV) or, literally, "the people of the

saints of the Most High" (ESV, KJV). You see this also in 8:24 -- "the holy people" (NIV), "the people of the holy ones" (NRSV), "the people who are the saints" (ESV), "the holy people" (KJV).

The saints receive the Kingdom because their King reigns, and they rule and reign with him in his administration (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4).

The Antichrist (7:23-25)

Because of Daniel's particular interest, the angel continues.

"²³ He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. ²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.'" (7:23-25)

When we get to 11:36-39, we'll speak more of "another king," whom I understand as the Antichrist. This lesson is already long, so we'll wait until [Lesson 9](#) to discuss the Antichrist. However, observe what we learn about the Antichrist figure here. He will:

1. Subdue three kings (7:24b).
2. Speak against the Most High (7:25a).
3. Try to change the set times and the laws (7:25b).
4. The saints will be under his domination for "time, times, and half a time" (7:25c).

There is a sense in which this can be seen as partially fulfilled under Antiochus Epiphanes, but as we'll see in [Lesson 9](#), this Antichrist figure is larger than any human, and speaks of events long after Antioch Epiphanes was dead and buried.

The Everlasting Kingdom (7:26-28)

The angel now concludes the vision by declaring the final victory of the Kingdom of God.

"²⁶ 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' ²⁸ This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself." (7:26-28)

"The court will sit" (7:26) brings our minds back to the heavenly court that had been seated for judgment in 7:10-14. There we were told of the judgment of the "little horn."

"¹¹ Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)" (7:11-12)

There will come a time when the pomp and pride of man's kingdoms will be forever gone. Kings and dictators will oppress God's people at various points in history. At the time of the End this persecution will become extremely intense. Then the Seventh Angel will blow the final trumpet and declare for all to hear:

"The kingdom of the world
has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

End Notes

[173] Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 145.

[174] Some of the Jewish apocalyptic writings include: First and Second Enoch, Book of Jubilees, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Psalms of Solomon, Assumption of Moses, Fourth Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Baruch.

[175] George Eldon Ladd, "Apocalyptic Literature," ISBE 1:151-160; also George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (Harper & Row, 1964), chapter 3, later published under the title, *The Presence of the Future*.

[176] Longman, *Daniel*, p. 163.

[177] "Ancient" is the adjective *attîq*, "advanced, aged" (BDB). Derivatives of the Hebrew root include the ideas of value and eminence, "old, aged" (Holladay, p. 417). "Days" is *yôm*, "day" (TWOT #2762).

[178] Nearly always, he is called "Son of God" only by others, but in his trial before the Sanhedrin he acknowledges that he is indeed the Son of God (Luke 22:70).

[179] Longman, *Daniel*, in loc. He notes that in literature from Ugarit. Baal, the chief deity and primary divine warrior of that culture, is often called the "Rider on the Clouds."

[180] "Ancient" is the adjective *attîq*, "advanced, aged" (BDB). Derivatives of the Hebrew root include the ideas of value and eminence, "old, aged" (Holladay, p. 417). "Days" is *yôm*, "day" (TWOT #2762).

[181] "Authority" (NIV), "dominion" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *sholtān*, "dominion, sovereignty," usually of God. From *shelēt*, "have power, rule" (BDB), "dominion, lordship" (Holladay, p. 423).

[182] "Glory" is *yeqār*, "honor," from the root "to be precious" (BDB).

[183] "Sovereign power" (NIV), "kingship" (NRSV), "kingdom" (ESV, KJV) is *malkû*, "royalty, kingship, kingly authority" (BDB), "royalty, reign, kingdom" (TWOT #2929c), "kingship, sovereignty," similar to "kingdom, realm" (Holladay, p. 411).

[184] *Pelah*, BDB. We saw this verb previously in 3:12, 14, 17, 18 regarding worshipping the golden image and 6:16, 20, the God that Daniel serves continually.

[185] Charles D. Isbell, TWOT #2940. "Serve (God)" (Holladay, p. 417).

[186] "Dominion" is *sholtān*, which we saw in 7:13, "dominion, sovereignty," usually of God. From *shelēt*, "have power, rule" (BDB), "dominion, lordship" (Holladay, p. 423).

[187] "Kingdom" is *malkû*, which we saw in verse 13 and 14a: "royalty, reign, kingdom" (BDB), "kingship, sovereignty," similar to "kingdom, realm" (Holladay, p. 411).

[188] "Everlasting" is *ālam*, "perpetuity, antiquity" (BDB), "remote time, eternity" (Holladay, p. 416).

[189] "Pass away" is 'ādâ', "pass away" (BDB), "go away, vanish" (Holladay, p. 415).

[190] "Destroyed" is the Hithpael stem of *ḥabal*, "be destroyed," see also 2:44 and 6:26 (BDB), "be destroyed, perish" (Holladay, p. 405).

[191] Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

[192] The interpreters who see the whole focus of Daniel on Antiochus Epiphanes (a Greek Seleucid king), separate the Medo-Persian Empire into the Median Empire and the Persian Empire, as beasts two and three, with the Greek empire as the fourth beast. However, in Daniel's vision in 8:20, the Medo-Persian Empire is depicted by a single beast, a two-horned ram. (For more, see [Appendix 2. The Medo-Persian Empire.](#))

[193] Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

[194] Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

[195] Longman notes that a strong case can be made (based especially on the clear meaning of Daniel 8) that the fourth beast is Greece and the ten horns are the kings that followed Alexander, with the climactic horn being associated with the insidious figure of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who oppressed God's faithful people in the middle of the second century BC. Proponents of this view cite the period of time (time, times, and half a time) as roughly equal to the number of years that Antiochus wreaked havoc with the religion of the Jewish people in 168-165 BC.

[196] Some of those who believe the reference is to the future time of the Antichrist prefer to speak of three and a half years of tribulation for God's people at the time of the second coming of Christ.

6. A Vision and a Mighty Prayer (Daniel 8:1-9:19)

I'm combining into a single lesson both Daniel's vision of a ram and a goat in chapter 8 with Daniel's great prayer of intercession in 9:1-19. I'm putting these together because though Daniel's vision is fascinating, it doesn't have too much application to disciples today -- while we can learn a great deal from Daniel's prayer.

It's a long lesson, though Daniel 8 will involve primarily reading on your part. Daniel 9:1-19, on the other hand, will include a number of discussion questions. If you're teaching this in a small group or a class, feel free to separate these two sections if you like.

A. Daniel's Dream of a Ram and Goat (Daniel 8)

If Daniel 7 seems difficult to understand, Daniel 8 will be much clearer, since the main characters in the vision are identified in 8:20-21. The language is no longer Aramaic, the language of Babylon, but is now in Hebrew, which continues through the end of the Book of Daniel. This vision is dated about 550 BC, about eleven years before the end of the Babylonian Empire.



Willem Drost (Dutch painter), 'The Vision of Daniel' (1650), oil on canvas, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Guided by an angel, Daniel sees a vision of a ram on the far side a chasm.

"¹ In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me. ² In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal." (8:1-2)

Though Daniel is physically in the city of Babylon, in the vision he is in the ancient fortress city of Susa. It was one of the royal cities of the Medes and Persians that had been the home of both Esther and Nehemiah in their exile.

The Ram and the Goat (8:3-8)

In the vision, Daniel looks forward a couple of hundred years to the conflict between a ram and a goat, a battle that took place in 331 BC.

³ I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. ⁴ I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great." (8:3-4)

I don't want to spoil the suspense for you, but verse 20 gives us the identity of this ram.

"The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia." (8:20)

Daniel's vision continues.

⁵ As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.

⁶ He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. ⁷ I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power.

⁸ The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven." (8:5-8)

Verse 21 identifies this goat for us also.

"The shaggy goat^[197] is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king." (8:21)

Medo-Persian (Achaemenid) Empire (550-330 BC)

As you can see on the map that follows, the Medo-Persian Empire was vast, and lasted for nearly 220 years -- a long time on the world stage. For more information on this great world power, see [Appendix 2. The Medo-Persian Empire](#).



[Larger Map](#)

The Two-Horned Ram -- the Medo-Persian Empire (8:3-4)

We've looked at the big picture. Now we can begin to interpret the vision verse by verse.

"I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later."
(8:3)

As mentioned above, this ram represents the Medes and the Persians. Perhaps the larger horn represented the Medes who had united six Iranian tribes into the united Median state. (These tribes included the Medes, Sythians, Parthians, and Persians).

The horn that grew up later might represent Cyrus the Great. In 553 BC, Cyrus II, King of Persia, rebelled against his grandfather, Astyages, King of the Medes, and won a decisive victory over him in 550 BC. Then Cyrus went about expanding the combined Medo-Persian Empire even further, conquering Babylonia in 539 BC.

" I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great." (8:4)

For nearly 220 years, the Medo-Persian Empire seemed invincible, taking whatever they wanted, ruling over a huge swath of land from Asia Minor to the Indus River.

The Goat with a Single Horn -- Alexander the Great (8:5-7)

Alexander the Great is the goat with the prominent horn.

⁵ As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.
⁶ He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. ⁷ I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power." (8:5-7)

Alexander the Great (born in 356 BC) was tutored by Aristotle as a young man. He succeeded his father, Philip of Macedon in 333 BC at age 20 as king of the Greek kingdom of Macedon (Macedonia). In a series of daring battles, Alexander led the allied armies of the Hellenic League to defeat the Persian Army in the Battle of Issus (present-day Turkey) in 333 BC and the Battle of Gaugamela (present-day Iraq) in 331 BC, suddenly making him successor to the immense Persian Empire. He marched through Syria and Palestine in 333 and 332 BC, and into Egypt, founding the city of Alexandria (which later became the capital of the Ptolemies).

Josephus relates that after Alexander had taken Gaza, he went up to Jerusalem and met with Jaddua the high priest.

"And when the Book of Daniel was



'Alexander fighting king Darius III of Persia,' Alexander Mosaic (c. 100 BC), Naples National Archaeological Museum, Italy.



A fifth century AD mosaic on the floor of a synagogue in Huqaq, Lower Galilee, Israel, discovered in 2014, seems to depict Alexander the Great visiting a Jewish high priest, following the account recorded by Josephus.

showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended."[\[198\]](#)

Later, Alexander invaded Persia and India. Wherever he went he spread the Greek language and culture, Hellenizing much of the known world -- and paving the way for the spread of the gospel in the first century. Seemingly, nothing could stop Alexander. "The ram [Medo-Persia] was powerless to stand against him" (8:7b).

Alexander's Death and Successors (8:8, 22)

"The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven." (8:8)

Alexander died in Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon in 323 BC at the age of 32. Since Alexander's sons were young, there was confusion about who would succeed him. Eventually, his kingdom was split into four parts ("four prominent horns"), each led by one of Alexander's generals. These four generals began four dynasties:

1. **Ptolemaic Dynasty** (Egypt, 323-30 BC), begun by Ptolemy I Soter.
2. **Seleucid Dynasty** (Palestine, Mesopotamia and Central Asia, 312-63 BC), begun by Seleucus I Nicator. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was king of the Seleucid Empire 175-163 BC.
3. **Attalid Dynasty** ruled Pergamum in Asia Minor (281-133 BC). Thrace, Asia Minor, and Macedonia were originally ruled by Lysimachus (306-281 BC), one of Alexander's generals.
4. **Antigonid Dynasty** (Macedonia, 306-168 BC) was founded by Antigonus I Monophthalmus (the "one-eyed"), who also ruled over part of Asia Minor, and northern Syria for a time.

Verse 22 spells this out more clearly.

"The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power." (8:22)

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC)

"Out of one of them came **another horn**, which **started small** but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land." (8:9)

The "small horn" is a king in the Seleucid line of the empire created by the "shaggy goat," that is, Alexander the Great. This is surely Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The "Beautiful/Glorious/Pleasant Land," of course, is the Promised Land.[\[199\]](#)

Antiochus Epiphanes (born 215 BC) was a younger son of Antiochus III, king over the Seleucid Empire, with its capital at Antioch. When Antiochus III lost battles to Rome, his younger son, Antiochus Epiphanes, was one of twenty members of royal and noble families who had been offered as political hostages of Rome in order to guarantee that the Seleucids wouldn't attempt again to encroach on Roman territory.

When Antiochus Epiphanes's older brother Seleucus IV became king in 187 BC, he arranged for Antiochus's release and replaced him as hostage with Seleucus's own son and heir, Demetrius I Soter. When Seleucus was assassinated in 175 BC, Antiochus ousted the assassin and took the throne for himself. Instead of giving the throne to its true heir, Demetrius, Antiochus proclaimed himself as co-regent for another of Seleucus's sons, an infant whom he murdered a few years later.

Antiochus strongly believed in Hellenization, in particular, changing the culture and religion of Judaism to Greek culture and the worship of Greek gods. To help in this, Antiochus appointed a man named Menelaus (which was the name of a Greek god) to be the high priest in the Jewish temple. Menelaus wasn't of the priestly family and had no interest in maintaining Jewish laws and customs. Antiochus Epiphanes was the first Seleucid king to use divine phrases on coins, such as "manifest god" and, after his defeat of Egypt, "bringer of victory."

In 170 BC, Antiochus launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, conquering all but Alexandria. To avoid alarming Rome, he allowed Ptolemy VI to continue as a puppet king, but this led to a civil war in Egypt. When Antiochus attacked Egypt again in 168 BC, a Roman ambassador delivered a message to him from the Roman Senate demanding the withdrawal of his armies from Egypt and Cyprus -- or face war with Rome. Antiochus withdrew.

When a rumor spread that Antiochus had been killed in Egypt, a deposed high priest, Jason, made a surprise attack on Jerusalem with 1,000 soldiers



Bust of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Altes Museum, Berlin.

and took the city. When Antiochus heard of this revolt, he returned enraged to Jerusalem in 167 BC, took back the city, restored Menelaus as high priest, and massacred thousands of Jews. The author of 2 Maccabees writes:

"He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. Then there was massacre of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed." (2 Maccabees 5:12-14)

Then he plundered the temple. Antiochus forcibly converted the temple into a temple to the Greek god Zeus and erected an altar to Jupiter, and defiled the temple by offering a pig on the altar. Remaining Jews were forced to eat of these sacrifices. Death was the penalty for Jews who circumcised their sons. Antiochus destroyed any copies of the Scriptures that he could find. This was a total departure from the former practice of the Seleucid kings, who had allowed people to practice their traditional religions.[\[200\]](#)

Antiochus Epiphanes's outrages brought about the Maccabean rebellion, which is described in an inspiring account in 1 Maccabees 1-3, which I recommend you read. (1 and 2 Maccabees are part of the Apocrypha, which are included in Catholic and Anglican Bibles, but not Protestant Bibles. You can read them online at BibleGateway.com in the New Revised Standard Version.)

The Maccabees were successful in their rebellion. Faithful priests cleansed the temple and it was rededicated in 165 BC, commemorated by Jews to this day with the Feast of Hanukkah (from a Hebrew word meaning "dedication").

Towards the end of his life, Antiochus's kingdom was attacked by the Parthians and he led a campaign against them. He died suddenly of disease in 164 BC.[\[201\]](#)

Another Horn -- Antiochus Epiphanes (8:9-13)

Now in the light of the history of Antiochus Epiphanes, let's consider Daniel's vision of the "small horn."

¹⁰ It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. ¹¹ It set itself up to be as great as the Prince[\[202\]](#) of the host[\[203\]](#). (8:10-11a)

Antiochus grows in power, throwing down some of his rival kings. He also challenges God himself, "the Prince of the host/army." From 169 BC, coins minted by his kingdom bear the title "King Antiochus God Manifest." And he attacks God's people and temple, thus attacking God himself.

The vision spells out this rebellion or transgression against God:

"^{11b} [The horn] took away the daily sacrifice[204] from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low[205]. ¹² Because of rebellion[206], the host [of the saints] and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground." (8:11b-12)

Antiochus substitutes the lie of paganism for the revealed truth of God's word entrusted to the Jewish people. "Truth was thrown to the ground" is fulfilled literally, since Antiochus insisted that the Torah scrolls be destroyed (1 Maccabees 1:56).

The Desolating Sacrifice (8:13)

A "holy one," an angel, asks how long God will allow this to continue.

"Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled -- the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender[207] of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?'" (8:13)

The phrase "causes desolation" is the verb *shāmēm*, "be desolate, appalled." [208] It refers to sacrificing pigs on the altar and thus rendering the altar and temple polluted, unfit for the worship of Yahweh.

We see similar words later in the Book of Daniel:

"On a wing [of the temple] he will set up an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (9:27b)

"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the **abomination that causes desolation**." (11:31)

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the **abomination that causes desolation** is set up, there will be 1,290 days." (12:11)

Jesus quotes this phrase in his prophecy of the End Times.

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the **abomination that causes desolation**,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand...." (Matthew 24:15)

We'll examine this "desolation" further. But for now, notice that this "desolation" in 8:13 seems to be the same desolation as referred to in 9:27b; 11:31; and 12:11. Nevertheless, Jesus refers to it as a future event, probably seeing the fulfillment by Antiochus as a foreshadowing of a later desolation that took place in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the temple and burned Jerusalem.

When the angel asks "How long?" Daniel is given an answer:

"He said to me, 'It will take 2,300[209] evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.[210]'" (8:14)

The text seems to mean that 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices would have taken place until the temple will be rededicated. This temple dedication, of course, is what the Jews celebrate each year in Hanukah. To do the math:

$$2,300 \text{ sacrifices} / 2 \text{ per day} / 365 \text{ days per year} = 3.15 \text{ years}$$

Rounded off, this becomes the 3-1/2 years of 9:27, and the 3-1/2 years mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

Daniel's Reaction to the Vision (8:15-18)

Daniel is terrified by the vision and the voices surrounding it.

"¹⁵ While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, 'Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.' ¹⁷ As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.' ¹⁸ While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet." (8:15-18)

Gabriel is an angel mentioned in 8:16 and 9:21. In Luke 1:11 he appears to Zechariah the priest, and in Luke 1:31 to the Virgin Mary. In the intertestamental books of 1 and 2 Enoch he is referred to as an archangel.

Identification of the Ram and Goat (8:19-22)

I've already given you Gabriel's identification of the ram and the shaggy goat, but here it is in sequence.

"¹⁹ He said: 'I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. ²⁰ The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. ²² The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.'" (8:19-22)

More About Antiochus (8:23-25)

Verses 23-25 gives us something of the character of Antiochus Epiphanes:

"²³ In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. ²⁴ He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. ²⁵ He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power." (8:23-25)

Antiochus is described as:

1. Stern-faced[211] (8:23b). Antiochus was scary to look at. He had a presence that reflected inner strength and made people afraid. Goldingay characterizes this as "ruthless boldness." [212]
2. Master of intrigue (8:23c). Goldingay calls this "artful cleverness." [213]
3. Strong, but not by his own power (8:24a). I take this to mean that behind Antiochus, Satan is attacking God and God's people.
4. Causes astounding devastation (8:24b). [214]
5. Destroys mighty men and the holy people [215] (8:24c). Antiochus ordered the slaughter of the rebel army defending Jerusalem, as well as tens of thousands of residents of the city.
6. Fosters deceitfulness in his kingdom (8:25a). Antiochus's character of deceitfulness set the standard for those under his rule.
7. Considers himself superior (8:25b). Antiochus is arrogant. The KJV puts it literally: "He shall magnify himself in his heart."
8. Stands against God himself, "the Prince of princes" (8:25c). When Antiochus proclaims himself the "manifest god" on his coins, and attacks Yahweh's temple and people, he attacks God himself, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.
9. Destroyed, but not by human power. Indeed, Antiochus dies suddenly of a sickness at the age of 51.

The Vision for the Future (8:26-27)

"²⁶ 'The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.' ²⁷ I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding." (8:26-27)

Seeing a vision of God is spiritually and emotionally draining. Daniel is overcome by what he sees and becomes sick. But the angel tells him that the fulfillment isn't for his own time but for "the distant future" (NIV) or "many days from now" (NRSV, ESV).

Summary

In this vision Daniel foresees the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire ("the ram with two horns"), which is suddenly ended by Alexander the Great ("the goat with the prominent horn"). He also sees the division of Alexander's empire among his four generals ("four prominent horns"), and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes who exalts himself, attacks God's people, ends the temple sacrifices, and brings desolation to the temple. Daniel is shown the time that the temple is desolate until its reconsecration -- about three and a half years. Daniel is told of Antiochus's destruction by God.

The fulfillment of this prophecy seems to be in the past, so what are present-day disciples to learn from it? Some of the lessons are inherent in other of Daniel's prophecies.

1. God sees the end from the beginning, and is in charge of the affairs of men, even though we may not see it at the time.
2. God sometimes reveals events to his prophets to encourage his people who may go through terrible persecution, so that they might take courage that the persecution will not last forever. In this case, Daniel is given the period of three and half years.
3. Visions can greatly telescope the time between events. Here, the time from the rise of the Medo-Persian empire under Cyrus the Great to its rapid end is a bit more than 200 years. From the rise of Alexander the Great to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes is just under 200 years.
4. Seeing the future is not without cost. Daniel is overwhelmed and devastated by what he sees. Sometimes we idly wish to know the future, but such a vision is costly.

B. Daniel's Prayer of Intercession (9:1-19)

Daniel's vision of the Goat and Ram in chapter 8 doesn't require much interaction. However, Daniel's prayer of intercession in 9:1-19 has many lessons that we disciples need to interact with and internalize in our own lives.

We want to learn prayer from someone who knows prayer -- who prays and God answers. Our mentor here is Daniel, the man who is punished for praying, persists, is thrown to the lions, and conquers. One of his prayers is resisted by the "prince of Persia," but God sends the answer nonetheless (Daniel 10:12-13).

70 Years Are Completed (9:1-2)

We begin our study with a clear historical reference point, 539 BC:

"¹ In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom -- ² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation^[216] of Jerusalem would last seventy years." (9:1-2)

Prior to this, Daniel has been reading and pondering the Scriptures,^[217] in this case, the prophecy of Jeremiah, who had prophesied 66 years previously in 605 BC. Jeremiah wrote:

""This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will

punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the LORD, 'and will make it desolate forever.'" (Jeremiah 25:11-12[218])

Daniel realizes that this 70 years is just about completed, that the prophecy is just about to be fulfilled. This 70 years is a round figure, perhaps a normal lifespan, but probably should be figured from the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 BC) to the start of the return under Cyrus's regime, 537 BC or thereabouts.^[219]

605 BC First exile
-537 BC Cyrus' decree
68 years

Confession of Israel's Sins (9:3-4a)

Because Daniel believes God's promises for a return, he begins to pray in earnest for his people, that God would forgive their sin and enable this restoration to take place. He could have been a fatalist and decide that God will take care of all the details, that God need not be concerned. Instead, he takes it upon himself to pray, to intercede, and to plead with God on the basis of God's character.

William Carey (1761-1834), who was to become one of the first Protestant missionaries, one day shared his passion to save the heathen of India with others at a minister's meeting. One arrogant hyper-Calvinist clergyman called out, "Young man, sit down: when God pleases to covert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine." Some predestinarians presume that God will work out his will on the earth without using human beings as his instruments or means. But that wasn't Daniel's view. Baldwin observes, "Divine decree or no, the Scriptures never support the idea that God's purpose will be accomplished irrespective of the prayers of his people."^[220]

³ So I turned to the Lord God^[221] and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed...." (9:3-4a)

Daniel "turned" (NIV, NRSV), "turned my face" (ESV), or literally "set my face" (KJV) to the Lord. This is a Hebrew idiom implying a deliberate determination towards something. We see this Hebrew idiom in the New Testament also, when Luke records that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51; NRSV). Daniel's prayer was no casual thing, but a firm heart's resolve to seek God for his people until an answer came.

The seriousness of the prayer is expressed by the phrase, "in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes." Fasting was a way to humble oneself before God. Sackcloth was a sign of mourning. Ashes "symbolized the penitence with which Daniel came to represent his people before the Lord."^[222] Several words describe the prayer:

Pleaded. Then he "pleaded" (NIV) "to seek" (KJV), "to seek an answer" (NRSV). This phrase uses the verb *bāqash*, "to seek, require, desire," which connotes a person's earnest seeking of something or someone which exists or thought to exist."^[223]

Prayer. In the phrase "prayer and petition," "prayer" is *tepillâ* (from the root *pālal*, which occurs in verse 4), the most common Hebrew word for prayer, occurring 76 times in the Old Testament.^[224]

Petition. "Petition" (NIV) or "supplication" (KJV, NRSV) is *taḥănûn*. The verb *ḥānan* depicts "a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need," that is, a granting of mercy. The noun *taḥănûn*, carries the idea of "a prayer for grace, supplication," but is less a formal entreaty than the outpourings of a troubled soul (used in parallel to "weepings" in Jeremiah 3:21; 31:9).^[225]

Abject humility. The phrase, "... in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes," depicts Daniel's manner of prayer -- deliberate and abject humility. Daniel doesn't come to God in boldness to plead a righteous cause. God owes him and his people nothing. He comes asking mercy for a clearly sinful people. Daniel comes humbly.

Now the Scripture indicates that he takes two actions: "I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed..." (9:4).

"**Prayed**" is *pālal*, "to pray," the most common verb for praying, of which we saw the noun form in the previous verse.

"**Confessed**" (NIV) or "made confession" (NRSV, cf. KJV) is *yādā*, which in various contexts can mean, "confess, praise, give thanks, thank." The primary meaning of this root is "to acknowledge or confess sin, God's character and works, or man's character." It is used in David's personal confession of sin (Psalm 32:5), the confession of all the nation's sins made on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:21), and other great confessions of Israel's sins (Ezra 10:1; Nehemiah 1:6; and Nehemiah 9:2-3).^[226]

Acknowledgement of Sin (9:4b-6)

Now we proceed to the content of Daniel's confession. Remember how the Lord's Prayer begins, with a recognition of God's greatness and holiness? "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name..." (Matthew 6:9). Daniel begins with the same kind of acknowledgement of God's greatness and mercy.

"⁴ O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." (9:4-6)

First, he acknowledges Yahweh as "the great and awesome God."^[227] Next, he acknowledges Yahweh's reputation and character, "who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands" (9:4b). A covenant (*b-rit*) is "between nations: a treaty, alliance of friendship." God made a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai, "accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it."^[228]

With this pair of words it is referred to as a "covenant of love" (NIV), "covenant and steadfast love" (NRSV, ESV), "covenant and mercy" (KJV). The second word is the common Hebrew noun *hesed*, "kindness, lovingkindness, mercy." In the mid-twentieth century many scholars saw the word as expressing loyalty within a covenant.^[229] But the word is more than that. It also carries ideas of love, faithfulness, good-heartedness, kindness. A common KJV translation of "lovingkindness" may be a pretty good translation after all.^[230]

Notice that Daniel is quite aware that the people of Israel don't qualify for relief under the covenant, since it is a covenant "with all who love him and obey his commands" (9:4b). The Israelites have not kept God's commands, but broken them and committed treason by worshipping other gods. Instead of the blessings of the covenant, they have faced the curses of the covenant. Daniel acknowledges this openly:

⁵ We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." (9:5-6)

Daniel uses all these synonyms for sin to make clear that he isn't trying to get mercy based on some loophole provided for under a "special definition," in the way that we sometimes excuse ourselves for sin. He flat out declares, "We have sinned!" Nor does he hide behind the "We-didn't-know-it-was-wrong" defense. He acknowledges that "We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name..." (9:6a). God isn't at fault. He sent prophets to warn them but they didn't listen. Instead they killed the messengers of God's merciful warning.

Confession of our sins must be open, complete, and brutally honest, without prevarication, claiming extenuating circumstances, or excuses. Anything less is unacceptable.

As a parent, have you ever confronted your child with a misdeed and waited for him or her to own up to it? Sometimes you'll hear a full admission, but often you hear lies and excuses. Not until the child is truly sorry will he or she fully confess with repentance and grief. But anything less is unacceptable to a parent intent on shaping the child's conscience and character. Why should we expect God to be less discerning than we?

Daniel Confesses the Sin as His Own (9:5)

One of the strongest lessons to me is the way Daniel places himself squarely in the middle of his nation's sin. He doesn't say, "*They* sinned," or "Seventy years ago some wicked people sinned." Instead, he says,

"We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled" (9:5).

If we are to intercede as Daniel did -- as a member of the sinning nation -- we must in a sense take that sin upon ourselves. Daniel was a very righteous man who lived without compromise all his life. I am sure he committed personal sins, but by any account he would

be classified as a righteous man. He is placed by God alongside Noah and Job (Ezekiel 14:14-20). Yet he prays, "We have sinned...."

It is no accident that half a millennium later, Jesus takes on himself the sins of the world in order to save it.

"... He poured out his life unto death,
and was **numbered with the transgressors**.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**,
for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" (Galatians 3:13)

"But when the time had fully come,
God sent his Son, born of a woman,
born under law, to redeem those under law,
that we might receive the full rights of sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

"For Christ died for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous,
to bring you to God." (1 Peter 3:18a)

"... Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made **in human likeness**.
And being found **in appearance as a man**,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death --
even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)

I don't know fully what this means. But surely it means that intercession is costly. Daniel doesn't take on sin in the sense that Jesus did, bearing others' sins in his body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). But Daniel is part of a sinful nation in the same way that a member of the human race bears guilt because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21).

This is not some legal fiction for Daniel. His intercession is costly. This 80- to 85-year-old man fasts, he wears sackcloth, he sprinkles ashes on his own head. This is not external. He feels the grief, is overwhelmed with the burden, is humbled before God. He, a righteous man, takes ownership, in a sense, for the sins of others so he can intercede for them. Daniel in his own person fulfills for Israel the condition and promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14:

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

How do you and I ask mercy for a sinful nation of which we are citizens? How do we pray for healing for a congregation whose spirit has been tarnished by pettiness, sin, and hatred? How do we pray for forgiveness and restoration for a church that has left true

doctrine for false? How do we pray? Painfully. Personally. We learn from Jesus and from Daniel.

Israel's Shame (9:7-11a)

Let's continue considering Daniel's prayer of confession:

"⁷ Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame -- the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. ⁸ O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. ⁹ The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰ we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you." (9:7-11a)

Daniel contrasts God's righteousness (*s-dāqā*) with Israel's shame (*bōshet*). The word comes from a root that means "to fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either of self or of an object of trust." It contains nuances of "confusion, disillusionment, humiliation, and brokenness."^[231]

Daniel acknowledges that God has righteously scattered the peoples among the nations due to their "trespass" (KJV), "unfaithfulness" (NIV), "treachery" (NRSV, ESV). The word is *ma'al*, "trespass," used to designate "the breaking or violation of religious law as a conscious act of treachery."^[232]

Note the hint of mercy in verse 9: "The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him...." God's character of mercy doesn't change even though his children rebel against him. This reminds me of a New Testament letter from Paul to Timothy:

"Here is a trustworthy saying:
'If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
if we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.'" (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

God's Punishment for Israel's Sins (9:11b-14)

Daniel's prayer continues, noting the justice of God's punishment:

"^{11b} Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. ¹² You have

fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. ¹⁴ The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him." (9:11b-14)

Three times in this passage (verses 12, 13, and 14) Daniel speaks of the "disaster" (NIV), "evil" (KJV), "calamity" (NRSV, ESV) that has come upon Israel. The word is *rā'ā*, "evil, misery, distress,"^[233] referring here to the utter destruction of the nation, of Jerusalem, and of the scattering of its people. He is referring to the curses that God promised to send upon his people if they didn't remain faithful (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Verse 13 is interesting:

"All this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth." (9:13)

"Sought the favor of" (NIV), "entreated the favor" (NRSV, ESV), "made ... our prayer" (KJV) is *ḥālā*, "mollify, pacify, appease, entreat the favor of ... induce him to show favor in place of wrath and chastisement."^[234] Sinners must seek the mercy of God.

What the nation has failed to do, Daniel does for the nation. He is not a high priest or a king or an official representative of the nation. He is a layperson who has served for years as a high official in the government of Israel's conqueror. But yet he takes on this intercession. Intercessors need not be officially designated for their task. God is the one that lays the burden of prayer on them and God is the one who answers the Spirit-inspired prayers of faithful intercessors.

I expect that others besides Daniel were feeling the need for confession and repentance. Before the exile, love for Yahweh was sparse, but during the exile God brought about a renewal of faith. The synagogue and scribal movements began during the exile and were brought back to Jerusalem with the returnees. Ezra was a godly scribe who returned to help lead the Israelites who had returned to their homeland. Probably those who felt the strongest love for Yahweh returned when they were able -- the "remnant." Those who had been assimilated into the Babylonian culture and religion did not feel a need to return. Thus the exile provided a sifting and refinement of the Israelites who ultimately returned to their homeland.

A Plea for Mercy (9:15-18)

Having acknowledged Israel's sins and God's just punishment, Daniel makes his appeal. Let's analyze it so we can learn to pray prayers that God answers.

¹⁵ Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. ¹⁶ O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us." (9:15-16)

Daniel appeals to God on the basis of:

1. **God's precedent.** God delivering Israel from Egypt provides a precedent for delivering them from Babylon (verse 15a). Neither time were they delivered for their own righteousness (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).
2. **God's glory.** Just as God's glory was known through the deliverance from Egypt, so the deliverance from Babylon will bring him glory (verse 15b).
3. **God's righteousness.** Deliverance of God's people shows God's righteousness as an act of mercy (verse 16a).
4. **God's personal identification with Jerusalem.** God has identified himself with Jerusalem, the City of God ("your city") and the temple mount ("your holy hill"). While Israel's sins have brought scorn to Jerusalem and Israel -- and to God, by association -- deliverance will erase that scorn (verse 16b).

Daniel continues:

¹⁷ Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy." (9:17-18)

Daniel extends his argument for God to show mercy.

5. **Worship in God's temple** ("your desolate sanctuary") will be filled with worshippers again. Notice that Daniel points out that this is "for your sake" (verse 17).
6. **God's personal identification with Jerusalem** (again). Daniel reminds God that the desolate city "bears your Name" (verse 18a).
7. **God's mercy.** Daniel's appeal is not on the basis of Israel's righteousness, which has been destroyed by sin and rebellion. He appeals solely on the basis of God's known character of mercy (verse 18b).

A Plea for Forgiveness (9:19)

Daniel concludes with what might seem an impertinent call to action as if to hurry God.

"O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." (9:19)

Daniel's prayer is urgent and impassioned. But God honors Daniel's intercession for his people.

God did hear and answer Daniel's prayer -- both by the personal messenger of the Angel Gabriel (9:20-21) and historical events that unfolded.

The Return from Exile

Daniel was an old man by now and did not return to Jerusalem, so far as we know. But others did. The book of Ezra records the amazing decree of Cyrus that freed the Israelites to return (Ezra 1:2-4). The new Persian rulers wanted the prayers of their conquered peoples, and so cooperated with the return and rebuilding process.

Endnotes

[197] The phrase "shaggy goat" (NIV), "male goat" (NRSV), "goat" (ESV), "rough goat" (KJV) is two words: *ṣapîr*, "he-goat"[197] and *šā'îr*, "hairy" and then "he-goat, buck" (Bruce K. Waltke, #TWOT 2274c).

[198] Josephus, *Antiquities* xi, 8, 4-6.

[199] "The Beautiful Land" (NIV, NRSV), "the glorious land" (ESV), "the pleasant land" (KJV) doesn't include the noun "land" in the Aramaic text, though it is implied. The adjective is *šebî*, "beauty.... The best in regards to splendor and honor is referred to as beautiful or glorious" (John E. Hartley, TWOT #1869a). Here it refers to the Promised Land (8:9; 11:16, 41; Ezekiel 20:6, 15).

[200] 1 Maccabees 1:20-42; 2 Maccabees 5:1-23; Josephus *Antiquities* 12,5,3.

[201] Facts in this appendix taken from Bruce K. Waltke, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes," ISBE 1:145-146; Wikipedia article.

[202] "Prince" is *šar*, "prince, chief, captain, ruler, governor, keeper, chief captain, steward, master," here as a military commander (TWOT 2295b).

[203] "Host" is *šābā'*, "army, host" (BDB 839, 1).

[204] "Daily sacrifice" (NIV, KJV), "regular burnt offering" (NRSV, ESV) is *tāmîd*, "continuity." Often used with *ōlâ* to refer to the morning and evening burnt offering. In Daniel 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11 *tāmîd* is used by itself to designate the daily burnt offering (Walter C. Kaiser, TWOT #1157a).

[205] "Was brought low" (NIV), "overthrew" (NRSV), "was overthrown" (ESV), "was cast down" (KJV) is the Hofal perfect of *shālak*, "throw, cast." Also in 8:7 (TWOT #2398).

[206] "Rebellion" (NIV), "wickedness" (NRSV), "transgression" (ESV, KJV) is *pesha'*, "rebellion.... In a context of international relationships, the verbal form designates a casting off of allegiance, a rebellion against rulers.... Predominantly *pesha'* is rebellion against God's law and covenant and thus the term is a collective which denotes the sum of misdeeds and a fractured relationship" (G. Herbert Livingston, TWOT #1846a).

[207] "Surrender" (NIV), "giving over" (NRSV, ESV), "to give" (KJV) is *nātan*, "give" (TWOT #1443).

[208] "Causes desolation" (NIV), "makes desolate" (NRSV, ESV), "desolation" (KJV) is the Polel stem of *shāmēm*, "be desolate, appalled.... Basic to the idea of the root is the desolation caused by some great disaster, usually as a result of divine judgment." The book of Daniel has four passages (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) employing the Polel form of the verb.... There is a causative (or, better, factitive) force here similar to the use of the Hiphil, except that the Hiphil generally involves a physical devastation, while the Polel seems to put more stress on the fact that someone has caused the sanctuary or altar to be polluted, thus rendering it unfit for the worship and service of God (Hermann J. Austel, TWOT #2409).

[209] 2300 days / 360 days per year/2 per day = 3.2 years.

[210] "Be reconsecrated" (NIV), "restored to its rightful state" (NRSV, ESV), "be cleansed" (KJV) is *šādaq*, "be just, righteous."

[211] "Stern-faced" (NIV), "of bold countenance" (NRSV), "of bold face" (ESV), "of fierce countenance" (KJV) is two words: *pānîym*, "face" and *'az*, "strong, mighty, fierce" (TWOT #1596e). The face reflects the attitude and sentiments of the person (Victor P. Hamilton, *pānîym*, TWOT #1782a).

[212] Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 217.

[213] Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 217. "Master of intrigue" (NIV), "skilled in intrigue" (NRSV), "one who understands riddles" (ESV), "understanding dark sentences" (KJV) is two words, *bîn*, "to understand" and *hîdâ*, "riddle, difficult question, parable" (TWOT #616a). Goldingay (*Daniel*, p. 199) comments, "There is no need to take *hîdâ* here alone to mean sayings intended to deceive, though this motif does come in 8:25.

[214] "Astounding devastation" (NIV) is also rendered, "fearful destruction" (NRSV, ESV) and "destroy wonderfully" (KJV).

[215] "Holy people" is two words, "People" is *'am*. "Holy" is *qādôsh*.

- [216] "Desolation/s" (NIV, ESV, KJV), "devastation" (NRSV), is *ḥorbâ*, "waste or desolate places, ruins" (TWOT #731). A related word is Mount Horeb, "desolate region," from *ḥārēb*, "dry up."
- [217] *Sēper*, "writing, book" (R.D. Patterson, *sāpar*, TWOT #540a).
- [218] See also Jeremiah 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 and Zechariah 1:12.
- [219] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 164. R.K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 126. John Bright (*Jeremiah* (Anchor Bible 21; Doubleday, 1965, second edition), p. 160, fn. 11) notes that in Zechariah 1:12 this 70 years seems to refer to the interval between the destruction of the temple in 587 and its rebuilding in 520-515. In 2 Chronicles 36:20-23 it is made to refer to the period between 587 and Cyrus' edit in 538.
- [220] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 165.
- [221] In verse 3, Daniel refers to Yahweh here by a pair of words *ādōn*, "lord, master, owner," and *ʾēlōhīm*, the generic word for God. In verse 4 he refers to God as "the LORD my God," literally "Yahweh my God." Yahweh is the name by which God revealed himself to Abraham (Genesis 12) and later Moses (Exodus 3:15), God's specific, unique, given name. I don't find any particular significance here of using one expression or the other, only that Daniel feels free to use them interchangeably.
- [222] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 165.
- [223] A noun from this root, *baqqāshā*, "petition," which occurs seven times in the Old Testament, is a technical term "denoting a petition or request by a subject to a king that he grant a specific desire" (Leonard J. Coppes, *bāqash*, TWOT #276).
- [224] Victor P. Hamilton, *pālal*, TWOT #1776a.
- [225] Edwin Yamauchi, *ḥānan*, TWOT #694g.
- [226] Ralph H. Alexander, *yādā*, TWOT #847.
- [227] "Great" is *gādōl*, which means here "great in importance" (Elmer B. Smick, *gādal*, TWOT #315c). "Awesome" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "dreadful" (KJV) is *yārē*, "be afraid, revere," which can refer to the emotion of fear as well as to "reverence or awe" (Elmer B. Smick, *brh*, TWOT #282a).
- [228] Elmer B. Smick, *berit*, TWOT #282a.
- [229] For example, N.H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Schocken, 1964), pp. 94-130.
- [230] R. Laird Harris, *hesed*, TWOT #698.
- [231] John N. Oswalt, *bōsh*, TWOT #222c.
- [232] Victor P. Hamilton, *mā'al*, TWOT #1230a.
- [233] G. Herbert Livingston, *rā'a'*, TWOT #2191c.
- [234] BDB; cf. TWOT #656.

7. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:20-27)

Daniel's vision of the Seventy Weeks (9:20-27) is closely tied to Daniel's prayer of confession and intercession earlier in the chapter (9:1-19). However, because Daniel's vision is controversial in our day, I've decided to devote an entire lesson to this vision, in particular to the four verses that conclude the chapter (9:24-27).

Gabriel Appears to Daniel (9:20-23)

²⁰ While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill -- ²¹ while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight^[235] about the time of the evening sacrifice. ²² He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. ²³ As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision.' (9:20-23)



Michelangelo, 'Daniel' (1508-12), fresco, Sistine Chapel ceiling, Vatican, after restoration of 1980-94.

The evening sacrifice would have been between 3:00 and 4:00 pm. The bringer of this vision is the angel Gabriel, whom we met in Daniel 8:16, and who, in the New Testament, appears to Zechariah and Mary.

The vision came in direct response to Daniel's intercessory prayer for the return of God's people to their homeland in Jerusalem (9:23). The vision that follows, confirms to Daniel that Jerusalem will be rebuilt (9:25), but then reveals that the return to the Holy Land and rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem is not the climax of Bible history. Much is yet to come.

Seventy Sevens (9:24)

Miller calls verses 24-27 "four of the most controversial verses in the Bible."^[236] Daniel has prayed for the restoration of Israel, since

the **seventy years** prophesied by Jeremiah are nearly complete. But Gabriel answers with **seventy-sevens**.

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy." (9:24)

Verse 24 tells us that six purposes will be completed over this whole Seventy Sevens time period. How you interpret these actions depends on how you interpret "the anointed one" in verse 26. Since I take "the anointed one" in verse 26 ultimately as Jesus, not the high priest Onias III, this affects my interpretation below. The first two purposes seem closely related.

1. **To finish transgression.** The word suggests restricting or restraining sin. [\[237\]](#)
2. **To put an end to sin.** One of the words points to sealing to designate that something is securely closed. [\[238\]](#)

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." (1 John 3:8)
3. **To atone for wickedness,** that is, to forgive. "Atone for" is *kāpar*, "to make atonement, reconciliation." The name of the Jewish feast of Yom Kippur uses a related word, *kippūr*, "atonement." [\[239\]](#) Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)
4. **To bring in everlasting righteousness.** Our righteousness does not depend on us, but on Jesus who justifies us, that is, declares us righteous.

"By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11)

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 11:9b)
5. **To seal up the vision and prophecy.** To seal could mean to affirm with an official seal, or to close up something so no one could see it until the seal is finally broken. I don't think this means that God will no longer reveal through prophecy; we have prophets in the New Testament Church. Rather, it probably means to authenticate by accomplishing all that God had revealed to Jeremiah, the focus of Daniel's prayer of intercession earlier in this chapter.
6. **To anoint the most holy.** This could refer to anointing the temple when it is rebuilt, but probably points to the anointing of the Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah, who will accomplish God's work (Matthew 12:6).

Baldwin says that this verse "is speaking of the accomplishment of God's purpose for all history."[\[240\]](#) I don't see how these actions could have been completed by the time of the Maccabees, as some interpreters would have us to believe. They are the work of God through his Christ, Jesus our Lord.

Assumption behind the Interpretations

My approach to studying this prophecy may be frustrating to some. Instead of giving you the "right" answer to the puzzle, I'm going to examine the various ways interpreters have solved each piece of the puzzle. After looking at the prophecy piece by piece, I'll give you my own tentative conclusion. By that time, I hope, you'll realize that our interpretations *must* only be tentative, since so many assumptions must be made in interpretation, and unless all of our assumptions are correct, our interpretation will be flawed. Yes, I think we can see the overall pattern, but some of the details elude us.

The Seventy Sevens -- literal or figurative?

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble." (9:25)

In verse 25, Gabriel divides the entire period into three parts.

1. The first seven "sevens."
2. The next sixty-two "sevens."
3. The last "seven," is divided in the middle, as we'll see in verse 27.

How to interpret these periods is fraught with difficulties. The first issue we have to face is whether to take the numbers as literal years or as symbolic periods.

Literal Years

The most straightforward approach would seem to take these numbers as years, since the context here is Daniel praying about the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah. To support this conclusion, the calculation of the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus (which is related to Jeremiah's prophecy) seems to translate Sevens into years.

"Count off seven sabbaths of years -- seven times seven years -- so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years." (Leviticus 25:8)

Seventy Sevens would equal 490 years. The problem is that while you can get one or two of the periods to work using the approach of literal years, you can't make all three periods work easily. In other words, no view of the

literal numbers interpretations I am aware of allows you take the numbers at face value without further explanation. I'll discuss the details below under the heading "Counting the Years."

Symbolic Numbers

An alternative approach is to see the Seventy Sevens as symbolic numbers, since seven is often a symbol of completeness in the Bible. Ten, on the other hand, seems to be a "convenient rounded figure for an amount greater than a few."[\[241\]](#) Seventy, a multiple of 7 and 10 seems to be used symbolically as 70 nations on earth (Genesis 10) and 70 disciples sent out (Luke 10). In 2 Chronicles 36:21, Jeremiah's "seventy years" of keeping Sabbath years seems to count only the period between the desolation of the temple (587 BC) and the decree of Cyrus (539 BC), which is actually 48 years, not 70 actual years.

Here are a couple of examples of numbers being used symbolically in the New Testament.

- Forgiveness. Peter asked how many times he had to forgive. Jesus answered seventy times seven (or, perhaps, seventy-seven; Matthew 18:20-21). Here Jesus takes the number of completeness and multiplies it by the number of completeness, then by the number 10. Would Peter only have to forgive 490 times maximum? No. That's not the point. Peter must *always* forgive.
- The 144,000 (Revelation 7:4; 14:1, 3) is a symbolic number -- the number of apostles multiplied by the number of patriarchs times 1,000. One thousand is the common "large number," used much like we use it in the phrase, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." Is 144,000 a precise number? No. It is a symbolic number.

Goldingay argues that Daniel is not trying to offer chronological information but "chronographical," that is a stylized scheme of history used to interpret historical data, rather than arising from it.[\[242\]](#) F. F. Bruce prefers the term "schematic numbers."[\[243\]](#) Similarly, E. J. Young sees these as symbolic periods of time, not literal.[\[244\]](#)

Seven "Sevens" and Sixty-two "Sevens" (9:25)

The first two periods are described in verse 25.

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble."
(9:25)

Most of the interpretations I have seen lump these two periods together, 7 + 62 = 69, rather than explain what is happening during the first Seven. What happens during the first Seven just doesn't seem to be very clear to us.

The Anointed One

Once you've decided whether the numbers are literal or symbolic, you need to determine the identity of "the anointed one, the ruler."[\[245\]](#) We see two mentions of an anointed one in verses 25 and 26.

"Anointed One" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "Messiah" (KJV) is *māshîaḥ* (from which we get our word "Messiah"), "anointed one," from *māshah*, "anoint, spread a liquid."[\[246\]](#) The word is sometimes used of kings (1 Samuel 2:10; 2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 2:2; 18:50). High priests were anointed (Exodus 40:13; Leviticus 16:32). Once God refers to Cyrus II as his "anointed one" (Isaiah 45:1).

"Ruler" (NIV), "prince" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) in both verses 25 and 26 is *nāgîd*, "ruler, leader, captain"[\[247\]](#) (though they refer to different individuals). It is important to note that there are no capital letters in Hebrew or Aramaic to denote deity, so the reader must determine (rather than the text itself) whether this anointed one is Jesus or someone else. As we'll discuss in a moment, the two primary figures suggested for the "anointed one" in 9:26 are either Onias III, the last high priest of the line of Zadok, or Jesus of Nazareth.

Jerusalem Will be Rebuilt (9:25)

According to verse 25 Jerusalem will be rebuilt[\[248\]](#) with public squares[\[249\]](#) and a moat[\[250\]](#), a defensive structure associated with a rampart. This rebuilding will be carried out "in times of trouble." The accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah indicate the enemies who sought to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. I don't know that Jerusalem ever had an actual mote; perhaps the word indicates general defensive structures.

Determining the Beginning Point

The next question facing the interpreter is the beginning point of the prophecy, when the "issuing of the decree[\[251\]](#) to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" was given. Certainly, Cyrus II gave a decree about 538 BC allowing the first wave of exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1).[\[252\]](#) However, apparently the city itself wasn't restored nor its walls completed at that time (Nehemiah 2:12-15). So others take the beginning of the "Seven" from a decree[\[253\]](#) by King Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464-424 BC), directing Nehemiah and Ezra to

return to Jerusalem and repair its walls (Ezra 7; Nehemiah 2:9), which occurred about 445 BC.[254]

Counting the Years

Interpreters now face the question of how to count the years. Of course, if you take the numbers as symbolic, making an exact count isn't as important. But if you see these as literal days, then counting is very important. Here are some approaches.

Maccabean Interpretation. Non-messianic interpreters, typically those who see Daniel as pseudo-prophecy written after the fact, take the seven seventies as literal years. Behrmann took the beginning point as Jeremiah's prophecy (605 BC), 49 years later, Cyrus's accession (556 BC), and -- *if you let the 49 and 434 years run concurrently* -- the death of the high priest Onias III in 171 BC, followed seven years later by the rededication of the temple (164 BC).[255] Others who hold this interpretation feel that Daniel was just mistaken about the number of years.

Messianic Interpretation. The other main group of interpreters see the "anointed one" as Jesus the Messiah.

It's important to note that the exact date for Jesus' crucifixion isn't without question, but based on the officials at Jesus' trial, considerations of astronomy (which determined the setting of Jewish months), and the framework of Jesus' ministry, most scholars see Jesus' death taking place on Passover of 30 AD or of 33 AD.[256] The year 32 AD is considered "impossible."

If you take the beginning point as Artaxerxes's Decree to Nehemiah (445/444 BC), then 483 years take you to Jesus' death at Passover, 32/33 AD, *but only if you use so-called "prophetic years," that is, lunar (360 day) years, rather than 365-day years (as the Jews did)*.[257] The final seven years, seen as the period of the tribulation, would come after an indeterminate gap. This is the view, for example, of Walvoord and most dispensationalist interpreters.

Another approach is to take the beginning point as Artaxerxes's decree to Ezra in 458 BC. This takes you to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, 26 AD. The stopping of sacrifices and offerings would refer to Jesus' death, 3-1/2 years later. The final half-week is pushed into indefinite future.

Both of these Messianic interpretations posit a "gap" or "parenthesis" to take up the space between Christ's death and Christ's Second Coming. The problem is that this "gap theory" is rather arbitrary and has no basis in

Daniel's prophecy or the rules of Bible interpretation. It could be correct, but there is no evidence in the text to support it.

The Final "Seven" (9:26-27)

²⁶ After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come [258] will destroy [259] the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War [260] will continue until the end, and desolations [261] have been decreed [262]. ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant [263] with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] [264] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end [265] that is decreed is poured out [266] on him. [267]" (9:26-27)

Let's examine what will happen during the final Seven. Though I believe in a Messianic interpretation of these verses, I'll show you how some interpret this as fulfilled by the high priest and Antiochus Epiphanes. I do this because I think it is likely that Antiochus is a type [268] or forerunner of the Antichrist (the antitype).

1. "The Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing [269] (26a). "Cut off" means here, "to destroy by a violent act of man or nature," that is, be killed. [270] The Maccabean interpretation sees this as Onias III, the last legitimate high priest of the family of Zadok, a pious and faithful man (2 Maccabees 3:1), who served from 187-175 BC. He was replaced by Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 BC and then murdered a few years later. None of his offspring served as priests after him. He had nothing. The messianic view is that this refers to Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified as a common criminal, and had no physical offspring. He was dead and buried. He had nothing. But he rose! Hallelujah!

2. "The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (26b). The Maccabean interpretation sees "the ruler who will come" [271] as Antiochus Epiphanes, who caused widespread death and destruction in Jerusalem and defiled the temple, though the temple itself was not demolished nor was the city razed (1 Maccabees 1:30-31). Or this ruler could well refer to the Roman emperor or the general who besieged Jerusalem from 67 to 70 AD, and utterly destroyed both the temple and the city of Jerusalem. [272] Or this ruler could be the Antichrist referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2 (written about 50 AD), 1 John 2:18; 4:3 (written somewhere between 70 and 90 AD); and Revelation 13 (written about 90-95 AD).

3. "The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed" (9:26c). The "end" [273] -- whether it refers to the city or to anointed one -- will come like a flood, quickly and overwhelmingly. War [274] will continue. Desolations [275] -- an emptying of

the city or land, and/or appalling events -- are decreed[276] by God. For the Maccabean interpretation, we read in 2 Maccabees:

"[Antiochus] commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. Then there was **massacre** of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed." (2 Maccabees 5:12-14, NRSV)

Jesus talked about wars continuing.

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs." (Matthew 24:6-8)

Revelation speaks about final battles (Revelation 16:14-16; 19:11-21; 20:7-10).

4. "He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'" (9:27a). "Confirm the covenant" (NIV, KJV), "make a strong covenant" (NRSV, ESV) is two words, *berît*, "covenant" and the verb *gābar*, "prevail, be mighty, have strength." [277] Baldwin observes that this verb "has the implication of forcing an agreement by means of superior strength." [278] "He" seems to refer to "the ruler who will come." The Maccabean interpretation sees this as Antiochus Epiphanes who found apostate Jews to cooperate with him in Hellenizing Judea [279] (1 Maccabees 1:11a).

Antiochus sought to unite his kingdom through a single pagan religion (1 Maccabees 1:41-43). Probably a covenant was made by the Romans with cooperating Jews during the Jewish rebellion in 67-70 AD. But this could also refer to the Antichrist described in 2 Thessalonians 2, who authorizes only those who bear the "mark of the beast" to buy and sell (Revelation 13:16-17).

5. "In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering" (9:27b). Clearly Antiochus Epiphanes put a temporary end to the Jewish sacrificial system in the temple (1 Maccabees 1:45). Elsewhere in Daniel's visions we see clear references to Antiochus Epiphanes.

"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice." (11:31a)

Of course, the daily sacrifices were ended by Antiochus Epiphanes. [280] That would be the Maccabean interpretation.

However, when Jerusalem fell in 70 AD, the Romans sacked and destroyed the temple, utterly ending the sacrificial system permanently; it has not been restored to this day. Christians see the sacrificial system as obsolete, fulfilled by Christ's death on the cross for our sins.

Then, putting an end to sacrifice and offering could refer to the Antichrist, the "man of lawlessness," who Paul talks about.

"He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

What temple this is we can't be sure. Some believe that the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt before Christ returns, but this could be a symbolic or spiritual use of "temple," which we sometimes see in Paul's epistles. According to Revelation, the Antichrist, the "beast rising out of the sea," will exercise authority and persecute God's people for 42 months (one half of seven years), demanding exclusive worship (Revelation 13:5-8).

6. "And on a wing [of the temple][\[281\]](#) he will set up an abomination that causes desolation" (9:27c). This was literally fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC. 1 Maccabees, written about 100 BC, uses a similar phrase:

"Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev [November/December] in the one hundred forty-fifth year [168 BC], they erected a desolating sacrilege[\[282\]](#) on the altar of burnt offering." (1 Maccabees 1:54)

In Daniel's final vision we see two references to this -- apparently referring to the desecration under Antiochus Epiphanes. He erected in the temple a shrine to Zeus and sacrificed pigs on the altar. There are other references in Daniel also.

"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation." (11:31)

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." (12:11)

However, we see the same phrase in Jesus' predictions of the fall of Jerusalem as a *future event*, fulfilled (at least partially) in 70 AD.

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand...." (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14)

As mentioned above, Paul tells us of a similar desecration by the Antichrist, "the man of lawlessness":

"... He sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

7. "The end that is decreed is poured out on him" (9:27d). Finally, God will put an end[283] to this. This ruler who opposes God and his people will himself be judged. God's wrath will be poured out[284] on this one who desolates God's temple[285]. Antiochus Epiphanes died suddenly of disease in 164 BC, four years after the "abomination of desolation" was erected in the temple. The Roman General Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. He became Emperor Augustus Caesar in 79 AD and died of a fever two years later. And we read that the Beast (the Antichrist) and the False Prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). There is judgment. The Kingdom of God prevails.

A Synopsis of the Major Interpretations of the Seventy "Sevens"

Is your head swimming yet? I sympathize with you. Let me summarize. Perhaps that will help. There are four major interpretations, with lots of variations within them.

1. Literal time periods with Antiochus Epiphanes as the end-point

This Maccabean interpretation begins the 490 years at the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, and the termination as Antiochus's persecution (164/163 BC). But this is only 422 years, so these interpreters assume that Daniel was mistaken about chronology and the coming of the kingdom. This view sometimes takes the "anointed one, the ruler" in verse 25 as Cyrus II (or Zerubbabel or Joshua, Zechariah 4:14), and the "anointed one" in verse 26 to refer to Onias III, the last legitimate high priest of the descendants of Zadok, deposed in 175 BC and murdered in 171 BC.[286]

The so-called "historical view" has the advantage of a close tie-in with the theme of Antiochus Epiphanes as clearly seen in chapters 8, 10-12. A good case can be made that Antiochus is the *initial* focus of Daniel's prophecy (though its proponents generally interpret Daniel's visions as historical narratives written after the fact *as if they were* predictive prophecy). Baldwin writes:

"The historical interpretation is surely correct in seeing a primary fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in the second century BC, but to confine its meaning to that period is to close one's eyes to the witness of Jesus and the New Testament writers in general that it also had a future significance." [287]

2. Symbolic time periods with the first century AD as the end-point

A second view sees the time periods as symbolic, not literal. This is the view, for example, held by conservative amillennialist scholar E.J.

Young.[288] Seven Sevens cover the period from the decree of Cyrus until the completion of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah, approximately 440 to 400 BC. Sixty-two Sevens from about 400 BC to the first advent of Christ, "who alone," says young, "can be described as an anointed one, a prince." [289] During this time the city is completely rebuilt, though in stressful times. The final Seven encompasses Christ's First Advent to sometime after Christ's death, but before 70 AD.

3. Literal time periods with Christ's Second Coming as the end-point

A third view, often held by premillennialist and dispensational interpreters, sees the 70 Sevens as literal time periods -- years -- with Christ's Coming as the end-point. The seven Sevens extend from command to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra, 458 BC or Nehemiah, 445 BC) to the completion of work, 49 years later. The sixty-two Sevens (434 years) extend either to Christ's baptism (about 26 AD) or his presentation of himself as Messiah on Palm Sunday (32/33 AD). Key to this view is that you stop counting for "the time of the Gentiles." That whole period is skipped. The final Seven years begin at the end of present age, with terrible tribulation for Israel and the world, during which the majority of Israel will be saved. The final Seven is terminated by Christ's coming and Kingdom, which will last 1,000 years.[290] One obvious weakness of this view is that it uses 360-day "prophetic years" rather than 365-day years as did the Jews. Also it arbitrarily skips counting years during the Church Age. Typical of this view would be Miller and Walvoord.

4. Symbolic time periods with Christ's Second Coming as the end-point

A fourth view believes that the 70 Sevens are symbolic periods of time and are a prophecy of Old and New Testament church history from Cyrus' decree (538 BC) until Christ's return. The details may vary, but this view typically holds that seven Sevens extend from Cyrus' decree until the coming of Christ, about 550 years. The sixty-two Sevens extend from Christ's coming to persecution of the church by Antichrist (at least 2,000 years). The final Seven seems to include the Great Tribulation and ends with Christ's advent. Keil and Baldwin hold this view. Baldwin sees the last Seven beginning with the first coming of Christ and extending until his Second Coming.

My Conclusions about Daniel's Seventy Weeks

It's only fair, having taken you through the various issues concerning Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the various interpretations, to let you know where I come out -- and why.

Let me begin by sharing that I courted my wife over jigsaw puzzles. I can remember lining up dozens of pieces of an uninterrupted blue sky and trying to fit each of the pieces to each other in each direction to see if I could make any of them go together. A few times I would put a couple of pieces together that *almost* fit, but ended up damaging the edges of both pieces. I can also remember putting together a puzzle only to find that a few key pieces were just missing. It was frustrating -- except that it afforded an excuse to spend a pleasant time with my girlfriend!

I think Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks is something like a puzzle with some of the pieces missing. Part of it seems clear enough, but we're missing something, like part of the vision is "sealed up" until the Last Days when it may be revealed. I don't want to force pieces to fit that don't really fit. But some parts of the vision seem intelligible to me.

Numbers. I'm convinced that Daniel's numbers are not precise, literal numbers that come out exactly. So far I don't think that anyone has come up with a scheme to make all the numbers fit precisely. Perhaps we need to get over our twenty-first century precision and be willing to round up or down a few years. I'm not sure the ancients were as precise as we are concerning such things, especially in the case of numbers that surely have some symbolic sense. Having said that, I think it's quite remarkable that the period from a decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time when "the Anointed One will be cut off" (9:26a), that is, Christ's death on the cross, is so close to 483 years -- not precise, but very close indeed!

Anointed One. I believe that "the anointed one" in both verses 25 and 26 refers to Jesus the Messiah, not to an anointed high priest.

Antichrist. "The people of the ruler who will come" refers, I believe, to the followers of a future Antichrist. The reason I believe this is that both Jesus and Paul and the Book of Revelation see the "abomination of desolation" and Antichrist as a *future* event. While Antiochus Epiphanes is certainly a *type* of the Antichrist in the Book of Daniel, the figure that we see here and elsewhere in Daniel and the New Testament far exceeds him in wickedness and power.

Tribulation and Final Half-Week. The Final Week of Daniel's Seventy Weeks seems to refer to the same period of Great Tribulation that we see in Jesus' teaching on the Last Days (Matthew 24) and Paul's exposition on the Man of Lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2). "In the middle of the 'seven'" (9:27b) the persecution seems to be the greatest. This seems to conform to the three-and-one-half year time frame that we see elsewhere in Daniel (7:25; 12:7, 11, 12; 8:13-14) and in Revelation (11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). I'm uncomfortable with the "gap theory" that leaves out the whole Church

Age and skips directly to the Great Tribulation; perhaps I'd rather call this a missing piece of the puzzle that wasn't revealed to Daniel.

The End. It is also clear to me that "the end that is decreed" (12:27) refers to judgment by the Ancient of Days and his Christ, the Son of Man (7:9-14, 26-27), when Christ returns, the believers are raised, and the final judgment takes place.

I think it's important that we have great humility concerning whatever interpretation we hold of Daniel's Seventy Weeks. We shouldn't fight over it. We shouldn't discriminate against brothers and sisters who don't agree with our particular scheme. History is littered with many, many, many schemes to interpret Daniel. Who are we to be so proud and inflexible?

Endnotes

[235] "Swift flight" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "being caused to fly swiftly" (KJV), "in my extreme weariness" (NASB) is the Hofal participle of the verb *yā'ēp* along with the noun *ye'āp*, from the same root. BDB shows the meaning as "be weary, faint," which, doubled with *ye'āp* would intensify it to "extreme weariness." Goldingay (*Daniel*, p. 228) notes that the translations "to fly swiftly," literally, "flying in flight" (NJB), presuppose that *yā'ēp* has a homonym meaning, "to fly," which would be a by-form of *'ūp*, "fly, fly about, fly away." Miller (*Daniel*, in loc.) sees "extreme weariness" as a better translation since: (1) Conjecture of a Hebrew verb is necessary to come up with "swift flight." (2) The Scriptures don't assume that all angels have wings; here Gabriel has the appearance of "a man" (9:21). (3) Daniel would have been extremely tired after a prolonged period of fasting and praying (9:3). TWOT comments: "However, it would seem equally strange for angels to grow weary but the action of this verb could perhaps be assigned to Daniel who may be wearied because of his praying and fasting (cf. KD loc. cit). Since seraphim and cherubim have wings and since angels appear with wings in Enoch 61, perhaps it would be best to accept the traditional translations--'fly swiftly'" (TWOT #1582).

[236] Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

[237] "Finish" is *kālā'*, "withhold, shut up, keep back, refrain, forbid." The basic meaning of this root is to restrict the flow or movement of a thing or person ... to indicate the interruption of what is in progress or would naturally be in progress (J.N. Oswalt, TWOT #980).

[238] "Put an end to" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "make an end to" (KJV) is two words: *tāmam*, "be complete, finished" (BDB) and *hātam*, "affix a seal, seal up ... sealing designates that which is securely enclosed" (Jack P. Lewis, TWOT #780). "Sin" is a doubling of the Hebrew noun *ḥattā't*, "sin, sin offering."

[239] TWOT #1023.

[240] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 169.

[241] B.C. Birch, "Number," ISBE 3:561.

[242] Goldingay (*Daniel*, p. 257) cites L.L. Grabbe, "Chronography in Hellenistic Jewish Historiography," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, 17 (1979), 43-68, especially pp. 43-44.

[243] F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), pp. 67-74. Speaking of the use of such numbers found in Qumran texts, Bruce says: "The figures given are schematic rather than material on which a chronologer could build with confidence" (p. 68).

[244] Young (*Daniel*, p. 196) quotes Keil (and believes he is correct), that the reference is to "an intentionally indefinite designation of a period of time measured by the number seven, whose chronological duration must be determined on other grounds."

[245] Punctuation of verse 25 is seen by some to be significant. The NIV, NASB, and KJV put a comma or no punctuation after "seven weeks" (following Theodotion's Greek translation and the Latin Vulgate). The NRSV and ESV put a semicolon or period after "seven weeks," indicating the *atnach* (a caret mark) in the ninth century AD Masoretic Text. Of course, there were no vowel points or punctuation marks in the early Hebrew text, as indicated in scrolls recovered from Qumran. According to some, the full stop makes it more likely that the anointed one in verse 25 can be a different person than the anointed one in verse 26. I don't think there's enough evidence to make a decision based on punctuation.

[246] Victor P. Hamilton, *māshîaḥ*, TWOT #1255c.

[247] *Nāgîd* is from a root denoting, "to place a matter high, conspicuous before a person" (Leonard J. Coppes, TWOT #1289b). Harris points out, "The word is used almost fifty times and is applied to leaders in several fields -- governmental, military and religious. The word usually is singular and refers to the man at the top, the king, the high priest, etc. But there are references to leaders and captains in the army" (R. Laird Harris, TWOT 1289b).

[248] "Rebuilt" (NIV), "built again" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is two verbs, *shûb*, "return" and *bānâ*, "build, rebuild" (TWOT #255).

[249] "Streets" (NIV, NRSV, KJV), "squares" (ESV) is the singular noun *rehōb*, "open place." The term is always used of a square, market place, or pasture within a town or village (William White, TWOT #2143d).

[250] "Trench" (NIV), "moat" (NRSV, ESV), "wall" (KJV) is *hārûš*, "trench, moat," only found here. Basic to the meaning of the verb *hāraš* are the concepts "to cut or sharpen" and "to decide" (TWOT #752b). In Akkadian *harīšu* denotes a ditch or moat associated with a rampart (Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 229).

[251] "Issuing of the decree" (NIV), "the word went out" (NRSV), "the going out of the word" (ESV), "the going forth of the commandment" (KJV) is two nouns, *môšā'*, "act or place of going out" (TWOT #893c) and *dābār*, "word, speaking, speech, thing" (TWOT #399a).

[252] "Proclamation" in Ezra 1:1 is two words, the noun *qwl*, "voice" and the Hiphil stem of the verb *ābar*, "pass over/by/through," here, "cause to make/move" (TWOT #1556). The NRSV renders it: "sent a herald."

[253] "Decree" in Ezra 7:13, 21 is *te'ēm*, "taste, judgment, command" (TWOT #2757a).

[254] Walvoord, *Daniel*, pp. 224-227; Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 170. However, some take this king to be Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-359 BC), dating the return about 398 BC (C.E. Amerding, "Ezra, Book of," ISBE 2:264-266; R.K. Harrison, "Artaxerxes," ISBE 1:306).

[255] Georg Behrmann, *Das Buch Daniel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1894), cited in Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 257.

[256] H.W. Hoehner and J.K. Brown, "Chronology," in Joel B. Green, et al. (editors), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (second edition; InterVarsity Press, 2013), p. 137.

[257] Hoehner, Harold W., "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, Pt 6 : Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975), pp. 47-65. He makes some corrections to the work of Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) in *The Coming Prince* (London; Hodder, 1881; tenth edition published about 1914-15).

[258] "The ruler who will come" uses the noun *nāgîd* we saw in verse 25, but is clearly another ruler than the Anointed One. His "people" will "destroy the city and the sanctuary."

[259] "Destroy" is *shāhat*, "destroy, corrupt." The object of this verb may be a city (Sodom, Jerusalem); a dynasty (the house of David); nations who harass God's people (Babylon); most often God's own covenant people and their possessions (Victor P. Hamilton, TWOT #2370).

[260] "War" is *milhāmâ*, "battle, war," from *lāham*, "fight, do battle" (TWOT #1104c).

[261] "Desolation/s" in verses 26 and 27 is *shāmēm*, "be desolate, appalled," which we saw in 8:13. Cf. 9:18. Also in 11:31 and 12:11, in the phrase, "abomination that causes desolation."

[262] "Decreed" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "determined" (KJV), also in verse 27, is the Niphal participle of *hāraš*, "cut, sharpen, decide, determine." In most places "the word connotes the concept of 'determined' and refers to something which cannot be changed. Perhaps the basic idea of 'cut' is evident here in that that which is incised cannot be altered" (TWOT #752).

[263] "Confirm the covenant" (NIV, KJV), "make a strong covenant" (NRSV, ESV) is two words, *berît*, "covenant" and the Hiphil stem of *gābar*, "prevail, be mighty, have strength, be great" (TWOT #310). "It has the implication of forcing an agreement by means of superior strength" (Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 171).

[264] "Wing [of the temple]" (NIV), "in their place" (NRSV), "the wing of abominations" (ESV), "overspreading of abominations" (KJV). The Hebrew word is *kānāp*, "wing, winged, border, corner, shirt" (TWOT 1003a). The "pinnacle" of the temple in Matthew 4:5 is literally "little wing" (Greek *pterugion*) (Young, *Daniel*, p. 218).

[265] "End" (NIV), "consummation" (KJV) is *kālâ*, "full end," from *kālâ*, "accomplish, cease, determine." The basic idea of this root is "to bring a process to completion" (John N. Oswalt, TWOT #982).

[266] "Poured out" is *nātak*, "be poured, drop (of rain), be melted or molten." Such things as water, groans, divine wrath, and curses are poured forth (TWOT #1442).

[267] "Him" (NIV), "the desolator" (NRSV, ESV), "the desolate" (KJV) is the Qal participle of *shāmēm*, the verb used in the phrase "abomination that causes desolation."

[268] A look at vocabulary is important. You often see the words "type" and "antitype," where the type prefigures the actual antitype, "One that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type, such as a figure in the New Testament who has a counterpart in the Old Testament" (TheFreeDictionary.com). "Type" means "a figure, representation, or symbol of something to come," such as an event in the Old Testament that is believed to foreshadow another in the New Testament (TheFreeDictionary.com). "Prototype" is similar, but slightly different: "an individual that exhibits the essential features of a later type" (Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary).

Just to confuse us, "prototype" *can* also be a synonym of "archetype," which means, "the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies" (*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary*).

[269] Because of the variableness of this word, Baldwin notes, "The exact meaning is far from clear." "Have nothing" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "not for himself" (KJV) is *'ayin*, "nothing, nought." This word is basically a negative substantive used most frequently in the construct form. The word therefore has no single meaning and the exact translation must be determined in each context (Jack B. Scott, TWOT #81).

[270] "Cut off" is the Niphal stem of *kārat*, "be cut off, cut down." The word is used in the Pentateuch for "cut off" (by death penalty) from one's people (BDB). "There is the metaphorical meaning to root out, eliminate, remove, excommunicate or destroy by a violent act of man or nature. It is sometimes difficult in a given context to know whether the person(s) who is 'cut off' is to be killed or only excommunicated" (Elmer B. Smick, TWOT #1048).

[271] "The ruler who will come" uses the noun *nāgîd* we saw in verse 25, but is clearly another ruler than the Anointed One. His "people" will "destroy the city and the sanctuary."

[272] "Destroy" is *shāḥat*, "destroy, corrupt." The object of this verb may be a city (Sodom, Jerusalem); a dynasty (the house of David); nations who harass God's people (Babylon); most often God's own covenant people and their possessions (Victor P. Hamilton, TWOT #2370).

[273] "End" is *qēš*, "end," from the verb *qāšaš*, "cut off, sever, separate in two." This noun is used in a context of judgment (Genesis 6:13; Ezekiel 7:2-3; Isaiah 9:7).

[274] "War" is *milḥāmâ*, "battle, war," from *lāham*, "fight, do battle" (TWOT #1104c).

[275] "Desolation/s" in verses 26 and 27 is *shāmēm*, "be desolate, appalled," which we saw in 8:13. Cf. 9:18. Also in 11:31 and 12:11, in the phrase, "abomination that causes desolation."

[276] "Decreed" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "determined" (KJV), also in verse 27, is the Niphal participle of *ḥāraš*, "cut, sharpen, decide, determine." In most places "the word connotes the concept of 'determined' and refers to something which cannot be changed. Perhaps the basic idea of 'cut' is evident here in that that which is incised cannot be altered" (TWOT #752).

[277] The verb is the Hiphil stem of *gābar*, "prevail, be mighty, have strength, be great" (TWOT #310).

[278] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 171.

[279] Driver, *Daniel*, p. 141.

[280] "[Antiochus] sent an Athenian senator ... to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus.... The temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws" (2 Maccabees 6:1-5).

[281] "Wing [of the temple]" (NIV), "in their place" (NRSV), "the wing of abominations" (ESV), "overspreading of abominations" (KJV). The Hebrew word is *kānāp*, "wing, winged, border, corner, shirt" (TWOT 1003a). The "pinnacle" of the temple in Matthew 4:5 is literally "little wing" (Greek *pterugion*) (Young, *Daniel*, p. 218).

[282] "Desolating sacrilege" is two words, *bdelygma erēmōseōs*. *Bdelygma*, is generally, something that causes revulsion or extreme disgust, a "loathsome, detestable thing," here, "something that is totally defiling, abomination, pollutant" (BDAG 172, 2). Also found in Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14. *Erēmōsis* is the "state of being made uninhabitable, devastation, destruction, depopulation" (BDAG 392).

[283] "End" (NIV), "consummation" (KJV) is *kālâ*, "full end," from *kālâ*, "accomplish, cease, determine." The basic idea of this root is "to bring a process to completion (John N. Oswalt, TWOT #982).

[284] "Poured out" is *nātak*, "be poured, drop (of rain), be melted or molten." Such things as water, groans, divine wrath, and curses are poured forth (TWOT #1442).

[285] "Him" (NIV), "the desolator" (NRSV, ESV), "the desolate" (KJV) is the Qal participle of *shāmēm*, the verb used in the phrase "abomination that causes desolation."

[286] Driver, *Daniel*, p. 138-140; Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 262.

[287] Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 173.

[288] So Young, *Daniel*, pp. 220-221.

[289] Young, *Daniel*, p. 220.

[290] Preferred by Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

8. The Kings of the North and South (Daniel 10:1-11:35)

If the previous lesson only covered a few verses, this lesson covers nearly two chapters. Chapter 10 describes Daniel's experience of receiving the vision -- and some hints about spiritual warfare in the heavenly places -- while chapter 11 is a prophecy detailing wars and kings that span hundreds of years, finally focusing on the cruel reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.



Indian war elephants of Antiochus III and African war elephants of Ptolemy IV in the Battle at Raphia, 217 BC. Illustration attributed to Peter Dennis.

I encourage your patience as you study Daniel 10-11 with me. It may seem tedious, yet you will find a fascinating correlation in detail after detail of prophecy with history as it played out hundreds of years after Daniel's time. There is something for us to learn here about God's foreknowledge and predestination.

Revelation of a Great War (10:1-3)

¹ In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.

² At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice [\[291\]](#)food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." (10:1-3)

The third year of Cyrus II ("the Great," 559-530 BC) probably refers to the third year after his conquering of Babylon, so this would be about 536 BC.

A fearsome unnamed angel appears to Daniel in a vision, and then speaks in this vision explaining what will happen in the future. The vision concerned "a great war" -- actually a whole series of wars. It begins with Alexander the Great conquering the Persian Empire (330 BC) and continues through the six

Syrian Wars (174-168 BC) that go on back and forth between the Seleucid kings of Syria and the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt. We'll consider that in detail later in this lesson.

Daniel Sees a Vision of an Angel (10:4-7)

Now Daniel details the circumstances of the vision. Daniel is standing on the banks of the Tigris River. Babylon is built on both banks of the Euphrates River. The Tigris roughly parallels the Euphrates for many miles, and is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) northeast of Babylon.

"⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. ⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves." (10:4-7)

The figure is called a "man," but he is doubtless an angel, since he is involved in spiritual warfare alongside Michael the Archangel against the princes of Persia and Greece. He is dressed in white with a belt of gold. His body is like chrysolite, probably the semiprecious stone yellow jasper.[\[292\]](#) His face is so bright that it can't be looked on. His eyes are terrible flames, his limbs gleam like bronze, and his voice thunders.

Daniel is not alone when the vision appears. The men with him are terrified and run off, though they don't see the actual vision. So alone, completely sapped of strength, Daniel falls helpless[\[293\]](#) before the angel, his face to the ground, falling into a deep sleep.

The Vision Saps Daniel's Energy (10:3, 7-11, 15-17)

Verses 2 and 3 give us an idea of the effect of the vision on Daniel.

"² At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice[\[294\]](#) food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." (10:2-3)

Daniel, who is now perhaps 80 years old, is devastated by the vision. I don't think he is deliberately fasting. He just has no appetite. He is crushed over what he sees -- and the destruction of his people that will come. He mourns for three weeks.

Daniel tells us more in verses 8 and 9.

"⁸ So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ⁹ Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground." (10:8-9)

Many of us underestimate the physical, emotional, and spiritual toll involved in encountering God. Paul describes intercessory prayer as "struggling" or "wrestling" (Colossians 2:1; 4:12, *agōn, agōnizomai*). Spiritual warfare is compared to wrestling (Ephesians 6:10, *palē*). Later verses 12 to 14 we see spiritual warfare taking place at a country level by angelic beings. Many preachers can attest how drained they are after preaching. Being a prophet, seeing visions, takes a tremendous toll as well.

A few verses later we see the effects on Daniel again.

"¹⁵ While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. ¹⁶ Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, 'I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. ¹⁷ How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.'" (10:15-16)

Daniel can hardly breathe! But the angel strengthens him again so he can finally stand.

"¹⁰ A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said, 'Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.' And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling." (10:10-11)

Resisted by the Prince of Persia (10:10-19)

Now the angel relates an incident that can only be described as country-level spiritual warfare.

"¹² Then he continued, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted^[295] me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained^[296] there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.'" (10:12-14)

Notice that God sends an answer to Daniel's prayer immediately. However, the angel sent with the answer can't get to him for three weeks because of a battle.

"The prince of the Persian kingdom" isn't Darius or Cyrus. He seems to be a demonic power, a fallen angel, who is over the demonic forces that control Persia, the current superpower in the world, that had conquered the Babylonian Empire just a few years previously.

The Apostle Paul writes of what seems to be a hierarchy of demonic powers, what the KJV calls "principalities and powers."

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **powers of this dark world** and against the **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**." (Ephesians 6:11-12)

Elsewhere, Paul calls Satan "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

The angel messenger is helped by Michael to extricate himself from the spiritual battle. Later in this chapter, Michael is described as "the great prince who protects your people" (10:21a). In Jude 9, Michael is referred to as an archangel. In Revelation, we read:

"And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back." (Revelation 12:7)

I can hear some of you say, I don't believe in angels and demons. I would ask: Why not? The Bible teaches us about this spiritual world that is beyond our sight. Why shouldn't you believe it? Unless you're an expert on prayer and spiritual warfare, you probably don't have enough experience to make an informed judgment anyway.

In Daniel 10 we learn that there is a spiritual battle for nations fought behind the scenes. Prayer is one of our chief weapons. God answers prayer, but the functionality of how it all works is normally hidden from us. In verses 12-13, God pulls back the drapes a bit so we can see. I think the lesson here is to be diligent in prayer and to intercede for our national leaders. They are subject to the normal human failings, of course. But they are also subject to the influence of country-level demonic forces that aren't immediately obvious.

Whether or not you agree with the politics of your country's leader, you must pray for him or her! We fight this battle on our knees. Why do our missionaries in foreign countries so need our prayers? Because they are contending for the souls of nations that are in deep spiritual darkness, kept so by country-level demonic powers. Dear friends, God calls us to pray.

In the last couple of decades, C. Peter Wagner has written extensively on these matters. To learn more, read his books: *Wrestling with Dark Angels* (edited 1990), *Warfare Prayer* (1992), *Confronting the Powers* (1996), and others.

Daniel Receives Strength (10:15-19)

Daniel is weak, but the angel strengthens him, as we saw above.

¹⁵ While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. ¹⁶ Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, 'I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. ¹⁷ How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.'

¹⁸ Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ¹⁹ 'Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,' he said. 'Peace! Be strong now; be strong.' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.'" (10:15-19)

Wars against the Princes of Persia and Greece (10:20-11:1)

The angel continues to explain to Daniel some of the angel's future responsibilities.

^{10:20} So he said, 'Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight [\[297\]](#) against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; ²¹ but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. ^{11:1} And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)'" (10:20-11:1)

The Persian Empire, in power when Daniel saw this vision in 536 BC, continues for a couple of centuries, and is defeated by the Greek, Alexander the Great in 330 BC -- hence the angel's references to the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Greece." Michael, too, is deeply involved in the spiritual battle, since Michael seems to be "your prince," the archangel assigned to protect God's people.

Our God, his angels, and his human servants are deeply involved in what is going on in our world today as well. Let us continue in prayer.

Prophecies of the Persian and Greek Kings (11:2-35)

Chapter 11 is largely taken up with detailed prophecies concerning the final kings of the Persian empire, and especially Alexander the Great and the Greek Empires of his successors, the Seleucid kings and the Ptolemaic kings. Your eyes may glaze over, and I'll understand if you feel that way. But I encourage you to read below how Daniel's prophecies, given in 536 BC, accurately predict the reign of kings hundreds of years after Daniel's time.

These kings are important to God's people living in Judea in those centuries, since many of the battles take place in Palestine, located right between the rival kings of Egypt and Syria.

Why is Daniel given this vision, and what is its importance to us today?

1. This account of kings and battles over hundreds of years reminds us to number our days.
2. We see God's amazing foresight of history. And in the process we reflect on the relationship between predestination or determinism and free will. God can see all this ahead of time, but those kings are still responsible for their actions, and are able to repent of evil if they so desire.
3. We are encouraged that though persecution and hardship may rage, it will not last forever, and God will bring final justice.
4. We also learn about the refining power of persecution (11:35).

Okay, with that introduction, let's launch into these amazing prophetic insights that extend far into the future beyond Daniel.

Four Persian Kings (11:2)

"Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece." (11:2)

Here are the kings of Persia during this period. Cyrus II the Great (576-530 BC), reigns when Daniel had this vision. The next three kings are Cambyses (530-522 BC), Smerdis (pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata; 522 BC), and Darius I Hystaspes (522-486 BC). Xerxes I (486-464 BC) is probably the fourth king mentioned in the vision, since he invaded Greece in 480 BC, won the Battle of Thermopylae and captured Athens, lost the Battle of Salamis, and then pulled the bulk of his troops back to Asia.

Alexander the Great and His Four Successors (11:3-4)

"³ Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. ⁴ After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others." (11:3-4)

This king is Alexander the Great, whom Daniel has foreseen in previous visions (7:6; 8:5-7, 22). You can read more about his history in [Lesson 6A](#) on Daniel 8:5-7. Upon his death, Alexander's empire is divided among his leading generals: (1) Ptolemy I Soter, (2) Seleucus I Nicator, (3) Lysimachus, and (4) Antigonos I Monophthalmus (the "One-Eyed"). Of these, Ptolemy (Egypt) and Seleucus (Syria) became dominant.

Wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (11:5-9)

Following the division of Alexander's empire to his generals, there is much fighting back and forth, known to history as the Syrian Wars. (You can see a synopsis of the Syrian Wars in [Appendix 4. Important Dates for the Book of Daniel.](#))

Since one general is based in Egypt and another in Syria, when they fight, their armies often cause major disruptions in Judea. At the beginning of the Syrian Wars, Judea was under control of the kings of the South, the Ptolemies. This back and forth warfare is the focus of verses 5-9 where the prophet describes events with amazing accuracy.

"The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power." (11:5)

The "king of the South" in verse 5 is Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BC) the ruler of Egypt (cf. 11:8), one of Alexander's former generals. "One of his commanders" in verse 5 is Seleucus I Nicator (312/311-280 BC). Seleucus had been appointed satrap of Babylonia in 321 BC, but when another general, Antigonos, seizes Babylonia, Seleucus flees to Ptolemy Soter in Egypt in 316 BC to serve under him. When Antigonos is defeated in 312 BC in Gaza, Seleucus returns to Babylon, greatly increased in power ("even stronger than [Ptolemy I]," and comes to control Babylonia, Syria, and Media, the largest division in the Greek empire.

"After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her." (11:6)

About 250 BC, an alliance/treaty of peace is made between Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC) of Egypt and Antiochus II Theos (261-246 BC), grandson of Seleucus. According to the terms of the treaty, Ptolemy's daughter Berenice ("the daughter of the king of the South") is to marry Antiochus ("the king of the North"). Her son is then to become heir to the Seleucid throne. But Antiochus's former wife Laodice (whom he had divorced to execute this treaty with Egypt) ends up murdering Antiochus, Berenice, and their child. Thus their "power" did "not last." Laodice rules as queen regent until her son Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 BC) becomes an adult.

⁷ One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious.

⁸ He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone. ⁹ Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country." (11:7-9)

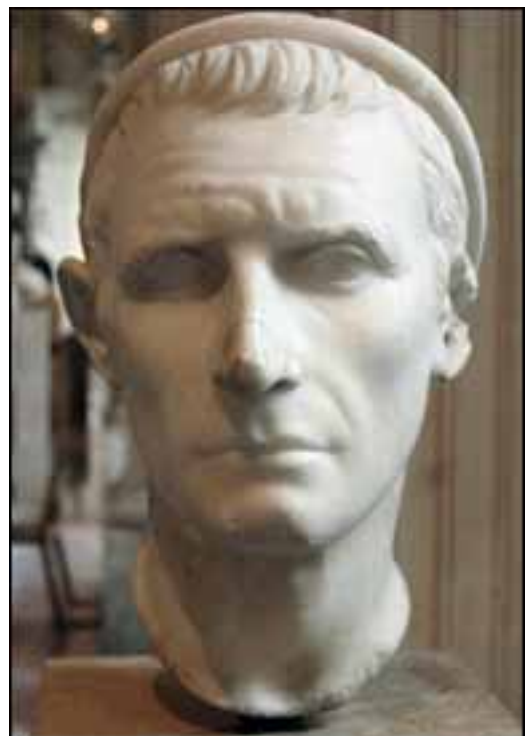
"One from her family line" is Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC), who is now king of Egypt. In revenge for his sister's murder, from 246-241 BC Ptolemy III attacks Syria and its king, Seleucus II (246-225 BC) with a large army beginning the Third Syrian War (246-241 BC). He captures and loots the Seleucid capital of Antioch. In 240 BC Ptolemy III makes a peace treaty with Seleucus II so he can pursue conquests in the Aegean region. Verse 9 seems to indicate an unsuccessful invasion of Egypt by Seleucus II, but there is no corroboration of this from contemporary sources.

Antiochus III the Great vs. Ptolemy IV and V (11:10-17)

Seleucus II and Ptolemy III die and the Syrian Wars between Egypt and Syria move to the next generation.

"His sons shall wage war^[298] and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress." (11:10, ESV)

Seleucus II's sons are Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 BC), who reigns for three short years, and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC), who reigns for 36 years. Through his military efforts Antiochus III restores much of the territory of the Seleucid Empire previously lost. He also seeks without great success to resist growing pressure from Rome.



Antiochus III 'the Great' bust (possibly Roman copy of Hellenistic portrait), Louvre, Paris.

¹⁰ His sons will ... assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. ¹¹ Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. ¹² When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands...." (11:10-12a)

During the Fourth Syrian War (219-217 BC), Antiochus III campaigns in Phoenicia and Palestine ("as far as his fortress," probably at Gaza), which are at that time part of the Ptolemaic Empire of Egypt. Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 BC) fights back. According to ancient historian Polybius, Antiochus's army had 62,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants. Ptolemy's army had 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 elephants. Egypt

defeats the Syrians at the Battle of Raphia (Gaza) on June 22, 217 BC, one of the largest battles of the ancient world.

"^{12b} ... Yet he will not remain triumphant. ¹³ For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped." (11:12b-13)

However, when Ptolemy IV dies in 203 BC, he is succeeded by his five-year-old-son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-181 BC). Antiochus III takes this weakness as an opportunity to invade again in the Fifth Syrian War (202-195 BC).

"In those times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success." (11:14)

Antiochus III is apparently aided by Philip V of Macedon, as well as Jews ("violent men among your own people") who take this as occasion to rebel against Egypt. These Jewish leaders are eventually punished by Egyptian General Scopas ("without success").

"¹⁵ Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand. ¹⁶ The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it. " (11:15-16)

Egyptian General Scopas loses the Battle of Panium to the Syrians in 199 BC, and surrenders in 198 BC when Syrians besiege the city of Sidon, where the Egyptians have retreated. Now Antiochus III has complete power over Phoenicia and Palestine. Jerusalem becomes an important fortress to maintain Seleucid control over this territory in the future. At the time, Jerusalem welcomes Antiochus III as their deliverer.

"He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him." (11:17)

In a forced treaty to subdue Egypt, Antiochus's daughter, Cleopatra I, becomes the wife of Ptolemy V (193 BC). However, she ends up loving her husband and supporting the Egyptian cause over the Syrians.

"¹⁸ Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. ¹⁹ After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more." (11:18-19)

Now Antiochus III turns to conquests in the Mediterranean, invading Greek towns in Asia Minor as well as Greece itself in 192 BC. However, this threatens the growing power of the Roman Republic. The Romans win the Battle of Thermopylae (191 BC), the Battle of Magnesia (190 BC), and achieve victories over the Seleucid navy. They force upon Antiochus III the

Treaty of Apamea (188 BC), whereby Antiochus III drops his claim to territory north and west of the Taurus Mountains in southern Asia Minor, has to surrender his war elephants, is limited to only 12 warships, and is forced to pay the costs of the war. In addition, he has to surrender 20 hostages -- one of whom is his younger son Antiochus (who later becomes Antiochus IV Epiphanes). Antiochus III is killed by an angry mob in 187 BC.

Okay, take a deep breath. I know this is overwhelming. But the point here is to illustrate how precisely the prophecy given in 536 BC comes to pass, as shown by the history of this later period. God knows the beginning from the end. Okay, let's continue.

The Tax Collector (11:20)

"His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle." (11:20)

Antiochus III's "successor" and older son is Seleucus IV Philopater (187-175 BC), who releases his brother Antiochus IV from being a hostage, exchanging his own son, Demetrius I Soter for Antiochus.

To pay the heavy annual tribute of 1,000 talents demanded by the Romans in the Treaty of Apamea (188 BC), Seleucus IV is hard pressed to find this kind of money and has exhausted the Syrian treasury. In response, he sent his prime minister Heliodorus (the "tax collector") who plunders the temple in Jerusalem (2 Maccabees 3:7-40).

Seleucus IV is assassinated by prime minister Heliodorus, and is succeeded by his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The Prince of the Covenant (11:21-24)

We've already outlined the events of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes in [Lesson 6A](#), on Daniel 8:8-13, so you might review that. Below I am comparing Daniel's vision in chapter 11 with what contemporary history tells us of Antiochus Epiphanes.

"He will be succeeded by a contemptible person^[299] who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue." (11:21)

Seleucus IV's rightful heir is his son, Demetrius I Soter, who is now a hostage in Rome. Instead of seeking his release (as Seleucus had done for him), Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) takes the throne for himself, with the fiction that he is serving as regent for Seleucus IV's infant son (also named Antiochus), who is murdered a few years later. Antiochus is not the

rightful heir to the kingdom ("given the honor of royalty"), but he takes the throne anyway.

"²² Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. ²³ After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. ²⁴ When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses -- but only for a time." (11:22-24)

In the Sixth Syrian War (170-168 BC), Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146 B.C.) of Egypt attacks Syria to regain possession of Phoenicia and Palestine in 169 BC with an "overwhelming army," but is defeated and Ptolemy VI is captured, his power destroyed. Ptolemy VI is sometimes thought to be the "prince of the covenant" who acts deceitfully because he has made an agreement with Antiochus to help him regain his throne, and then reneges on his agreement. (Others see the "prince of the covenant" as a reference to the murder of Onias III, the last legitimate high priest.) Antiochus plunders his richest provinces and distributes the plunder among his followers.

War between North and South (11:25-27)

The battle mentioned in verse 22 (when Ptolemy VI attacks Antiochus to begin the Sixth and final Syrian War, 170-168 BC) is spelled out in further detail.

"²⁵ With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. ²⁶ Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. ²⁷ The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time." (11:25-27)

Ptolemy VI (the king of the South) attacks Syria, but then isn't able to maintain his advantage. Antiochus meets with Ptolemy VI, and both give each other insincere promises. Antiochus agrees to help Ptolemy VI regain the throne of Egypt from his brother Ptolemy VII Euergetes (who had assumed the throne when Ptolemy VI had been a prisoner). This isn't altruism; Antiochus wants Syria to be able to exert better control of Egypt. But neither keep their promises.

Antiochus Invades Jerusalem (11:28)

"The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country." (11:28)

Here the "holy covenant" obviously refers to God's people and temple. As Antiochus returns home through Palestine with his army in 169 BC, he hears of a rebellion going on in Jerusalem (1 Maccabees 1:16-28; 2 Maccabees 5:1-11). He puts down the rebellion, massacres 80,000 men, women, and children (2 Maccabees 5:12-14), and loots the temple (2 Maccabees 5:15-21).

King of the North Shows Fury against the People of the Covenant (11:29-30)

In Antiochus's absence from Egypt, Ptolemy VI (whom he restored to power) has joined forces with his brother Ptolemy VII.

"²⁹ At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. ³⁰ Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart...." (11:29-30a)

In 168 BC Antiochus invades Egypt again. He captures Memphis and marches on to Alexandria. But then the "ships of the western coastlands," the Roman fleet, arrives in Alexandria, who have come to Alexandria at the request of the Ptolemies. The Roman legate C. Popilius Laenas draws a circle in the sand around Antiochus and gives him an ultimatum from the Roman Senate to answer before he steps outside the circle: Leave Egypt or face war from Rome. Rome now has the power to easily threaten the Seleucid empire all over the Mediterranean. This is the origin of the famous "draw a line in the sand" saying. Antiochus backs down and removes his armies from Egypt.

If you remember Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a man in Daniel 2:

"There will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron -- for iron breaks and smashes everything -- and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others." (2:40)

Rome doesn't figure much in Daniel's visions, but here is an appearance of the kingdom that begins to threaten the Greek kingdoms and will ultimately defeat them.

Antiochus Attacks Jerusalem (11:30b)

"Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant." (11:30b)

Antiochus is angry about his humiliation in Egypt, but feels he needs to strengthen the southern border of his kingdom against any attack from Egypt. To do this he must secure Jerusalem. When he learns that the high priest he has appointed has been deposed in a rebellion, in 167 BC he sends an attachment of troops who attack Jerusalem on the Sabbath when few Jews will fight. He slaughters most of the inhabitants, sacks the city, and sells the women and children into slavery (1 Maccabees 1:29-40; 2

Maccabees 5:24-26). He believes the Jews will betray him, so he shows favor to those who accept his policy of Hellenization, and attempts to destroy those who try to keep their traditional Jewish faith.

The Abomination of Desolation (11:31-32)

"³¹ His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. ³² With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him." (11:31-32)

To destroy the morale of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes desecrates the temple and sets up there an statue of Zeus -- "the abomination that causes desolation." The Jewish sacrificial system is disrupted. Circumcision of children is banned. The Gentiles now control the temple, and those Jews who go along with Antiochus's movement to Hellenize Palestine ("those who have violated the covenant") are flattered and shown favor. For more on "the abomination that causes desolation" see [Lesson 6A](#).

A Resistance Movement -- the Maccabees (11:33-35)

However, Antiochus's move to destroy Judaism meets resistance.

"³³ Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. ³⁴ When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. ³⁵ Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time." (11:33-35)

Teachers continue to teach the faith, even though they may face martyrdom. A priest named Mattathias, who lives in Modein, about 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem, resists. Three of his five sons become known as the Maccabees ("hammer") -- Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. In a series of amazing military victories against Antiochus's generals between 166 and 164 BC, they win independence for a portion of Judea, and rededicate the temple on December 14, 164 BC, an event celebrated by Jews to this day in Hanukkah (1 Maccabees 4:52). For the exciting story of this resistance movement, I recommend that you read the book of 1 Maccabees.

Verses 34-35 suggest that Jews who had sided with Antiochus switch sides out of expediency, when the Maccabees began to execute the traitors.

Reflecting

If you've gotten this far, you're probably overwhelmed by the level of detail, and the names and dates of how it all played out in the history of the next

several hundred years. Here are a couple of discussion questions that will help you reflect on the meaning of what you've read.

Endnotes

[291] The adjective in 10:3 is *hemdâ*, "pleasant, precious," from the root idea of "to desire." TWOT #582c.

[292] "Chrysolite" (NIV), "beryl" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is *tarshîsh*, "precious stone, perhaps yellow jasper" (TWOT #2546), "a precious stone, suggested chrysolite" (Holladay, p. 395). Chrysolite (from Greek *chrysolithos*, "yellow stone") referred to more than one type of mineral including topaz (see NEB uses below), yellow sapphire, yellow zircon, yellow garnet, and yellow-green olivine (R.G. Bullard, "Stones, Precious," ISBE 4:626).

[293] "Helpless" (NIV) is literally, "retained no strength" (NRSV, ESV, KJV).

[294] The adjective in 10:3 is *hemdâ*, "pleasant, precious," from the root idea of "to desire." TWOT #582c.

[295] "Resisted" (NIV), "opposed" (NRSV), "withstood" (ESV, KJV) is two words: *âmad*, "stand, remain, endure, etc.," and the preposition *neged*, "in front of, in sight of, opposite to" (BDB).

[296] "I was detained" (NIV), "I left him there" (NRSV), "I was left there" (ESV), "I remained there" (KJV) is the Niphal stem of *yâtar*, "remain over, leave." It refers to one portion of a quantity which has been divided (John E. Hartley, TWOT #936).

[297] "Fight" is *lâham*, "fight, do battle" (TWOT #1104).

[298] "Prepare for war" (NIV), "wage war" (NRSV, ESV), "shall be stirred up" (KJV) is *gârâ*, "stir up, be stirred up, contend, meddle, strive." Here "wage war" (NRSV, ESV) is better than "prepare for war" (NIV) (Bruce K. Waltke, TWOT #378); Miller, *Daniel*, in loc.

[299] "Contemptible person" (NIV, NRSV, ESV), "vile person" (KJV) is a participle of *bâzâ*, "to despise, disdain, hold in contempt," from the basic meaning of the root: "to accord little worth to something" (Bruce K. Waltke, TWOT #224).

9. Antichrist, Resurrection, and the Last Days (Daniel 11:36-12:13)

Thus far, there is general agreement that in Daniel 11, the Greek kings through Antiochus Epiphanes IV have been the focus of Daniel's prophecy. But there is disagreement about the individual described in 11:36-45. Yes, Antiochus declared himself the "manifest god," but he himself worshipped the pantheon of Greek gods, "the gods of his fathers." In fact, he seems to have been recognized for his "piety" by building temples and shrines to the Greek gods throughout his lands. Antiochus doesn't fit this description:

"He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all." (11:37)

The figure described in these verses goes substantially beyond Antiochus Epiphanes. Rather, he seems to be the Antichrist described in the New Testament who will come in the Last Days. Antiochus Epiphanes is certainly a *type* of the Antichrist who does God's people great harm, but the true Antichrist (the *antitype*) is much worse.

I must acknowledge that there is no break in the flow of the text between verses 35 and 36 that would suggest that a different king is now in view. Thus, it's important not to be dogmatic and intolerant of those who might see this passage differently than I do. Nevertheless, I'll be interpreting verses 36-39 as some future Antichrist figure, not Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the focus of the immediately preceding verses.

The Antichrist Exalts Himself against God in the Last Days (11:36-39)

Let's see what Daniel says about this king.

³⁶ The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. ³⁷ He will show no



Detail from Luca Signorelli, 'Sermon and Deeds of the Antichrist' (1499-1502), fresco, Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto, Italy.

regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. ³⁸ Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. ³⁹ He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price." (11:36-39)

As mentioned above, though Antiochus was arrogant and blasphemed the "God of gods," the God of the Jewish people (11:36), we know from history that Antiochus *did* worship the "gods of his fathers," the Greek gods. The phrase "the one desired by women" is difficult to interpret with any certainty.[\[300\]](#) The Antichrist figure indicated in verses 36-45 will both blaspheme the *true* God and exalt himself above *every* so-called god.

Rather than worship the "gods of his fathers," the Antichrist seems to make a god out of war ("fortresses") and wealth. He has military successes, and shows favor in terms of power and wealth to those who support him. Of course, making a god of war and wealth could describe many dictators over the centuries.

Several Scripture passages come to mind, the first one we saw previously in Daniel:

"He shall speak words against the Most High,
shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High,
and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law;
and they shall be given into his power for a time, two times, and half a time." (7:25)

Then from Isaiah, referring at least initially to the king of Babylon:

"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon;
I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High.'" (Isaiah 14:13-14)

The Apostle Paul associates this exaltation over God to the "man of lawlessness," or the Antichrist.

"Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Revelation also seems to refer to this Antichrist figure, who, in Revelation, goes under the name of "the beast that comes out of the sea."

"The beast [rising out of the sea] was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth

to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven." (Revelation 13:5-6)

This Antichrist seems to exercise complete authority for a short period of time, doing what he pleases and oppressing God's people. Then his end shall come.

Battle with the King of the South (11:40-45)

The battles referred to in verses 40-45 don't describe anything that we can identify from the history of Antiochus Epiphanes or his successors. We see the phrase, "at the time of the end" (11:40a). This seems to be a clear pointer to the End Times, the Last Days, just before God delivers his people. Here is Daniel's vision of the battles of these Last Days:

⁴⁰ At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. ⁴¹ He will also invade the **Beautiful Land**. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. ⁴² He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. ⁴³ He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. ⁴⁴ But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵ He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the **beautiful holy mountain**. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him." (11:40-45)

In the previous parts of the vision (verses 11-35) "the kings of the North" refer to the Seleucid kings, culminating in Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of God's people (11:28). In verses 40-45, I believe the pronouns "him" and "he" refer to "the king of the North," now this Antichrist figure, the antitype, of whom Antiochus Epiphanes is the type.

There have been many attempts to cast this prophecy in terms of present-day geo-politics. For example, some in our era see Russia as "the king of the North," while Christians in previous eras have cast the evil kingdom in terms of their most-feared world power.

Notice the nations named. "The Beautiful Land" (11:41a) refers to the Promised Land, while "the beautiful holy mountain" refers to Jerusalem. Edom, Moab, and Ammon are Judah's neighbors to the east and south (present-day Jordan). Egypt and Libya still exist today on the southern Mediterranean, while Nubia would refer to the territory of southern Egypt and northern Sudan.

Exactly what events are foretold by verses 40-45 are as yet unclear to us. The Book of Revelation describes these final battles of the forces of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet:

"... They go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.... Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called **Armageddon**." (Revelation 16:14, 16)

Armageddon refers to the battlefield near Har ("mountain") Megiddo, where many battles have been fought over the years (Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29-30). Ezekiel, too, prophesies final battles on the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 38:8, 21; 39:2, 4, 17).

Revelation 19 has a vision of a conflict between the King of kings riding a white horse, leading the armies of God:

"Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet...." (Revelation 19:19-20a)

Revelation 20 describes a final battle following the Millennium, or Thousand Year Reign of Christ.

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded **the camp of God's people, the city he loves**. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them." (Revelation 20:7-9)

There are some prophetic teachers who can tell you with "certainty" what these events refer to. I can't. But we do know that history, which Daniel saw glimpses of, and as seen by other prophets, is moving towards a final battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, and it will take place in Israel, at or near the holy city of Jerusalem.

Spiritual Warfare (12:1)

Daniel's vision shows us the spiritual roots of this war. Just as an angel with the archangel Michael's help engaged in combat with the "prince of Persia" (10:13), so now there is war in heavenly places as well as on earth.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered." (12:1)

The Book of Revelation gives us a symbolic vision of the spiritual battle raging in heavenly places that features the archangel Michael.

⁷ And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called

the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.'" (Revelation 12:7-10)

The Time of Distress (12:1)

The "time of distress" in 12:1 probably corresponds to the "Great Tribulation" that Jesus spoke of:

"For then there will be **great distress**, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22; Mark 13:19-20)

There is a reference to the "Great Tribulation" in Revelation as well.

"These are they who have come out of the **great tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14)

I won't explain with precision just how the Great Tribulation corresponds to the 3-1/2 years referred to in verse 7. I can't. But there is no lack of Bible teachers who claim to be able to.

"It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." (12:7)

That there will be a great persecution of God's people is quite clear, but the exact times and duration are not clear -- though we know that this persecution will be limited and will end with Christ's deliverance.

Resurrection of the Righteous and the Unrighteous (12:2-3)

Now we come to one of the clearest references in the Old Testament to the resurrection that will take place in the Last Days.

"² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (12:2-3)

Daniel sees a double resurrection -- not only of the righteous, but also of the wicked, just as Jesus does (John 5:28-29).

The righteous are referred to as "those who are wise" as in 11:33, 35. They will shine with God's glory eternally ("for ever and ever"). And they will be a powerful influence on others who will turn to God.

Development of a Doctrine of Resurrection

The Patriarchs believed that they would be "gathered to their fathers" in death (Genesis 49:29; Judges 2:10), but there wasn't widespread understanding of eternal life beyond the grave. For example, David wrote:

"No one remembers you when he is dead.
Who praises you from the grave [Hebrew *sheol*]?" (Psalm 6:5)[301]

However, God was revealing to his people an understanding of life beyond the grave, of eternal life, and of resurrection. We see hints of it here and there. In the Song of Hannah we read:

"The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up." (1 Samuel 2:6)

Job had a remarkable understanding of physical life after death.

"I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him with my own eyes -- I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27)

Isaiah saw some kind of future resurrection.

"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead." (Isaiah 26:19)

David also saw glimpses of resurrection.

"You will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay." (Psalm 16:10)

Ezekiel had a vision of dry bones that come together in life (Ezekiel 37:1-14). Hosea, too, saw this from afar.

"Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.
After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him." (Hosea 6:1-2, ESV)

However, Daniel has by far the clearest vision of resurrection in the Old Testament.

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake:
some to everlasting life,
others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2)

In the Apocrypha and other intertestamental writings we see a growing belief in resurrection.^[302] By Jesus' day, many Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day. The Pharisees dogmatically affirmed resurrection in opposition to the Sadducees, who emphatically denied that there was a resurrection to come. Jesus publicly took the Pharisees' position on the truth of the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-34; Luke 14:14). Jesus said:

"A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:28-29)

Indeed, Jesus affirmed that he personally would raise believers up on the Last Day (John 6:39-40). This expectation of the resurrection on the Last Day is the understanding of the early church as well (Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; etc.).

Seal Up the Words of the Scroll (12:4)

"But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." (12:4)

Daniel has seen visions of the End Time, but the words are "sealed" until the time of the end, when God will reveal their meaning. I think one of the reasons there is so much confusion about Daniel's visions is that God hasn't seen fit to reveal fully what they mean. Some of the words remain sealed to this day.

Time, Times, and Half a Time (12:5-7)

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.

⁶ One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, 'How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?' ⁷ The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, 'It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.'" (12:5-7)

Daniel asks "How long?" The "man clothed in linen" replies cryptically that the completion of these things will be "when the power of the holy people has been finally broken," and uses the indefinite "time, times, and half a time," which, when added together equals 3-1/2. We see this elsewhere in Daniel (7:25, and perhaps 8:14 and 12:11-12) as well as the Book of

Revelation (Revelation 11:2-3, 9; 12:6, 14; 13:5). This period seems to indicate the time that the people of God are oppressed by great tribulation.

I think that "when the power of the holy people has been finally broken" (12:7b) may correspond to the fate of the two prophets in Revelation, which I believe symbolize God's people present on the earth at that time.

"Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial."
(Revelation 11:8-9)

But all of a sudden they are raised from the dead and ascend to heaven.

"But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on." (Revelation 11:11-12)

When the time of the Antichrist ends, suddenly God's people, whose power seemed to have been broken, will be restored, accompanied by resurrection.

Sealed until the End (12:8-10)

Daniel still can't make sense of what he has seen.

⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?'

⁹ He replied, 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.'" (12:8-10)

Daniel has prophesied this, yet he doesn't understand fully. We shouldn't be surprised if we don't yet fully understand either.

Notice the sentence:

"Many will be purified, made spotless and refined,
but the wicked will continue to be wicked." (12:10a)

This is echoed in Revelation:

"Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong;
let him who is vile continue to be vile;
let him who does right continue to do right;
and let him who is holy continue to be holy." (Revelation 22:11)

It is amazing that at the same time believers grow and mature and begin to walk in paths of righteousness, that the unbelievers continue on in their sin as if nothing has changed:

"Evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:12-13)

Why? Because when they reject God's mercy and revelation, he has "given them over" to their sins and the consequences of their sins (Romans 1:24-27).

"So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices." (Psalm 81:12)

"They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11)

As much as it hurts us to say it, not all will be saved. There is a terrible consequence for "suppressing the truth" (Romans 1:18), for rejecting the truth that will set you free (John 8:32). But for the believers, this time of persecution will be a refining experience.

1,290 and 1,335 Days (12:11-12)

Now we come to a passage that isn't clear to us.

¹¹ From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days." (12:11-12)

If you calculate using 30-day months, then 3-1/2 years is 1260 days or 42 months (Revelation 11:3). However, the period in verses 11 and 12 seems to be slightly longer.

If you calculate with 365-day years (which were used by the Jews, adding days to their lunar months to conform to the solar year), then the periods are 3.53 years and 3.66 years respectively. I don't know of anyone who has come up with a satisfactory explanation of the days here, though the reference seems to be to the 3-1/2 year period we've seen previously (9:27) when Antiochus Epiphanes -- and later, the Antichrist -- appear to be in full control, at least from an earthly perspective.

Daniel Rises to Receive His Inheritance (12:13)

"As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." (12:13)

Daniel is an old man when he receives this final vision that takes such a physical and mental toll on him (10:8-9, 16-17). Now the vision is at an end and Daniel is told to "seal up the vision" (12:4), for it is of future things.

God speaks of Daniel's immediate future -- rest -- probably the rest of death. But Daniel's rest comes with the promise of resurrection and a future inheritance[303] that God has predetermined. To that reward, Daniel's body

will "rise," [304] along with us, on that final Day when Christ appears in victory and judgment to vindicate his people forever. This is "the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Come soon, Lord Jesus!

End Notes

[300] Those who see Antiochus referred in these verses sometimes interpret the "one desired by women" as the god Tammuz-Adonis with his female devotees (cf. Ezekiel 8:14-15), though we have no record that Antiochus opposed this cult.

[301] Similar thoughts are found in Psalm 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18.

[302] For example, 2 Maccabees 7:9, 11, 14; 12:43-45. N.T. Wright traces the history of belief in resurrection in *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Fortress, 2003), pp. 108-128. However, his views are affected by his late date for the writing of Daniel, so I find part of his survey unconvincing.

[303] "Allotted inheritance" (NIV), "reward" (NRSV), "allotted place" (ESV), "allotted portion" (NASB), "lot" (KJV) is *gôrāl*, "lot, portion." It is the lot that is cast before the Lord to determine a decision or recompense. After the Exodus, the land to be assigned to each tribe was determined by casting lots (Joshua 8:6-28). "By metonymy the word is used for the portion of land assigned to a tribe or family and therefore becomes an equivalent for *naḥāiâ* 'inheritance,' *ḥeleq* 'portion,' *yerūshshâ* 'possession,' *ʾăḥūzzâ*, "possession," etc." (Earl S. Kalland, TWOT #381a).

[304] "Rise" (NIV, NRSV), "stand" (ESV, KJV) is the Qal imperfect of *ʾamad*, used extensively in the Old Testament of the physical act of standing (Ronald B. Allen, TWOT #1637).

Appendix 1. The Medo-Persian Empire

As we survey the rise and fall of empires, we often overlook the Median Empire, sometimes lumping it together as the Medo-Persian Empire. But in interpreting the four empires indicated by the beasts in chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel, it's important to at least consider if the Median Empire is one of these empires referred to in the visions.



The Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great ([Larger image](#)).

The Median Empire was certainly massive enough to be considered a major empire on the world stage. While the Neo-Babylonian Empire consisted of what we call the Fertile Crescent -- along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean -- the Median Empire extended north to the Black and Caspian Seas, as far east as the Indus River and as far west as part of Asia Minor.

As the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911 to 609 BC) went into decline, vassal states such as Media and Babylon, stopped paying tribute to the Assyrians, and in 612 BC, the Medes and their allies captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Free of Assyrian domination, the Medes grew their empire from their capital in Ecbatana, and extended it from northeastern Iran to the Halys River (Kizilirmak River) in Asia Minor (present-day north-central Turkey). Media was considered one of four major powers of the ancient Near East, along with Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt.

According to the kings lists compiled from Herodotus and the Babylonian Chronicle (cuneiform tablets), Cyaxares reigned 624-585 BC. He developed the united Median state by bringing together the Iranian tribes and conquering territory. He formed an alliance with Neo-Babylonia against the Assyrians, sealed by the marriage of his daughter to Nebuchadnezzar II. The Medes were instrumental, along with Babylon and allies, for the fall of the Assyrian Empire. Cyaxares was followed by his son Astyages as King of the Medes, reigning from 585 to 549 BC.

During this time the Persians were one of six Iranian tribes that made up the united Median state (others included the Medes, Scythians, and Parthians). In 553 BC, Cyrus the Great,

King of Persia, rebelled against his grandfather, Astyages, King of the Medes, and won a decisive victory over him in 550 BC. After this, the Medes were now subject to their close kin, the Persians, who now ruled over -- and expanded -- the Medo-Persian Empire. When Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, the Medes and the Persians took over the territory of Neo-Babylonia and ruled over the largest empire so far known in the West.

I conclude that Media was a great empire in itself. However, since Media is treated together with the Persians as "the kings of Media and Persia" in the vision of the two-horned ram in Daniel 8:20, Medo-Persia is probably to be considered the third beast or kingdom in chapters 2 and 7.

Appendix 2. The Case for a Sixth Century Dating of Daniel

Any study of the dating of the Book of Daniel must begin with the dates imbedded within the text. Nearly every chapter is tied to some historical event, beginning in 605 BC when Daniel and his friends were deported from Jerusalem to Babylon to serve in the court of Nebuchadnezzar the Great. In addition to the "court stories" in chapters 1-6, Daniel's visions are dated as follows:



James J. Tissot, 'By the Waters of Babylon' (1896-1903), The Jewish Museum, New York. Notice the instruments hanging from the trees. Tissot illustrates Psalm 137:1-2: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps...."

- Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, "in the second year of his reign," about 603 BC (2:1).
- Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts, "in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon," about 553 BC (7:1).
- Daniel's Vision of a Ram and a Goat, "in the third year of King Belshazzar's reign," about 550 BC (8:1).
- Daniel's Prayer of Intercession and Vision of the Seventy Weeks, "in the first year of Darius son of Xerxes," about 539 BC, (9:1).
- Daniel's Vision of the Kings of the North and South, "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia," about 536 BC (10:1).

Based on the internal dating, Daniel has been dated in the mid-sixth century BC by both Jews and Christians from the earliest times. The only exception to this was a pagan Neoplatonic philosopher named Porphyry of Tyre (c. 234-305 AD), who, in a 15-volume work *Against the Christians*, tried to discredit Jewish and Christian prophecy by claiming that Daniel's visions were written by "someone who lived in Judea at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and so instead of predicting the future, this writer describes what

has already happened."[\[305\]](#) This was refuted by Jerome in his *Commentary on Daniel* (407 AD) and there it lay for more than a thousand years.

During the Enlightenment, when liberal scholars began to question the dating and authorship of dozens of Old and New Testament books, that began to change. Since the early 1800s, Porphyry's position became the basis of the German literary-critical movement's dating, spreading the theory far and wide, so that by the mid-twentieth century this was the dominant scholarly position. They didn't believe that accurate prophecy of the future was possible. Their view was that the Hebrew prophets were "forthtellers" not "foretellers" -- though a careful study of the prophets shows that this is a clear overstatement. However, it is only fair to say that some respected evangelical scholars, such as Goldingay,[\[306\]](#) F.F. Bruce,[\[307\]](#) and N.T. Wright,[\[308\]](#) also hold to a late dating.

The late-dating of Daniel is primarily based on claims that:

1. Daniel contains historical inaccuracies concerning sixth century kings and events.
2. Daniel contains Greek words that wouldn't have been possible if it had been written in the sixth century.
3. Daniel's predictions of the future are "too accurate" to be authentic prophecy. Therefore, they must have been written after the fact.
4. Apocalyptic literature didn't flourish until after 200 BC.

Questions of History Accuracy

Those who hold a late date for the Book of Daniel question the historical accuracy of several passages in Daniel that purport to be from the sixth century. We'll look at them one by one.

1. The siege of Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim (1:1)

The very first verse in Daniel reads:

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

This is disputed on two grounds: (1) that Nebuchadnezzar's assault on Jerusalem took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (Jeremiah 46:2), not in the third year (Daniel 1:1); and (2) that Nebuchadnezzar didn't actually *besiege* Jerusalem.

The reason for the discrepancy between the third and fourth year is a difference in reckoning systems, pure and simple. Palestinian and Egyptian reckoning (most common in the Old Testament) counts the months between a king's accession and the new year as a *complete* year. The Babylonians, however, began to count a king's reign from the first new year *after* accession. Since the Book of Daniel is written from the point of view of a court officer in Babylon, using the Babylonian system makes good sense. In fact, it is an argument for the early dating of Daniel.

Late-daters dispute that Nebuchadnezzar actually *besieged* Jerusalem. The Hebrew verb is *šûr*. The root means "to make secure a valuable object, such as money." Applied to military action it means "to relentlessly attack an opponent's stronghold."[\[309\]](#) Though 2 Kings doesn't specifically use the term "besiege," we read that Nebuchadnezzar "came up," forcing Jehoiakim to be his vassal (2 Kings 24:1; 2 Chronicles 36:6). Whether the Babylonian army entered into a full siege Jerusalem in 605 BC, or just the presence of troops in the area caused enough of a threat, the bottom line is that Jerusalem capitulated, and at one point Jehoiakim was forced to be a vassal of Babylon.

2. King Belshazzar

Some later-daters complain that while Belshazzar is called "king" in Daniel 5:1, he wasn't the king. Technically, Belshazzar's father Nabonidus (556-539 BC) was king and Belshazzar served as co-regent with his father about 553-539 BC. Nevertheless, Belshazzar functioned as king in Babylon, since Nabonidus was engaged in war and other pursuits far from the capital for nearly a full decade. To see a late date for Daniel based on this point is weak.

3. Darius the Mede (5:30; 6:28)

Darius the Mede who appears as the king of Babylon under the Persians (5:30; 6:28) is unknown to history outside of Daniel. Two alternative explanations of the identity of Darius the Mede have been suggested. (1) D.J. Wiseman argues that Darius the Mede was merely an alternative title for Cyrus the Persian. In this case, 6:28 would be translated (legitimately): "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, namely the reign of Cyrus the Persian."[\[310\]](#) I don't find this compelling.

Whitcomb argues that Darius the Mede was in fact Gubaru, the governor of Babylon and the region Beyond the River (Abar-nahara), exercising virtually royal powers in Babylon and hence not improperly called "king."[\[311\]](#) I think

this is more likely. We still don't know anything about this Darius the Mede from contemporary documents.

4. Use of the Term 'Chaldean'

Some have questioned the use of the word "Chaldean" in Daniel. The Aramaic word is *kaśdîm*. It can be translated as either "Chaldean" by race, or as "learned," of the class of Magi (a technical term derived from the reputation of the Chaldean wise men), depending upon the context.^[312] In Daniel's day, Babylon was ruled by leaders drawn from the clan of the Chaldeans who lived in the area around Babylon. To claim that Daniel is late based on its use of this word is weak.

Questions of Language

The late date of Daniel was supported by scholars who claimed that the Aramaic sections in Daniel belonged to a later period. However, more recent studies have found that the Aramaic used in Daniel was used in the courts and chancelleries from the seventh century BC on, and tends to support an early date for Daniel.^[313]

The presence of Persian and Greek loanwords in the text of Daniel, primarily in the words for musical instruments, was long taken as a proof that Daniel was written in the Greek period after Alexander's conquests. It is now generally recognized that there were many earlier contacts with the Greeks and Persians, including Greek colonies in Egypt in the mid-seventh century BC and Greek mercenary troops in the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC. Also, the names of musical instruments could well be found along with the instruments at the Persian court.^[314] Today, linguistic arguments for a late date of Daniel are considered quite weak.

The Rise of Apocalyptic Literature

One argument for a late date comes from the observation that apocalyptic literature seems to have been popular between 200 BC and 100 AD. However, most apocalyptic literature seems to copy the style of Daniel, as one of the earliest examples of apocalyptic. If the *copies* occur between 200 BC and 100 AD, the *prototype* doesn't have to be from the same period.

Daniel seems to have been widely accepted as authoritative Scripture from the second century BC onwards.^[315] Daniel was a popular book in the Qumran community, with eight fragments of the Hebrew text found at Qumran. The oldest of these (4QDan^c; 4Q114) seems to have been copied in the late second century BC, only a half century after the Maccabean

period.^[316] If Daniel had been written in the Maccabean period, fifty years just isn't enough time for it to have been considered canonical, authoritative Scripture.

Pseudonymous Writings

Those who contend for a late date of Daniel argue that it is an example of the pseudonymous quasi-prophecy that is a common feature of Jewish apocalyptic literature of the period.^[317] They claim that everyone of the time knew that the attributed authors weren't the real authors. Longman disagrees, and I share his concerns.

"For this type of literature to work -- that is, if it is to achieve its intended effect on an audience -- they cannot know that it is quasi-prophecy. In order to build up the reader's confidence that God controls history and that he is sovereign over the future, the reader must believe that the prophecy is precisely that."^[318]

When a book gives in the text specific dates for its composition, to say that it was written hundreds of years later implies an intent to deceive the readers that the prophecy was actually written by the prophet Daniel. To make Daniel a deception doesn't do justice to its widespread use as authentic Scripture by Jesus, the apostles, and the early church. I don't think you can get around that.

In conclusion, despite arguments to the contrary, I believe that an excellent case can be made for a sixth century dating of the Book of Daniel. My conclusion is that the Book of Daniel seems to have been written in Babylon by Daniel near the end of his life, about 530 BC -- or compiled in Babylon by his disciples from Daniel's writings shortly thereafter.

Endnotes

^[305] Summarized by Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 35, translated by Gleason Archer (1958).

^[306] Goldingay, *Daniel*, pp. 321-329.

^[307] F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), pp. 67-74.

^[308] N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Fortress, 2003), pp. 108-128.

^[309] *Şûr*, TWOT #1898.

^[310] D.J.A. Clines, "Darius," ISBE 1:867.

^[311] D.J.A. Clines, "Darius," ISBE 1:867. This Gubaru is not to be confused with Ugbaru [Gobryas], the governor of Gutium who captured Babylon for Cyrus but died three weeks later.

^[312] *Kašdîm*, BDB 109, 2.

^[313] Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 1123-1125.

^[314] See Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 126-127; TWOT #2887.

^[315] There is an apparent borrowing of Daniel 7:9-10 in the pseudepigraphic 1 Enoch 14:18-22, which was written prior to 150 BC.

^[316] Eugene Ulrich, "Daniel Manuscripts from Qumran. Part 1: A Preliminary Edition of 4 QDan^a," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 268 (November, 1987), pp. 17-37.

[317] E.C. Lucas ("Daniel: Book of," DOTP, p. 120) writes, "Pseudonymous quasi-prophecy is a common feature of Jewish apocalypses. We should not reject it as an unworthy literary form simply because we do not understand the psychology of both author and readers involved in its use."

[318] Longman, *Daniel*, p. 272. E.C. Lucas ("Daniel: Book of," DOTP, p. 121) asserts, "Attributing the visions to Daniel was not an attempt to deceive people; it was an expression of the group's sense of solidarity and continuity with their past traditions." In my opinion, Lucas's rationalization is unsupportable.

Appendix 3. Important Dates for the Book of Daniel

612 BC	Fall of Nineveh. Effective end of Assyria.
609	Reforming King Josiah of Judah killed by Egyptian forces under Pharaoh Neco (610-595 BC) at the Battle of Megiddo.
609- 598	Reign of <u>Jehoiakim</u> , placed on the throne of Judah by Pharaoh Neco. (Jehoiakim succeeded <u>Jehoahaz</u> who had replaced Josiah, but Jehoahaz reigned only 3 months; Kings 23:34; 2 Chronicles 36:4).
Babylon	
605	Battle of Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon defeats the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt under Pharaoh Neco, signaling the end of Assyrian might and Egyptian intervention. Nebuchadnezzar II reigns (605-562). First wave of exiles (a small group of hostages) deported from Judah to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends (1:1). Jehoiakim began giving tribute to Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. The Babylonians invade Syria in 604, Ashkelon in 603, and clash with Pharaoh Neco on the borders of Egypt in 601.
597	Jehoiachin becomes king of Judah, reigns for three months (2 Kings 24:8-17), until Jerusalem is besieged and surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiachin is deported and his uncle Zedekiah is made king (2 Kings 24:18). City is subjugated but not yet destroyed. Second group of exiles , a massive group, is deported to Babylon.
589	Zedekiah rebels against Babylon and forms an alliance with Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt (589-570 BC; 2 Chronicles 36:13; 2 Kings 24:20; Ezekiel 17:11-21).
587	Nebuchadnezzar returns, lays siege to Jerusalem for two years until the food supply runs out. Nebuchadnezzar executes Zedekiah's sons, deports Zedekiah and imprisons him, destroys the city, and the Third and final group of exiles is deported to Babylon July/August 587 BC. The Kingdom of Judah ceases to exist (2 Kings 25).
563- 560	Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach, 2 Kings 25:27-30) is king of Babylon. Releases Jehoiachin in 562 after 37 years in prison. Jehoiachin is honored at the king's table.
560- 556	Neriglissar, son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar.
556	Labashi-Marduk.
556- 539	Nabonidus is the last king. His son Belshazzar is co-regent (553-539) reigns in Babylon while Nabonidus is on journeys and at foreign battles.
539	Fall of Babylon to Cyrus II.

Persia	559 to 530	Cyrus II ("the Great") reigns, founder of the Medo-Persian Empire (Achaemenid dynasty).
	538	Cyrus allows the first wave of Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2-4).
	537-520	Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:1; Haggai 2:18).
	530-522	Cambyses (alluded to in Daniel 11:12).
	522-486	Darius I Hystaspes "the Great" (Ezra 5:5 ?).
	486-465/4	Xerxes I (King Ahasuerus; Ezra 4:6). His second queen was Esther. He died by the hand of an assassin. Built up Susa and Persepolis.
	464-423	Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Opponents of the Jews write Artaxerxes to try to stop construction of the walls (Ezra 4). Ezra receives a letter from the king authorizing him to take money and people to Jerusalem (Ezra 7). Nehemiah served as his cupbearer, and in Nov/Dec 445 BC goes to Jerusalem to repair its walls (Nehemiah 1:1).
	423-404	Darius II. Allows construction of Jerusalem to continue (Ezra 5-6 ?).
	404-359	Artaxerxes II. Note: some see Ezra during the reign of Artaxerxes II rather than I.
	338-336	Arses
	336-331	Darius III
Greece	334-331	Conquests of Alexander ("the Great") of Macedon (331-323) (Daniel 8:5, 21 ?). He Hellenized the lands he conquered, spreading Greek language and culture, which paved the way for the Gospel.
	323	Death of Alexander, empire divided into four areas, of which the Egyptian and the Syrian become predominant.

EGYPT (Ptolemies)	SYRIA (Seleucids)
323-285 BC Ptolemy I	312-281 BC Seleucus I
285-245 Ptolemy II	281-260 Antiochus I
247-221 Ptolemy III	260-246 Antiochus II
221-203 Ptolemy IV	245-223 Seleucus II and III
203-181 Ptolemy V	222-187 Antiochus III ('the Great')
198 Syria took over Palestine from Egypt	187-175 Seleucus IV
	175-164 Antiochus IV ("Epiphanes")
ROME The rising power	168 Antiochus expelled from Egypt by Roman consul (11:30).
	167 Dec 25: erection of Greek altar in the Jerusalem temple.
	166-160 Judas Maccabeus. Rebelled against Antiochus, rebuilt and rededicated the temple (166-164).
	160-143 Jonathan Maccabeus

Table of dates, adapted from Baldwin, *Daniel*, p. 73.

Synopsis of the Six Syrian Wars

Syrian War 1 (274-271 BC). Ptolemy II vs. Antiochus I. Egypt extends territory into Asia Minor.

Syrian War 2 (260-253 BC). Antiochus II vs. Ptolemy II. Syria reduces Egypt's hold on Asia Minor.

Syrian War 3 (246-241 BC). Ptolemy III vs. Seleucus II. Egypt wins major victories in Asia Minor and Syria. Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt at the height of its power.

Syrian War 4 (219-217 BC). Antiochus III vs. Ptolemy IV. Syria regains territory in Syria and Phoenicia, but in counterattack, Egypt retains control over part of Syria.

Syrian War 5 (202-195 BC). Antiochus III vs. Ptolemy V (a child king). Rome prevents invasion of Egypt, but Syria wins back territory in Syria and other coastal strongholds.

Syrian War 6 (170-168 BC). Antiochus IV Epiphanes invades Egypt, but withdraws at the demand of Roman emissary Gaius Popilius Laenas.

Appendix 4. The Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles

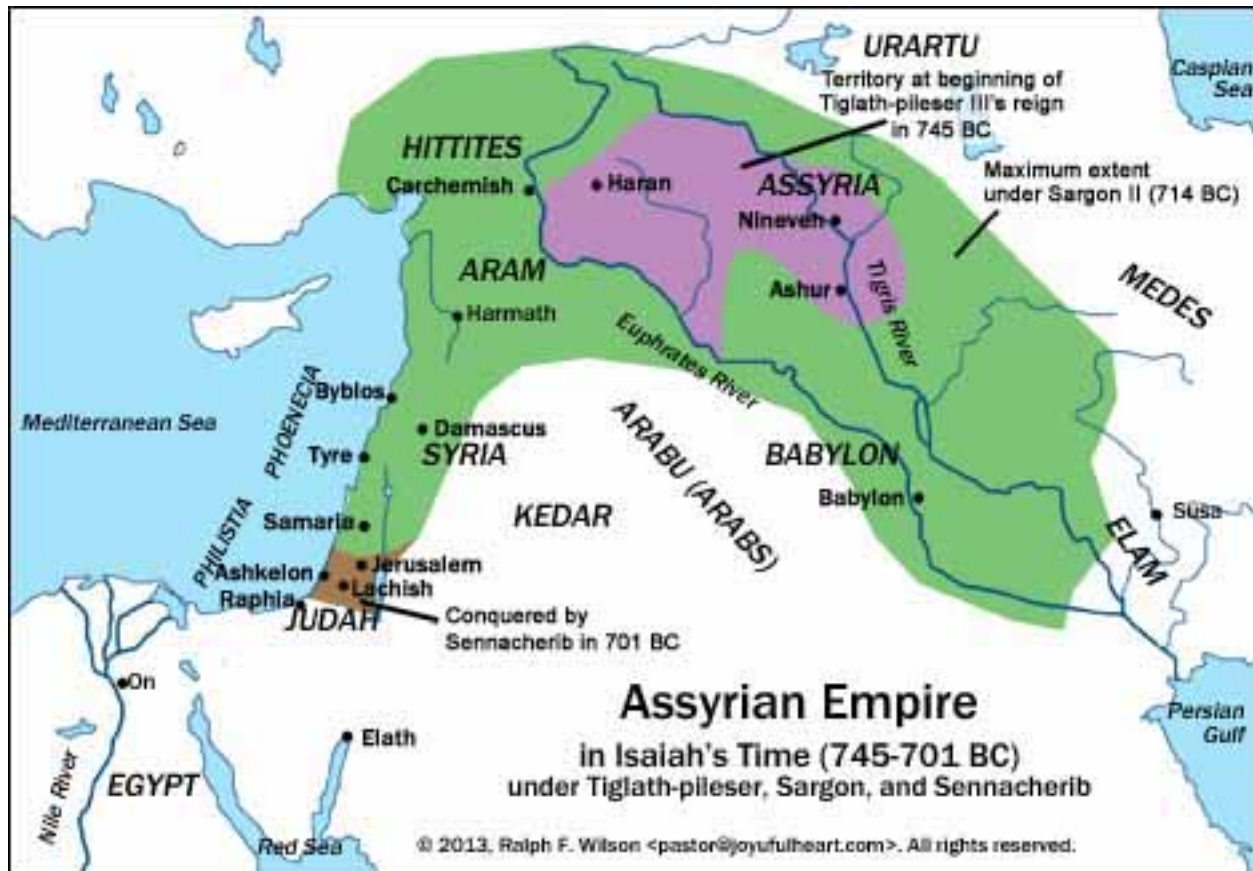
It will help you to understand the historical background of the Exile that so radically shaped the history and character of the people of Israel.

In order to subdue the rebellious peoples of its growing empire, the Assyrians -- and the Babylonians after them -- had a policy of deporting the leaders and artisans from a conquered country, leaving only the poorest. These were often replaced by conquered peoples from other lands (2 Kings 17:24).



James J. Tissot, 'The Flight of the Prisoners' (c. 1896-1902), gouache on board, 8 15/16 x 11 5/8 in, in the Jewish Museum, New York.

The Assyrian Deportations



Assyrian Empire in Isaiah's Time (745-701 BC) ([larger image](#))

When Assyria was in its ascendance under Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 BC), it conquered increasing amounts of the Northern Kingdom, exiling peoples from the area around and north of Galilee in about 730 BC (2 Kings 16:29). A few years later in 720 BC, Tiglath Pileser's successor, Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC), after a three year siege, took the rebellious capital city of Samaria and deported its people to Gozan, on the Harbor River, and in towns belonging to the Medes (2 Kings 17:6).

Judah, too, was threatened by this Assyrian resurgence. In 701, and perhaps again in 688/87 BC, Sennacherib sent forces into Palestine, attacking all the fortified cities of Judah and took them all except for Jerusalem, which was spared (2 Kings 18-19).[\[319\]](#)

Later in the fifth century BC, pressures on Assyria from within Mesopotamia caused the Assyrians to be less involved in Palestine. This left Josiah, king of Judah, able to institute considerable religious reform without interference. Nineveh, capital of Assyria, fell to the Babylonians and their allies in 612 BC.

Babylon Exile

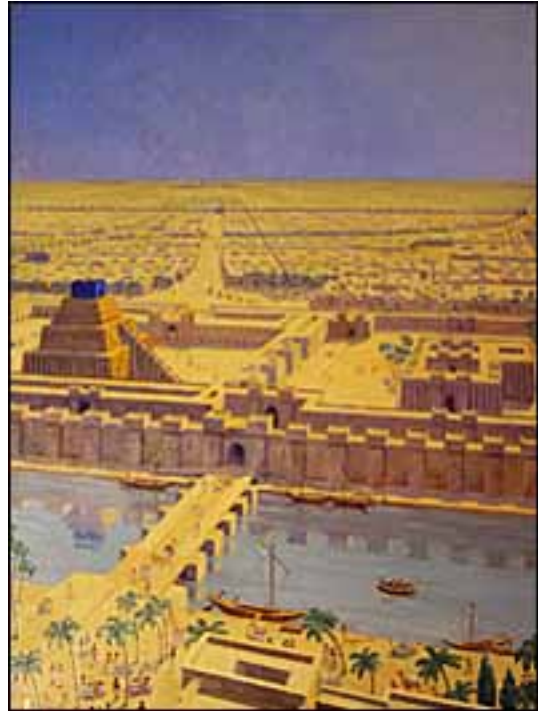


Neo-Babylonian Empire (625-539 BC) ([larger image](#))

The King of Babylon who ended three centuries of vassalage to Assyria was Nabopolassar (626-605 BC), Nebuchadnezzar's father. Nabopolassar sent his son Nebuchadnezzar west with a large army to end the influence of Egypt over the lands of Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia. Egypt had allied with Assyria, now in severe decline, having moved their capital from Nineveh to Harran, and then to Carchemish.

At the Battle of Carchemish in 609 BC, the Egyptians and their allies were soundly defeated (Jeremiah 46:2; 2 Chronicles 35:20). Assyria soon ceased to exist. The Babylonians wasted no time in sending the armies of Babylon through Phoenicia, Philistia, and into Judah, which had formerly been under Egyptian control. In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) threatened Jerusalem, and exiled to Babylon some of the city's elite and royal families as hostages, including Daniel and his friends, in the first exile. At that time, King Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) became a vassal of Babylon.

Three years later, however, Jehoiakim sensed a weakness in Babylon and rebelled. By the time he died, Babylon was on the march against Jerusalem to put down the rebellion. Jehoiakim's successor Jehoiachin (598 BC) reigned for three months until Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and at its surrender looted the temple and took many people into exile to Babylon, the second of three exiles. Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah (598-587 BC), on the throne in his place. When Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem for two years, finally breaking through and destroying the temple and the city, and breaking down the walls. At this time he took to Babylon the remaining articles for service in the temple, and in 587 BC, in the third and final exile, sent those remaining to Babylon. Only a few remained in the land.



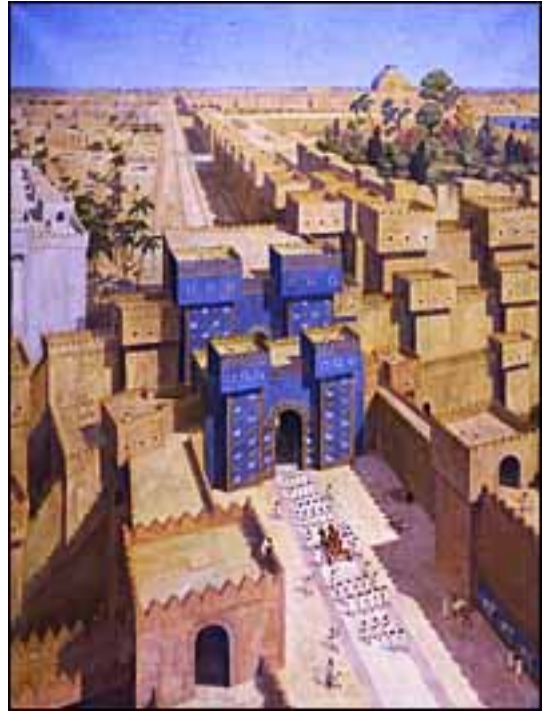
Maurice Bardin (1936), 'View of the City of Babylon' (1936), in the period of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BC), with the Euphrates, Esagila (left), and the Marduk temple (right) in the foreground. following Eckhard Unger's reconstruction. Oil on canvas, 4' x 3', Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

The Medes and Persians and a Return from Exile

Jeremiah had prophesied:

"This is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.'" (Jeremiah 29:10)

If you count from the first exile in 605 BC, this 70 years was up just about the time that Cyrus II, King of the Medes and Persians, conquered Babylon (539 BC), and subsequently decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1). Under Zerubbabel (Jehoiachin's eldest son) and the Prophet Haggai, the temple was rebuilt about 520-515 BC. The city walls, however, were still in disrepair, leaving the Jews weak and subject to their enemies. Later, Ezra (about 458 BC) and Nehemiah (about 445 BC) travelled to Jerusalem to regularize temple worship and to complete the building of the walls.



Maurice Bardin, "City of Babylon" (1936), showing the Ishtar Gate, oil, after watercolor by Herbert Anger (1931); Oriental Museum, University of Chicago.

Endnote

[319] Probably, many Judeans were deported at this time, though the Old Testament is silent on the matter. Accounts by Sennacherib claim 200,000 people were deported from the region, including Philistia, Tyre, and Sidon.

References and Abbreviations

- Baldwin Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*(Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; InterVarsity Press, 1972)
- BDAG *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, (Third Edition; based on previous English editions by W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker; University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000)
- BDB Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (eds.), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)
- DOTP Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (InterVarsity Press, 2012)
- Driver S.R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge, 1900)
- ESV English Standard Version (Crossway, 2001)
- Green, *Luke* Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Eerdmans, 1997)
- Grudem Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1994, 2000)
- Harrison, *IOTR*.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969)
- Holladay William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, based on the Lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988)
- ISBE Geoffrey W. Bromiley (general editor), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Eerdmans, 1979-1988; fully revised from the 1915 edition)
- Keil Carl Friedrich Keil (M.G. Easton, translator), *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, in C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (original edition 1864-1892; Hendrickson, Kindle version)

Kitchen	K.A. Kitchen, <i>On the Reliability of the Old Testament</i> (Eerdmans, 2003)
KJV	King James Version (Authorized Version, 1611)
Longman	Tremper Longman III, <i>The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel</i> (Zondervan, 1999)
Lucas	Ernest C. Lucas, "Daniel: Book of," DOPT, pp. 110-123
Miller	Stephen B. Miller, <i>Daniel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture</i> (The New American Commentary, vol. 18; Holman Reference, 1994)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (The Lockman Foundation, 1960-1988)
NIV	New International Version (International Bible Society, 1973, 1978)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1985)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, 1989)
TDNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (editors), Geoffrey W. Bromiley (translator and editor), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (Eerdmans, 1964-1976; translated from <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , ten volume edition)
TWOT	R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, (editors), <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (2 volumes, Moody Press, 1980)
Walvoord	John F. Walvoord, <i>Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation</i> (Moody Press, 1971)
Young	Edward J. Young, <i>The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary</i> (Eerdmans, 1949, reprinted 1980)

16. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:20-27)
17. The Kings of the North and the South (Daniel 10:1-11:35)
18. Antichrist, Resurrection, and the Last Days (Daniel 11:36-12:13)

You can study these lessons online, with a small group or class, or as the basis of your preaching or teaching. Some lessons are relatively short and easy to comprehend. Others are long and may leave you overwhelmed. Some will be immediately applicable to your life in a culture that is foreign to the values and allegiance of Jesus' kingdom. Others will find their primary application only in the Last Days, as God brings together all these strains of prophecy in a relatively short period of time.

Studying Daniel is worth your time and will make you a better disciple. I'll count it a privilege to have you study along with me.