

# The Most High Is Ruler Over The Realm Of Mankind

a study of Daniel

by Joshua Creel





## Introduction

### **“The Most High Rules Over The Realm Of Mankind”**

The 4th chapter of Daniel records how Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, boasted of his many achievements. And there was much he could boast of for he had completed the overthrow of Assyria that his father had begun, fashioning a Babylonian empire that extended throughout the Fertile Crescent. And to top it off, he had fashioned his capital city into one of the marvels of the ancient world. “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Daniel 4.30). But the text goes on to state how as soon as Nebuchadnezzar made this boast, he was humbled by Jehovah God and became like one of the beasts of the earth (vss. 31-33). Why was the great king of Babylon humbled in such a way? So that he would “recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” (Daniel 4.32).



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That is the point of the book of Daniel, to show that Jehovah rules over mankind. Interestingly, the idolatry of the Babylonian and then Persian kings is not directly challenged (for the most part), yet the book makes a point of referring to God as “the Most High” (see Daniel 3.26; 4.2,17,24,25,32,34; 5.18,21; 7.25). The theme of God’s supremacy and control is found throughout the narratives of chapters 1-6 as we see God’s faithful ones (Daniel and his three companions) exalted and rescued because Jehovah is greater than world rulers and their gods. It is also found throughout the visions of chapters 7-12 where Daniel is shown just how much upheaval the world would experience with the rise and fall of various empires and the tribulation God’s chosen people would experience. Yet, God’s supremacy is still at the forefront because not only does He know the future, He controls the future to bring about the salvation of all His people.

## Date of the book

The book of Daniel claims to be written by a Jewish man named Daniel who was carried into captivity by the Babylonians in 605 BC and would serve Babylonian and Persian rulers until around 535 BC. Note how the author uses first person often in the book (Daniel 7.2,4,6,28; 8.1,15; 9.2; 10.2). Yet, critics have long advocated that the book was written in the 2nd century BC by a contemporary of the Maccabees. Others opt for a hybrid approach, conceding that chapters 1-6 could have been written in the 6th century, but maintaining that chapters 7-12 were written in the 2nd century. However, the evidence favors the “traditional” view that the entirety of the book was written by Daniel in the 6th century (just as it claims). Consider the following:

### ***Daniel's accuracy as a historian***

- Nebuchadnezzar is able to change Babylonian law at will (2.12,46) but Darius is unable to change laws of the Medes-Persians (6.8,12,15).
- Babylonians used fire for capital punishment (3.11) and the Persians used the lion's den (6.7). Fire was sacred to the Persians and would not be used as a means of punishment (Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 447).
- Existence of Belshazzar - If Daniel wrote in the second century BC, he knew something no other historian at that time knew.

**Josephus** shows extensive knowledge of the book and attributes it to a 6th century author (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 10, chapters 10-11).

### Evidence from **Qumran**

- At least 17 fragments of Daniel have been found at Qumran. They date to about 120 BC.
- Manuscript evidence of Chronicles and Psalms at Qumran have convinced scholars that those works had to be written much earlier than the 2nd century, otherwise they would not have been accepted as Scripture by the Qumran community.
- Yet, the same consideration is not extended to Daniel. To do so would allow for predictive prophecy, something the critics will not allow.

### ***Language***

- “There are 15-20 Persian words used throughout the book of Daniel. The Persian words are Old Persian and some of the terms did not occur after 330 BC (Baldwin, 33). Many of the Persian terms are administrative and some of them were not understood by the Greek translators (Collins, 18-19) In LXX the translations of these words ‘are hopelessly inexact-mere guesswork’ shows words were so ancient that their meaning was lost by then (Miller, 28).” (Taken from Peeler class notes)

Daniel is **mentioned by a contemporary prophet** (Ezekiel 14.14,20; 28.3).

Daniel is **described as a prophet by Jesus** (Matthew 24.15).

So, why would anyone dispute the early date? Because if the book was written in the 6th century then it is the work of inspiration and the product of a God who is truly the “ruler over the realm of mankind. “The central argument is this; ‘Almighty God does not or cannot work miracles, or reveal the future of His creatures. Therefore since miracles or prophecy are impossible, a book which contains an account of miracles must be written long after the alleged miracles are related to have been worked; a book containing predictions beyond the unaided sagacity of man must have been written after the events which are predicted.’” (Daniel the Prophet, E.B. Pusey).

## Historical Context:

To fully appreciate the theme of Daniel, that God rules over the realm of mankind, we need some knowledge of what was happening in the ancient near east during the latter part of the 7th century BC and beginning of the 6th century. Let’s begin with a brief sketch of Babylonian history and then note how this affected the kingdom of Judah.

### Babylon

- “In 731 B.C. a Chaldean prince, Ukin-zer, attacked Babylon and seized the throne. Three years later Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, supported by the priesthood, launched a counter attack and deposed Ukin-zer. By keeping the Assyrians busy defending their Babylonian dependencies, the Chaldeans provided some relief for Israel and Judah from interference in their affairs.” (Pfeiffer)
- “Soon after the reign of Sargon II began in Assyria, another Chaldean, Merodachbaladan II, seized the Babylonian throne and succeeded at uniting the previously fragmented Chaldean tribes. Merodach-baladan is most notable for his ability to forge military alliances in his anti-Assyrian efforts, as he did with Babylon’s neighbor to the east, Elam. He attempted to draw Hezekiah of Judah into this international coalition against Assyria, as we know from 2 Kings 20:12–19 and Isaiah 39.” (IVPDOT:Prophets)
- “Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.) threw off the Assyrian yoke and founded an independent Chaldean, or Neo-Babylonian Empire. Not only were the Assyrians unsuccessful in putting down his revolt, but they lost their own capital, Nineveh, when Nabopolassar joined forces with Cyaxeres the Mede in 612 B.C. The Assyrians retreated westward to the ancient city of Haran, but it too fell to the Babylonians and their allies (610 B.C.). The following year Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (609-593 B.C.) marched northward to Carchemish on the Euphrates to assist the Assyrian king, Ashuruballit, in an effort to retake Haran from the Babylonians.” (Pfeiffer)

- “In the early summer of 605 B.C. a Babylonian army, led by the crown-prince Nebuchadnezzar, launched a surprise attack on Carchemish and crushed the Egyptian army which was based there. The survivors were pursued all the way to the frontier of Egypt, and might have been pursued farther, but for the fact that just then Nebuchadnezzar received news that his father Nabopolassar had died (August 16). He hurried back to Babylon with a few attendants, by the shortest route across the desert, to secure the throne for himself. The remainder of his forces returned home by the longer route, via Carchemish. They took with them captives from the Egyptian army and hostages from the states of western Asia which had recently been vassals of Egypt, including some of the noblemen of Judah.” (FF Bruce)



## Judah

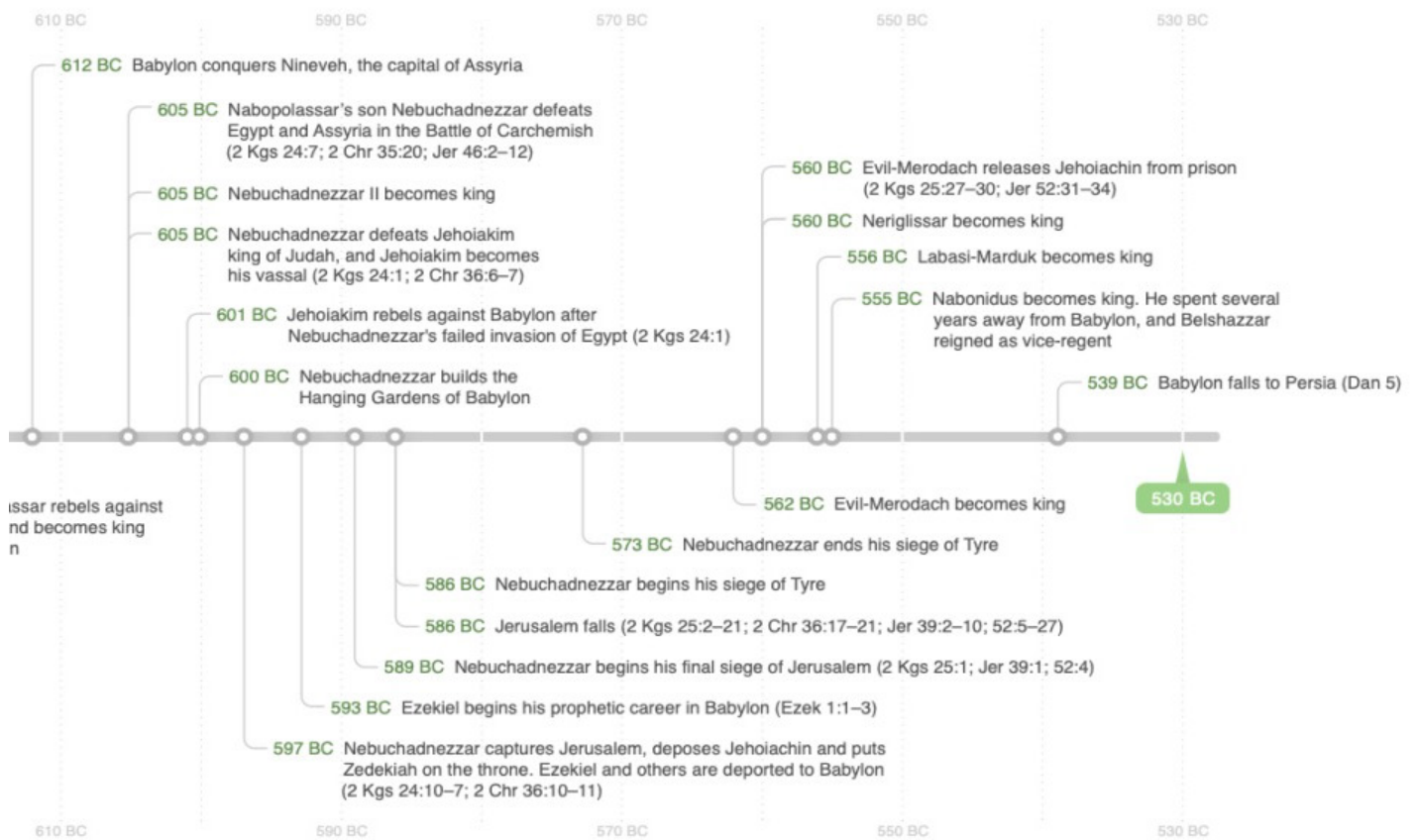
- Josiah 640-609 (2Kings 22-23.30; 2Chron 34-35)
  - » Assyria began to weaken after the death of Ashurbanipal (631-626).
  - » Asshur fell to Medes in 614 and Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612.
  - » Josiah was killed in 609 because he opposed Pharaoh, who was going to the aid of Assyria (2Kings 23.28-30; 2Chron 35.20-27).
- Jehoahaz 609 (2Kings 23.30-33; 2Chron 36.1-4)
  - » Made king by the people of the land (23.30). Actually younger than Jehoiakim.
  - » Probable that Jehoahaz was anti-Egypt, whereas Jehoiakim was pro.
- Jehoiakim 609-598 (2Kings 23.34-24.7; 2Chron 36.5-8)
  - » Placed on the throne by Pharaoh (23.34).
  - » Battle of Carchemish 605 - Babylon now the dominate power. Captives taken to Babylon (including Daniel), Judah now a vassal of Babylon.
  - » Rebelled and served Egypt (2Kings 24.1) and was swiftly punished by Babylon (2Kings 24.2-4).

- Jehoiachin 598-7 (2Kings 24.8-17; 2Chron 36.9-10)
  - » Succeeded his father Jehoiakim who died as Babylonian forces were on their way to Jerusalem.
  - » Surrendered to Babylon on March 15/16 597.
  - » His captivity is mentioned in Babylonian rations list and 2Kings 25.27-30 and Jer. 52.31-34.
- Zedekiah 597-587 (2Kings 24.18-25.7; 2Chron 36.11-21)
  - » Initially loyal to Babylon, but rebelled.
  - » Jerusalem and Temple destroyed in 587.

Where was God? Had he been defeated by the Babylonian god Marduk? Was Jehovah the Most High? Did He rule over the realms of mankind? These are the questions the Jews would have faced during these troubling days and these kinds of questions have continued to be asked through the years as God's people have suffered at the hands of the world. Daniel boldly asserts that the Most High rules over the realm of mankind, the hope of the righteous then and now!

# The Neo-Babylonian Empire









# Daniel 1

Without doubt, the verse most of us know best from Daniel 1 is vs. 8: “But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.” Daniel’s faith and dedication to the Lord are remarkable, but even more so when we consider the context of Daniel 1.1-2, for it would seem to the world that Jehovah had been defeated and His people were now suffering the consequences of His defeat. However, Daniel 1 helps establish the theme of the book, that the Lord rules over the realm of mankind. Thus, Daniel’s faith in Jehovah God is both vindicated and rewarded.

Before we look at chapter 1, it’s helpful to review what the Lord said to Israel in Deuteronomy 28. There the Lord promised blessings if the people would obeyed His law (vss. 1-14), but warned of a series of curses should they disobey (vss. 15ff). One of those curses was that the people would be torn from their land and scattered among the nations (vss. 63-68). That curse had come upon the northern kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians in 720 BC. The southern kingdom of Judah did not fall at that time, but they were not righteous either (2Kings 17.19-20) and their judgment was coming swiftly.

## ***Nebuchadnezzar Victorious, Daniel 1.1-2 (NASB95)***

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

- This was the same year that Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon, 605 BC.

2The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

- Note 2Kings 24.2-4. Judah’s distress was not due to the Lord lacking power. Rather, the Lord brought this calamity upon them because of their sins, in particular the sins of Manasseh. Thus, “the Lord gave” Judah into the hands of the Babylonians.
- Recall that Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian envoys all the treasures of his house, likely including various articles from the Temple. The Lord fore-

told that these vessels would be taken away (Isaiah 39.2-6).

- Shinar: this connects these events with the tower of Babel (Genesis 10.10; 11.1-9). Babel was the epitome of pride and rebellion against God. Now, articles of God's Temple were being taken and placed in a modern Tower of Babel.
- House of his god: "Nebuchadnezzar seems to have made Marduk his personal god since most of his inscriptions invoke him. Nebuchadnezzar, continuing work begun by Nabopolassar, restored the ancient ziggurat, or stepped temple-tower, of Babylon, named Etemenanki ("the building which is the foundation of heaven and earth") and the associated temple of Marduk, called Esagila ("the temple that raises its head"). These buildings dominated the city, with the temple-tower rising to about 300 feet (90 meters)." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)



Model of the Marduk Temple  
Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary

### ***Daniel & Friends Tested, Daniel 1.3-16 (NASB95)***

3Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,

- Possible that these were descendants of Hezekiah (Isaiah 39.7).

4youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- Interesting that "no defect" was a requirement for priests, those who would approach God (see Leviticus 21.17,18,21).
- Impossible to know how old Daniel was at this time, but some estimate he would have been 14. "Plato relates of the Persians, 'after twice 7 years have passed, those whom they call royal instructors receive the boy' to educate." (Pusey)
- "Babylonian and Assyrian are dialects of Akkadian, a Semitic language like Aramaic and Hebrew. While the language itself would not have been unusually difficult to learn, the system used to write it was. It required learning hundreds of symbols and the rules for using them correctly. This was done by first copying simple exercises set by the teacher. As the student

progressed, he would move on to copying important literary texts. Many of these were religious in nature. The learning process was therefore also an induction into the worldview and culture of Babylonia. Training foreigners in this way was intended to assimilate them into Babylonian life and make the skills of the best of them available to the Babylonians rather than to their real or potential enemies.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

5The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

6Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

7Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

- Daniel (God is my judge) changed to Belteshazzar (Bel, Marduk, protects his life).
- Hananiah (the Lord shows grace) changed to Shadrach (command of Aku).
- Mishael (who is what God is?) changed to Meshach (who is what Aku is?).
- Azariah (the Lord helps) changed to Abednego (servant of Nebo).

8But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

- There's a bit of word play in this verse. The word translated as “made” (for when Daniel made up his mind) is the same word translated twice as “assigned” in vs. 7. Daniel may have had a new name assigned to him, a name that honored a god other than Jehovah, but Daniel assigned where the devotion of his heart and mind would lie.
- There has been a fair amount of speculation about why the food would defile Daniel and his friends. The easiest solution is also the most obvious: these foods would have been unclean (Leviticus 11; see Hosea 9.3). Some object to this because wine was not considered unclean under the Law, but it could be that Nebuchadnezzar's wine had a stronger alcohol content, making it more of a “strong drink” to the Jews.

9Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

10and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you

would make me forfeit my head to the king."

- The term for "lord" is a-don, the same term used for Jehovah in vs. 2. Daniel fears/respects Jehovah as Lord, the commander fears Nebuchadnezzar as lord.

11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

- This is the likely background for the Lord's words in Revelation 2.10.

13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

### ***Daniel Exalted, Daniel 1.17-21 (NASB95)***

17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

- "Two types of dream were recognized as communications from the gods. In message dreams a divine being spoke directly to the dreamer, so that interpretation was not needed. A symbolic dream involved the dreamer seeing or experiencing something, the meaning of which was not obvious; thus, interpretation was needed. All known records of this kind of dream come from Sumerian or Babylonian sources rather than Assyrian ones... Interpretation could be done in one of two ways. Deductive interpretation relied on consultation of collections of dream omens (called "dream books"), which contained lists of things that might occur in dreams and assigned meanings to each one. Intuitive interpretation depended simply on the wisdom and insight of the interpreter... When a dream presaged something bad, there were rituals that could be performed to prevent this from happening. This is one reason why it was important to discover the meaning of a dream as soon as possible."

18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel,

Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

20As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.

- The Babylonian king's "magicians and conjurers" will play a significant role in the first 5 chapters of Daniel (see Daniel 2.2,10,27; 4.7,9; 5.11). These would record the movement of the heavenly bodies to discern the will of the gods.
- The failure of the Babylonian magicians (astrologers) is not only their failure, but the failure of their gods.

21And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

- If this references the first year of Cyrus' reign over Babylon, then the year would be 539 BC.
- Daniel would outlive the Babylonian kingdom.

### **Takeaways**

1. The best description I've heard for this chapter was given by Tommy Peeler when he spoke of "the gospel of Daniel 1." He described the chapter in this way because of the three occasions when God "gave" something. First, it was God who gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians (vs. 2). God was not defeated by Marduk, the Babylonian god, rather He brought the curse He had warned of in Deuteronomy 28.63-68. Second, after Daniel purposed in his heart to stay true to the Lord, God gave him favor in the sight of the Babylonian commander of officials (vs. 9). Finally, God gave Daniel and his three companions knowledge and intelligence, and to Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams (vs. 17). God's gift would show that His servants were superior to the servants of Marduk, just as Jehovah is superior to all other gods. God's rule over the realm of mankind is established in this chapter; that is the good news of Daniel 1.
2. We'd be remiss to not consider the statement made about Daniel in vs. 8. While the terms "believe" and "faith" are not used in this passage, I find this verse to be a powerful lesson about the faith of the Lord's godly ones. Consider the following:
  - » Daniel's faith was not dependent on circumstances. By all appearances, Jehovah had been defeated and His people were suffering the consequences of His defeat. But Daniel still believed that Jehovah ruled over all!
  - » Daniel's faith prompted obedience to Jehovah's revealed will. Thus, he

purposed to not defile himself with food that God had not permitted. Faith that doesn't compel one to follow God's will, isn't really faith.

- » Daniel's faith would have impressed others. We noted how the commander of officials was reluctant to grant Daniel's request because he feared the king (vs. 10). We can only imagine how impressed all of the officials were once they witnessed how Daniel and his companions were blessed by Jehovah God. This will be a frequent occurrence in the career of Daniel (see Daniel 2.47; 3.28-29; 4.34-35; 6.26-27).
- » Daniel's faith was rewarded. The Lord granted him favor (vs. 9) along with knowledge and insight (vs. 17).



## Daniel 2

While most of us know this chapter by the contents of Nebuchadnezzar's vision (vss. 31-45), the dominant theme is "mystery". The Aramaic term *raz* (translated as "mystery" in the NASB, ESV and NIV, "secret" in the NKJV), is found only 9 times in the Bible, all occurring in the book of Daniel and 8 of those in chapter 2. The chapter not only centers around the mysterious dream of the Babylonian king, but on who can reveal such a mystery. Such considerations were not only important for the Babylonian king who had the dream, but for God's people who were also perplexed by a mystery: what did the Babylonians' domination of Jerusalem, the Temple and the Davidic throne mean for God's people? What was becoming of God's Kingdom? By revealing the mystery of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Jehovah answered those questions as well.

### ***Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the failure of the Babylonian magicians to reveal the mystery (Daniel 2.1-13)***

1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

- Some are quick to see a contradiction between this verse and Daniel 1.5, 18. However, there are valid options that would bring the two passages into harmony:
- At least one old Greek manuscript has this as the 12th year.
- Homer Hailey argues that Babylonians counted part of a year as a year of the king's reign, whereas the Jews only counted whole years. Thus year 2 to the Jews would be year 3-4 to the Babylonians.
- Some argue that Daniel had not yet finished his training.
- Why did the dream trouble Nebuchadnezzar so much? Baldwin (in the Tyndale commentary) argues that political circumstances were already troubling the king: "Each year in the early part of his reign Nebuchadnezzar's expeditionary force went to the extremities of the empire to ensure that subjugated lands paid their taxes. In 604 Ashkelon had put up stiff resistance and had to be reduced to rubble; in 603 an extra large army, siege towers and heavy equipment are mentioned, and Babylonian troops were in the field for several months. Such a show of prestige hid a fear of inadequacy: his spirit was troubled."

2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers

and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

- Sorcery was forbidden for the Jews (Deuteronomy 18.10). Significantly, Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would fall in spite of her sorceries (see Isaiah 47.9,12).
- The term “Chaldeans” is used in Daniel to describe both experts in magic and as a general ethnic designation for the Babylonian people (see 1.4). Here it clearly refers to a class of people expert in magic.

3The king said to them, “I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream.”

4Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”

- Note that from Daniel 2.4 to Daniel 7.28 the language is Aramaic. Some propose that Daniel used the language of the empire (Aramaic) since this lengthy passage emphasizes God’s rule as it relates to world empires. That is an intriguing possibility. Note also the structure of this section:
  - » 4 kingdoms and God’s sovereignty (Daniel 2)
  - » God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 3)
    - » God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 4)
    - » God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 5)
  - » God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 6)
  - » 4 kingdoms and God’s sovereignty (Daniel 7)
- Baldwin: “These experts in dreams worked on the principle that dreams and their sequel followed an empirical law which, given sufficient data, could be established. The dream manuals, of which several examples have come to light, consist accordingly of historical dreams and the events that followed them, arranged systematically for easy reference. Since these books had to try to cover every possible eventuality they became inordinately long; only the expert could find his way through them, and even he had to know the dream to begin with before he could search for the nearest possible parallel. The unreasonable demands of the king and the protests of the interpreters in verses 3–11 are in keeping with his character and the known facts concerning dream books.”

5The king replied to the Chaldeans, “The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.

- This was not an idle threat by the king (see 2Kings 25.7; Jeremiah 29.21-23).

6“But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its

interpretation.”

7They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”

8The king replied, “I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,

9that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation.”

10The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean.

11“Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.”

- Vss. 10-11 contains the key point of the chapter. No man could do this, no king had ever made such a request... only a god could possibly reveal such a mystery.
- The gods of the magicians failed them. However, as we will see, there is a God who could reveal such a mystery.

12Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

13So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

### ***Jehovah reveals the mystery to Daniel (Daniel 2.14-30)***

14Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

15he said to Arioch, the king's commander, “For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

16So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

17Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter,

18so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

- First of 8 occurrences of the word “mystery” in the chapter.

- Note Ezekiel 28.1-3 where the Lord mocks the ruler of Tyre as being wiser than Daniel, that there was no secret hidden from him.
- Significant that Jehovah is referred to as the “God of heaven” in this chapter (vss. 18,19,37,44). The Babylonians worshiped the heavenly bodies and their magicians depended on the heavens to reveal and interpret visions and dreams. But only Jehovah is the God of heaven!

19Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

20Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him.

- Both wisdom and power are significant in the chapter. Only Jehovah possesses the wisdom to reveal the king's dream. Only Jehovah has the power to shatter the kingdoms of the world and establish an eternal Kingdom.

21“It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

22“It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

23“To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter.”

24Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king.”

25Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: “I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!”

26The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”

27Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

28“However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

- Note how Daniel makes no mention of himself, but puts the focus on his God.
- Recall the statement of the magicians in vss. 10-11; only God can do this!

- The use of “latter days” in this passage is parallel to “in the future” (see vss. 29,45). These days would include the period of the Messiah and the days leading up to that seminal event.

29“As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

30“But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

### ***Daniel reveals the mystery to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2.31-45)***

This is the best known section of Daniel 2. Space will not permit a detailed discussion of all the various theories regarding how this passage should be interpreted. However, the best interpretation remains the one that merges history with Scripture:

- » head of gold = Babylon
- » breast and arms of silver = Medo-Persia
- » belly and thighs of bronze = Greece
- » legs of iron / feet of iron and clay = Rome

It's also important to remember that this is a vision, not an allegory. We shouldn't read too much into every little detail. For instance, I can't think of any way in which Persia was “inferior” to Babylon. However, the point of the vision isn't to contrast each kingdom with each other, rather to contrast the kingdoms of men with the Kingdom of God. Consider these points from Tremper Longman in the NIV Application Commentary:

- “While human beings operate on the idea that we get better and stronger with time, God's vision undercuts our understanding, informing us that the opposite is true. Gold gives way to silver, which then becomes bronze, iron, and a weak mixture of clay and iron. A statue that starts out in grandeur and beauty ends in weakness. Indeed, the expression “feet of clay” has become an idiom in our language for a point of weakness in an otherwise strong person or institution.”
- “The other important principle in this dream-vision is seen when this statue is contrasted with the object of its demise, the rock. The statue is an object made with human hands and ingenuity. The rock, however, is explicitly said not to be the result of human intention or energy.”



31 "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

32 "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

36 "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

37 "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

- Note that Jehovah is described as "Lord of kings" in vs. 47. Ultimately, the title "King of kings" belongs to Jesus (1 Timothy 6.15).
- It is God who made Nebuchadnezzar the king of kings (see Jeremiah 27.5-7).

38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

39 "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

40 "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

41 "In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

42 "As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

43 "And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- Again, we don't want to read too much into every detail, but the description of the 4th kingdom is an apt one for Rome.

- Jim McGuiggan: "It's important to note that this "division" is equivalent to "weakness" and "strength" (verse 42)... The difficulties Rome experienced in trying to hold her kingdom together are well known. Italy was poor and Rome was very poor. The farther her troops traveled the more money she needed to support them. She had to come up with it some way and so she began the system known as "the client-king" system. These client kings were allowed to rule (under Rome) if they guaranteed to keep their kingdom from revolt and pay their taxes on time and without being pressed into it."

44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

- The key concept of "kingdom" is rule or reign. Note that in vs. 37 "kingdom" is used parallel to "power", "strength", and "glory".
- God has always ruled, as even this chapter confirms. But the vision points to a specific time when that rule is manifest in a new and awesome way. Jesus, the King of kings, coming to this world and ascending again was how God "set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed".
- The phrase "will not be left for another people" amplifies the fact that this Kingdom will endure forever. It would not be like Babylon which was supplanted by another kingdom.

45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

- The stone imagery is significant in both OT and NT. See Isaiah 8.13-14; 28.16; Psalm 118.22; Luke 20.18; etc.
- "without hands" emphasizes that this Kingdom does not have human origin, but is the act of God (see also Job 34.20; Daniel 8.25).

### ***Nebuchadnezzar praises Jehovah for revealing the mystery (Daniel 2.46-49)***

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.

- Note these prophecies of when the conquerors bow to their captives (Isaiah 45.14; 49.23; 60.14; Revelation 3.9).

47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

- Marduk was referred to in this way in Babylonian literature. But the honors

rightly belong to Jehovah (see Deuteronomy 10.17; Revelation 17.14).

- Note that Nebuchadnezzar refers to “your God”. He acknowledges the greatness of Jehovah, but likely sees Him as nothing more than a national god at this point.

48Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

49And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.

### **Takeaways:**

- 1. Jehovah, Who knows the future, controls the future.** As we noted at the beginning of this lesson, Daniel 2 centers around the idea of “mystery”. Nebuchadnezzar's magicians could not reveal the mystery of his dream, in fact they were confident that no man could... only a god could possibly do what the king demanded (vss. 10-11). And Jehovah God did just that, revealing the dream and its meaning to His servant Daniel (vs. 19). Recall again that Daniel praised God, “For wisdom and power belong to Him” (vs. 20). Jehovah had the ability to “reveal mysteries” (vss. 28, 29, 47) because it was by His power that all would take place. It was He who made Nebuchadnezzar king (vss. 37-38), and it was He who would set up a Kingdom that would endure forever, a Kingdom that would crush all others. Since God knows the future, He is in control of the future. This fact should give us hope, for He has revealed that we will be rewarded, even though now we suffer for a little while (1Peter 1.3-9). Since He has revealed this, He will bring it to pass!
- 2. The greatness of Jehovah's kingdom, contrasted with the kingdoms of the world.** Nebuchadnezzar wasn't the only one perplexed by a mystery; God's people were also confused. How could Babylon have desecrated God's Temple; how could the Babylonian king have taken the heir of David captive (1.1-2)? Many would wonder if this meant God had turned His back on them and on the promise He had made to David (see Psalm 89.38ff). But this vision would reassure His faithful ones, because God's Kingdom is not like the kingdoms of men. Even though God places rulers in power, their kingdoms are devised and ruled by men (thus the image is in the shape of a man). These kingdoms seem glorious at first, but over time they show just how fragile they are. But the Kingdom of God is not like these kingdoms, it is built by Him and not by men. It is eternal, not temporary. It is for all, not for a select nationality. And as will be related in a future vision, it is ruled over by the Son of Man (7.13-14). How blessed we are to be part of His Kingdom, which is incomparable to any kingdom of men. We would do well to remember that.



## Daniel 3

(Material for this chapter provided by Steve Patton)

This event must be viewed not only as Nebuchadnezzar would, but also how the captive Jews would see this event. This day will humble a king and comfort slaves. There will be no doubt who is God of gods and who rules over the affairs of kings and nations

### ***Nebuchadnezzar's Image (vs. 1)***

1Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

- Was it an image of Nebuchadnezzar or of a god? There is a lot of debate about this. The image is prepared so all the foreign government officials can bow before publicly. Are they being asked to show submission to Nebuchadnezzar or to Babylon's god? There are good arguments both ways. I tend to think it is a god. One thing I think about is an image doesn't have to be built for the officials to show submission to Nebuchadnezzar. He is right there. They do that in person. He may be requiring these foreign officials to show they are going to honor Babylon's god, also. This would have been the problem for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They acknowledged Nebuchadnezzar as the great ruler as had Daniel (2:37,38). But they would never acknowledge any of Babylon's gods as their god.

### ***The Great Assembly Before The Image (vss. 2-7)***

2Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,

5that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden

image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

6“But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”

7Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

- This assembly appears to be every foreign official from throughout the empire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are in Babylon but they are foreigners on the level of these other officials. This may be why they are included. King Nebuchadnezzar is wanting all these men to publicly acknowledge their submission to Babylon and its God.
- Where is Daniel? Why isn't he included? I don't know.

### ***Accusations Against Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (vss. 8-12)***

8For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

9They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever!

10“You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.

11“But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

12“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

- The Babylonian officials are obviously jealous of conquered foreigners holding important positions in the king's court. It is reminiscent of what the Persian officials will do against Daniel when we get to chapter 6. But God will take care of his children. He has a purpose to accomplish and He will do it in a spectacular way.

### ***A Last Chance, Then Judgment Pronounced (vss. 13-23)***

13Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

14Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?

15“Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and wor-

ship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

16Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

17"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

18"But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

19Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

20He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.

21Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

22For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

23But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

- The king actually gives them a second chance which they refuse. There is no hesitation on their part. They openly defy the king's command. His fury leads to heating the furnace seven times hotter than usual. There would be no doubt about the judgment of the king against any who would question his edict. His heightened reaction also calls even greater attention to this occasion. It was not just another execution.

### ***Yahweh's Miraculous Intervention (vss. 24-27)***

24Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

25He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

26Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

27The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers

damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

- Not only are they spared, they are not even singed by the fire. Nebuchadnezzar personally calls them out of the furnace, acknowledging them as servants of the Most High God.
- Who is the fourth person? I speculate it is an angel. It fits their role (Hebrews 1:14). Angels appear several times in this book.

### ***A Humbled Nebuchadnezzar (vss. 28-30)***

28Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

29"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

30Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

- Yahweh's supremacy is unquestioned. The God of the Jews is more powerful than any God. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar call for all to honor Yahweh but to also honor Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The king may not be monotheistic but he does not doubt the respect that must be given to the God of the Jews.

### ***Takeaways:***

1. The Value of conviction - 3:12,18
2. Trusting God will take care of you - 3:18
3. Keeping faith under pressure - 3:16
4. God honors faithfulness - 3:30
5. The value of faithful close friends.



## Daniel 4-5

In our study of chapter 2 we noted how the Aramaic section of Daniel (2.4-7.28) has a symmetrical outline:

- 4 kingdoms and God's sovereignty (Daniel 2)
  - God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 3)
    - God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 4)
    - God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 5)
  - God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 6)
- 4 kingdoms and God's sovereignty (Daniel 7)

In this lesson we aim to cover chapters 4 & 5, noting how God exercised His rule over mankind by humbling Nebuchadnezzar at the zenith of his power (chapter 4) and then finished the humbling of Babylon by bringing that kingdom to an end (chapter 5).

### ***Opening praise of Jehovah (Daniel 4.1-3)***

1Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!

- Note that he was made king of all peoples by Jehovah (see Daniel 2.37-38; Jeremiah 27.5-7).

2"It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

3"How great are His signs And how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom And His dominion is from generation to generation.

- Note that Nebuchadnezzar's first vision had revealed that God would establish an everlasting Kingdom (Daniel 2.44), but the events of this chapter have convinced the Babylonian king that Jehovah's rule was present at that time, and always would be.

### ***Nebuchadnezzar's dream and search for an interpreter (Daniel 4.4-18)***

4"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.

5“I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

6“So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

7“Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.

- This episode is similar to the one in chapter 2: the king has a dream that alarms him and he summons his wise men. However, on this occasion he only asks for the interpretation and doesn't require them to relate the contents of the dream as well.
- However, they are unable to meet even this lesser demand. Once again, the Babylonian magicians (and their gods) are shown to be nothing.

8“But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,

- Interesting that the king draws attention to the fact that he renamed Daniel to honor his god (Belteshazzar = Bel protects his life), but the king comes to understand that Daniel's God is “the Most High God” (vs. 2) and the King of heaven (vs. 37).
- When Nebuchadnezzar says Daniel has “a spirit of the holy gods”, the term for “gods” is *elah*, the same term used for Jehovah in vs. 2. So, it's possible that the king is referencing Jehovah in this passage.

9“O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

10“Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.

- Nations that exalted themselves against Jehovah are referred to as great trees elsewhere (Ezekiel 31; Isaiah 2.12-13).

11“The tree grew large and became strong And its height reached to the sky, And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

12“Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

13“I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

14“He shouted out and spoke as follows: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it

And the birds from its branches.

15“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

16“Let his mind be changed from that of a man And let a beast’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.

- Literally “seven times”. Many have concluded that years are meant, but the text does not say.

17“This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men.”

- “Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind” repeated again in vss. 25, 32. This is the fundamental lesson that Nebuchadnezzar, and all men, must learn.
- “lowliest of men” note Psalm 113.7-8; Luke 1.52.

18‘This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

### ***Daniel gives the interpretation of the dream (Daniel 4.19-27)***

19“Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!

- Interesting that Daniel is not happy about what the vision means. This was the king who had enslaved him (chapter 1), threatened to kill him (chapter 2) and tried to execute his fellow countrymen (chapter 3).
- Perhaps Daniel understood better than most that rulers are allowed to rule only because the Sovereign God allows it. Thus, Daniel was not wishing for ill to come upon the king.

20‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth

21and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—

22it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

- This was the Lord's doing (see Daniel 2.36-38).

23'In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,"

24this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

25that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

26'And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

27'Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'

- This dream is conditional. Nebuchadnezzar has the opportunity to humble himself and avoid this judgment from God. Note Jeremiah 18.7-10.
- For Nebuchadnezzar to repent meant pursuing righteousness and mercy, the same requirement of Israel's kings (2Samuel 8.15; Psalm 72.1-4).

### ***Nebuchadnezzar exalts himself; Jehovah humbles the king (Daniel 4.28-33)***

28"All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

29"Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

30"The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

- "Nebuchadnezzar's building projects in Babylon were magnificent. The Euphrates was channeled into a number of canals that passed through the city. His palace, on the north side of the city near the Ishtar Gate, was luxuriously appointed with all the finest materials. The palace gardens were terraced and gained international reputation, eventually being named

one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was a parklike enclosure with an arboretum of exotic trees. Additional building projects included the temples and the streets.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

31 “While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’

33 “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

- “Very few surviving Babylonian sources give information about the last thirty years of Nebuchadnezzar’s life. A fragmentary cuneiform text seems to refer to some mental disorder afflicting Nebuchadnezzar and perhaps his neglecting and leaving Babylon, maybe putting his son Amel-Marduk in charge for a while, and then of his repentance for neglect of the worship of the gods. Unfortunately the text is too fragmentary for any firm conclusions to be drawn.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

### ***Concluding praise of Jehovah (Daniel 4.34-37)***

34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

- Compare Isaiah 45.9; Job 9.12; Romans 9.20.

36 “At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

### ***Belshazzar's blasphemous feast (Daniel 5.1-4)***

1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

- The book of Daniel does not aim to give us a complete history of the Babylonian empire. Chapter 1 records when the Babylonian dominion over the Jews began, chapter 5 shows when it came to an end. So, ~70 years of history transpire between chapters 1 and 5.
- Belshazzar means “Bel (Marduk) protect the king”. Fitting that in a book whose theme is Jehovah ruling over the realm of mankind, the Babylonian god will be powerless to protect the king from Jehovah's judgment.
- We are not told the reason for the feast, particularly given that the Medes and Persians were advancing on the city. Some speculate that Nabonidus had been defeated in battle and Belshazzar was proclaiming himself as king. Regardless, both Herodotus and Xenophon record that Babylon was conquered during a feast.

#### Basic chronology of Babylonian kings:

1. Nabopolassar (625-605)
2. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562)  
Daniel 1-4
3. Evil-Merodach (562-560)  
2Kings 25.27-30; Jer. 52.31-34.
4. Neriglissar (560-556)
5. Nabonidus (556-539) He is the ruler of Babylon in Daniel 5, but was absent from city and Belshazzar his son was coregent.

2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

- See Daniel 1.1-2.

3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

- Note vs. 23. Belshazzar's actions were meant to show defiance towards Israel's God, perhaps asserting the superiority of the Babylonian gods.

### ***The handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5.5-12)***

5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite

the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

- Throne room of kings of Babylon discovered in 1899 and walls covered in white gypsum which would have made the writing visible (R. Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, 104)

6Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

- Note that Belshazzar's alarm will continue (vss. 9-10).

7The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."

- "Third ruler in the kingdom" was likely the highest position the king had to offer. Nabonidus was king, Belshazzar was co-regent or second in the kingdom.

8Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

- Compare Daniel 2.1-12; 4.4-7.
- The Babylonian magicians are shown to be helpless and incompetent from start to finish.

9Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

10The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

- The queen knew the history of Babylon, but Belshazzar will be shown to be ignorant (see vs. 22).

11 "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.

12 "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

- We can only speculate why Belshazzar did not know of Daniel.
- Could be that when new kings arose after Nebuchadnezzar, they dismissed the personnel of the previous king. Compare with Exodus 1.8.

### ***Daniel is summoned and gives the interpretation (Daniel 5.13-29)***

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

14 "Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

15 "Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

16 "But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

- Daniel was not the first prophet of God to refuse a reward (see 2 Kings 5.15-27).
- Significantly, God rebuked those prophets who prophesied for money (see Micah 3.5, 11).

18 "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

- See Daniel 2.36-38.

19 "Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.

- Nebuchadnezzar was able to exercise the same authority over life and death as God Himself (see Deuteronomy 32.39; 1 Samuel 2.6-7). This was because Jehovah had exalted Him.
- Significantly, this dominion would be given to the Son of Man (Daniel 7.14).

20 "But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

- See Daniel 4.28-33.

21 "He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he

recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

- See Daniel 4.17,25,32.

22“Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,

- Belshazzar may have known this history, but he had failed to learn the lessons of history.

23but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.

- Kings exalting themselves against Jehovah would also be a key feature of Daniel's visions (see Daniel 8.11,25; 11.36).
- Belshazzar had exalted himself against Jehovah by worshiping gods who could not compare with Jehovah (see Psalm 115.3-8; 135.15-18; Jeremiah 10.3-5).

24“Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

25“Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UP-HARSIN.’

- Mene: numbered
- Tekel: weighed
- Peres (Upharsin): divided. Note that the word Persia has the same consonants in Aramaic as “peres”. Thus, there is a possible allusion to Persians in the word chosen (see vs. 28).

26“This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENĒ’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

27“ ‘TEKĒL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

28“ ‘PERĒS’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

29Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

### ***The Medes and Persians defeat the Babylonians (Daniel 5.30-31)***

30That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

- 539 BC.

- “Herodotus says that Cyrus captured Babylon by temporarily diverting the course of the Euphrates when the Babylonians were feasting and dancing. His troops waded along the river bed where it passed through the city walls. Xenophon says much the same, adding that the Persians took the city at night and that Gobryas, one of Cyrus’s generals, killed the Babylonian king, a riotous, indulgent, cruel, and godless young man.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

- Critics charge that Daniel confused Cyrus (539-530 BC) with Darius who ruled over the Persian empire at a later time (521-486 BC).
- However, Daniel’s accuracy as a historian makes such a charge needless. It’s likely that Daniel is referring to the regent over the region of Babylon (possibly Gubaru who is mentioned in some texts as governor of Babylon and the region beyond the River).
- “The most likely suggestion, though it too has problems, takes Darius the Mede as an alternative name for Cyrus the Persian, who was about sixty-two when Babylon fell” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

### **Takeaways:**

1. “The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind...” That statement, found in 4.17,25,32; 5.21, is the theme of chapters 4-5, and of the entire book. It was Jehovah who exalted Nebuchadnezzar (2.36-38), and it was Jehovah who humbled the great Babylonian king (chapter 4) and brought his empire to an end (chapter 5). Jehovah’s sovereignty insures that His Kingdom will never come to an end (2.44; See Hebrews 12.28).
2. We’d be foolish to not make personal application of these chapters. Yes, Jehovah’s sovereignty over kings and kingdoms is clearly seen in these chapters, and if He rules over the “great” of this earth, then He most certainly reigns over you and I as well. But how easily we allow ourselves to be consumed with pride and fail to honor “the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways” (Daniel 5.21). No, we may not make the same boasts as Nebuchadnezzar (4.30), but we take far too much credit for what we have in this life (see Luke 12.16-21). Our God reigns over the realm of mankind, so let us not only follow the will of our King, but let us humbly acknowledge our reliance on our Sovereign God.



## Daniel 6

Our study of Daniel began with Jehovah giving His people into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Daniel 1.1-2). However, God continued to rule over the realm of mankind and brought the Babylonian empire to an end, giving Babylon into the hand of “Darius the Mede” (Daniel 5.30-31). As we noted in our last lesson, this Darius could have been the governor of Babylon or another title for Cyrus. But one thing we can be certain of is that Jehovah was carrying out His plan. Just as the Lord had warned the Israelites that if they disobeyed they would be taken into captivity (Deuteronomy 28.64-7), He also promised to bring them back to their homeland (Deuteronomy 30.1-3). And some 200 years before it occurred, the Lord foretold that Cyrus would be the one to let the captives go free (see Isaiah 44.28-45.1).

Given that Daniel 6 takes place during the reign of Cyrus, it would be helpful to note how he came to power (Quotes from Israel and the Nations by FF Bruce).

- After the death of Nebuchadnezzar the strength of Babylon began to fade. Media was fast becoming the dominant power. “The Medes had begun to encroach on the Babylonian territories in north Syria, so much so that Babylonian control of the usual trade route from the Egyptian frontier to Mesopotamia via Carchemish was in danger.”
- During this time a new king came to power in a small province of Persia called Anshan. This was Cyrus who began ruling in 559 B.C. While he was allied to the Median king through family ties (his mother was the daughter of the Median king) it appears that there was an allegiance between Cyrus and Babylon during the early days of Nabonidus' reign.
- In 550 B.C. Cyrus marched against the Median capital of Ecbatana and defeated it. The balance of power effectively changed at that moment!
- Instead of treating the Medes as a subject people, he made them equals



in his kingdom. "Cyrus immediately displayed the qualities of a statesman as well as those of a military commander. Instead of treating the Medes as defeated enemies and a subject nation, he had himself installed as king of Media and governed Media and Persia as a dual monarchy, each part of which enjoyed equal rights. The only reason for Babylonia's alliance with Persia, namely their common fear of Media, immediately disappeared."

- Shortly after incorporating Media into his kingdom, Cyrus defeated Croesus king of Lydia, 546 B.C. Now Cyrus had control of all of Lydia, and his empire extended all the way to Greece.
- After the conquest of Lydia, Cyrus turned his attention to the fading empire of Babylon.
- Nabonidus was still king of Babylon, but spent most of his time in his second capital of Tema seeking to establish trade routes in the south since Media had taken his in the north. He had left his son Belshazzar to reign in Babylon. Nabonidus' absence from Babylon was not viewed favorably by many, especially since he did not come back to celebrate the New Year in Babylon and worship Marduk.
- In 539 B.C. Cyrus took Babylon (Daniel 5.31).



## Outline of chapter 6:

- Daniel's Success (1-3)
  - Darius signs the law (4-10)
    - Daniel's colleagues plan his death (11-15)
      - Darius hopes for deliverance (16-18)
      - Darius sees deliverance (19-23)
    - Daniel's colleagues meet their death. (24)
  - Darius signs the decree (25-27)
- Daniel's success (28)

### **The Text: Daniel 6 (NASB95)**

1It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

- A satrapy was the main administrative division of the Persian empire (see Esther 1.1).
- If Darius the Mede is Cyrus, then these represented all the governors of the empire. However, if Darius is the governor of Babylon, then these were officials who administered affairs in the region.

2and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

3Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

4Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

5Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

6Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!

7"All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den.

- Persian kings were not inclined toward self-deification.
- However, "the decree makes sense in the context of the struggle in Persia between the advocates of pure Zoroastrianism and the supporters of the traditional Persian religion who advocated a syncretistic form of religion, which the Magi seem to have favored. The decree could be seen as a stand against syncretism, with the king representing Ahura Mazda." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

8"Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

- See Esther 1.19; 8.8.
- "It may be alluded to in Diodorus Siculus's reference to an occasion when

Darius III could not repeal a death sentence he had passed on an innocent man.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

9Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

10Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

- While praying toward Jerusalem was not commanded, Solomon asked that God would hear His people when they prayed toward His house (1Kings 8.44ff).
- Likewise, praying three times a day was not commanded, but it would seem to be a practice of many faithful Jews (see Psalm 55.17).
- Finally, note that Daniel's prayer also consisted of “giving thanks”. Quite the perspective from a man who could very well lose his life for his faith.

11Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

- Significant that these men had no doubt that Daniel would continue to pray to Jehovah.

12Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, “Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?” The king replied, “The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.”

13Then they answered and spoke before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day.”

14Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

- Contrast with Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3.13.

15Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”

16Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.”

17A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

18Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

- Possible that Daniel slept better than the king!

19Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den.

20When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

21Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!

22"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

- Compare with vs. 14. Jehovah accomplishes what the king cannot.

23Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

- Compare with Daniel 3.27.

24The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

- "maliciously" is literally "ate the pieces of".
- These men who had tried to "eat the pieces of" Daniel, were eaten by the lions.

25Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!

26"I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever.

27"He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

- Compare with similar declarations by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3.28-29; 4.34-35).

28So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- It could be that this verse shows Darius as reigning during the reign of

Cyrus, and if so then Darius is a governor in Cyrus' empire.

- However, "This can be translated as, 'the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus.' Note the similar construction in 1 Chronicles 5:26, 'Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria.' Kings in the ancient Near East usually had more than one 'throne name.' Since Cyrus took over the Median Empire and had a Median mother, he could be called 'a Mede,' even 'king of the Medes.'" (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

### **Takeaways:**

1. God can deliver
  - a. King sought to deliver Daniel (vs. 14)
  - b. Your God... will Himself deliver (vs. 16)
  - c. Has your God been able to deliver (vs. 20)
  - d. My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouth (vs. 22)
  - e. Because he trusted in God (vs. 23)
  - f. He delivers, rescues, performs signs, and wonders (vs. 27)
2. When our devotion to God is seen:
  - a. Might be a cause for derision and/or persecution (vss. 4-5; 10-11)
  - b. But helps point the way for others (vs. 16, 25-28).
3. The story of Jesus in Daniel 6...
  - a. His foes moved by envy (vss. 3-4; Matt 27.18)
  - b. Try to find accusation (vs. 4; Luke 6.7; 11.54; 20.20)
  - c. Arrested at the place of prayer (vss. 10-11; Luke 22.39-56)
  - d. Accused before ruler (vss. 12-13; John 18.28-40; Luke 23.1-5)
  - e. The king seeks to let him go (vs. 14; John 19.1-15; Luke 23.1-25)
  - f. The leaders tell ruler cannot be let go (vs. 15; John 19.7-13)
  - g. Stone rolled (vs. 17; Matt 27.60)
  - h. Seal placed on it (vs. 17; Matt 27.66)
  - i. Time of mourning (vs. 19; Mark 16.1)
  - j. Delivered from den (vss. 20-23; Acts 2.22-36)
  - k. Enemies destroyed through these events (vs. 24; Col. 2.14-15).



## Daniel 7

We noted earlier in our study that Daniel 2.4-7.28 were written in Aramaic, which may be significant as this entire section focuses on the Lord's rule over the nations. As we put forth before, there's a scheme to the material in this section:

- 4 kingdoms and God's sovereignty (Daniel 2)
  - God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 3)
    - God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 4)
    - God humbles those who walk in pride (Daniel 5)
  - God delivers those who trust in Him (Daniel 6)
- 4 kingdoms and God's sovereignty (Daniel 7)

However, it would seem that chapter 7 is the beginning of a new section in the book, a section comprised of Daniel's dreams and visions. Note that this chapter breaks from the historical of the first 6 chapters and now we are back in the reign of the Babylonians (vs. 1). Thus, it seems best to divide the book into 2 main parts:

1. Historical Narrative (chapters 1-6)
2. Visions and Revelation (chapters 7-12)

We would also do well to note how chapter 7 compares to chapter 2. First, here are a few points of comparison, and these are by no means exhaustive:

1. Four world kingdoms are described (2.31-45; 7.1-8)
2. God gives dominion to these kingdoms (2.36-38; 7.6,12,26)
3. There is a focus on the 4th kingdom (2.40-43; 7.7-8,29-25)
4. God established an everlasting kingdom (2.44; 7.13-14,27)

However, there are points of contrast between the two chapters:

1. The vision of chapter 2 was given to a pagan king, but in chapter 7 it is God's prophet who receives the vision.
2. In chapter 7 we see that the 4th kingdom will blaspheme God and persecute His saints (vss. 8,11,20,21,25). Yet, the saints will share in God's victory (vss. 18,22,27).
3. The length of the 4th kingdom's dominion is given in chapter 7 (vs. 25).

One final point we should make before looking at the text of chapter 7, and that is the apocalyptic that begins to be employed starting with chapter 7. This style is typically used during times of crisis when it appears that evil may triumph over good, but God intervenes to defeat evil and exalt His saints. Other sections in the Old Testament employ similar language to convey the surety of deliverance by God in times of great crisis (see Isaiah 24-27, 56-66; Ezekiel 38-39; Joel 3; Zechariah 1-6, 12-14). However, we must remember that while apocalyptic language is highly symbolic, this is not an allegory. Therefore, we need to be careful that we don't try to shoehorn meaning into every single detail of the visions.

### ***Vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7.1-8 NASB95)***

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

- The first year of Belshazzar was ~553 BC

2 Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

- Four winds likely represented all of the earth.
- The sea was an object of fear to the Hebrews (Psalm 18.16; 107.23-32) and sometimes stood for the nations (Isaiah 17.12-13).

3 "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

- The image is similar to that of chapter 2. Just as the image in chapter 2 was comprised of different parts, yet they were all part of one image.
- Likewise, the beasts of chapter 7 differ from each other, but they all originate from the same place. In this verse they are said to arise from the sea (likely referring to the nations). In vs. 17 they are said to come from the earth.
- Thus, the beasts may differ from each other, but each is from this world!

4 "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

- This beast would represent Babylon which is characterized as both a lion (Jeremiah 4.7; 49.19) and an eagle (Jeremiah 49.22) in Scripture.
- "Winged figures are common in the art and sculpture of Mesopotamia. The winged bulls and winged lions, both with human heads, flanked thrones and entryways in Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Winged human figures (wearing headdresses with horns) are known as early as the eighth

century and stood guard at Cyrus's palace in Pasargadae." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

- The end of this verse is likely an allusion to the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4. In that chapter a man was made like a beast, in this vision a beast is made like a man.

5"And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!'

- Represents the Medo-Persian empire.
- Here we must be careful that we don't allegorize the vision. For instance, the three ribs could represent three defeated foes, but we can't be certain.
- What we do know is the Medo-Persian empire conquered more kingdoms and territory than any before it.

6"After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

- Represents the Greek empire.
- The great speed of the leopard would be an apt symbol for the rapid expansion of the Greek empire under Alexander.
- Likewise, the four wings and heads could very well represent how the kingdom was divided after Alexander's death (see 8.8,22).

7"After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

8"While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

- Note the similarities between this beast and the legs of the image in Daniel 2.40-43. This beast represents the Roman empire.
- Horns were symbols of power and we see later that they were to represent kings (vs. 24).
- Some see the 11th, boastful horn as representing Domitian. This is possible, but it could be that the image speaks more generally of a ruler or rulers in this empire who would boast against God and persecute His people. We will say more about this later.

## ***Vision of the Ancient of Days and One like a son of man (Daniel 7.9-14 NASB95)***

9 "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.

- This image emphasizes various aspects of God's nature. He is timeless (Ancient of Days, see Psalm 90.1-2), He is pure and holy (white snow, pure wool, see Isaiah 1.18), and He is ready to judge (note the images of fire, see Isaiah 66.15-16).

10 "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

- Idea of God keeping a record of man's deeds found elsewhere in Scripture (Exodus 32.32; Luke 10.20; Revelation 3.5).

11 "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.

- This beast may boast against God (vs. 8) and even persecute His saints (vs. 25), but his utter destruction is assured.

12 "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

- Remember that their dominion had been given to them (see vs. 6).
- Extension of life likely refers to the fact that other kingdoms would continue to arise which would seek to war against God and His people. But just like the 4th beast, they won't last.

13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

- "son of man" was Jesus' preferred self-designation, occurring ~ 80 times in the gospels (see Matthew 8.20; 9.6; 16.27-28; 26.64).
- "the stress here is 'a son of man' as opposed to 'a beast'. One in the image of God as opposed to a savage, mindless animal. He comes on "clouds of heaven" which speaks of the non-human, the divine. The beasts came up out of the earth; they are the kingdoms of earth. This is the kingdom of heaven." (Jim McGuiggan).

14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

- The establishment of this kingdom was already promised in Daniel 2.44. But now we see its establishment would only occur when Jesus (the son of man) was brought to God (see Mark 16.19).

### ***Interpretation of the vision (Daniel 7.15-28 NASB95)***

15“As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

- We've noted similar reactions from both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

16“I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

- Previously, it was Daniel who interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar (chapters 2,4) and Belshazzar (chapter 5), but now he needs help in understanding.

17“These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.

18“But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

- “it didn’t matter that the saints had at one time Jewish opponents and then (as in this section) Roman opponents. And it didn’t matter that it sometimes looked as though the sovereignty (kingdom) wasn’t theirs - it was!” (Jim McGuigan)

19“Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet,

20and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.

21“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them

22until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

- It may appear that evil is triumphing over God’s people, but God’s victory and the victory of His saints is assured!

23“Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

24'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

25'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

- It is God's prerogative to "change times and epochs" (Daniel 2.21), thus this horn (king) is assuming the rights of Jehovah.

26'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

27'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

28"At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

### ***The meaning:***

To comprehend the meaning of this vision, we should note how the imagery of this chapter is used in Revelation:

1. Beasts coming from the sea (Daniel 7.3; Rev 13.1)
2. Lion, bear and leopard (Daniel 7.4-6; Rev 13.2)
3. Ten horns (Daniel 7.7; Rev 13.1)
4. Boasting, blaspheming (Daniel 7.8,11,20,25; Rev 13.5-6)
5. Beasts arise from the earth (Daniel 7.17; Rev 13.11)
6. 4th beast wages war with saints (Daniel 7.21,25; Rev 13.7)
7. 4th beast would seem to overpower the saints (Daniel 7.21; Rev 13.7)
8. 4th beast oppresses the saints for time, times & half a time (Daniel 7.25; Rev 13.5; 12.6,14)
9. Books opened (Daniel 7.10; Revelation 20.12,15)
10. Beast utterly destroyed (Daniel 7.11; Revelation 19.20; 20.10)
11. Extension of the life of the beasts (Daniel 7.12; Revelation 20.7-10)
12. Son of man on the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7.13; Revelation 14.14)

I'm sure there are other parallels, but these suffice to show that the vision of Daniel 7 foretold the very matter at the heart of Revelation. In the case of Revelation, John was writing about things "which must soon take place" (Revelation 1.1). At that time, Rome under the rule of Domitian (the 11th horn?) was

persecuting God's people. It seemed as if Rome would triumph, but the letter revealed that God would triumph over the kingdoms of the world and over Satan who was using these kingdoms to persecute God's people.

God knew that all of these things would take place ~600 years before it occurred! Daniel was shown the future suffering of the saints, but also the surety of their victory and of the everlasting rule of God. And if God knew then what His saints would undergo, He also knows every trial and tribulation we face. We too can be assured that God will prove victorious and we will continue to reign with Him!



## Daniel 8

As we've noted already, both Daniel 7 and Daniel 2 contain dreams where 4 world empires are described, but God's eternal Kingdom is established, bringing to an end the dominion of man. However, there are some significant differences between the two chapters. First, the dream of chapter 7 was given to God's prophet, Daniel, whereas the dream of chapter 2 was given to the king of the first empire. And this change of recipients likely accounts for the other differences, including the fact that God's saints were going to suffer at the hands of at least one of these empires (7.21,25). Even though he received an explanation of the vision, Daniel remained "greatly alarmed" (7.28). Daniel 8 relates another vision, one which hones in on 2 of the kingdoms described in chapter 7. Again, Daniel received some explanation, yet the experience left him "exhausted and sick for days" (8.27).

Daniel 8 is a fascinating chapter for lovers of history, for the chapter relates several significant events from history including the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire, the conquests of Alexander the Great, the division of Alexander's empire into 4 parts, and the rise of one Greek king (Antiochus IV) who would actively persecute God's people. And it was this coming persecution to which Daniel's attention was drawn in both this vision and the ones to follow.

### ***The rise of Persia (Daniel 8.1-4, 20 NASB95)***

Historical Sketch:

1. Cyrus conquered Ecbatana, the capital of the Medes, in 550 B.C. (possibly the same year as this vision). This brought the Medes into Cyrus' kingdom, forming the backbone of the Medo-Persian Empire.
2. Cyrus then defeated Lydia in 546 B.C. and Babylon in 539 B.C.
3. Other Persian rulers would extend the boundaries of the Medo-Persian empire, but for our purposes we will briefly note how future rulers interacted with Greece. (Taken from "Israel & the Nations" by F.F. Bruce)
  - When Cyrus the Great overthrew Croesus of Lydia in about 546 BC, and added the Lydian kingdom to his own, he brought into his empire a number of Greek settlements in the west of Asia Minor which had previously been under Lydian control. These Greeks had close ties with their kinsmen in Greece itself, who lived in independent city-states.

- A revolt by the Greek settlements of Ionia against the Persians in 494 BC was supported by some of the states of mainland Greece. When Darius I defeated the Ionian revolt, he determined to bring the states of mainland Greece into his empire as well, and in 490 BC sent an expedition against Athens, which had taken the lead in supporting the Ionian revolt. The expedition was defeated at the battle of Marathon.
- Ten years later Xerxes himself led a much larger army against Greece, attacking by land and sea, but his forces were routed by the combined states of Greece in the naval battle of Salamis (480 BC) and the land battle of Plataea (479 BC). The Greeks then made an attempt to carry the war into the enemy's territory and liberate the Greek states ruled by Persia. This attempt was not so effective as it might have been, because the city-states which had united to repel the Persian invader failed to remain united when the immediate threat receded.

1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.

- Note that this vision occurred before the Babylonian empire fell. Thus, the contents of this vision relate to the next 2 world empires.
- ~ 550 B.C.



2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

- "The Ulai Canal is in the vicinity of Susa, the capital of the territory of Elam, some two hundred miles from Babylon. The city will later become the royal residence of the Achaemenid kings of Persia, so it is a suitable locale for the vision. The canal is an artificial one on the north side of the city that was closely associated with Susa both in cuneiform and classical sources." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- Note that Daniel was at Susa in a vision. Does not seem likely that he actually traveled there.

3 Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.

- Possible that the longer horn represented the more dominant position of the Persians.

4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other

beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

20“The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.

### ***Alexander's conquests (Daniel 8.5-7, 21 NASB95)***

Historical sketch:

1. In 359 B.C. Phillip gained power in Macedon and over the next 20 years united the Greek city-states. He had plans of setting his forces out to war with Persia, but was assassinated before he could lead his forces into battle.
2. Alexander was made regent of Greece when he was only 16 years old. He was 20 when his father was assassinated and he quickly consolidated power for himself and set out to do what his father had planned.
3. In 334 B.C. Alexander crossed into Asia Minor and defeated a Persian army at the Granicus River. All of Asia minor was now open to him.
4. In 333 B.C. Alexander defeated the Persian king Darius III at the city of Issus, to the NE of Antioch of Syria.
5. Alexander spent the next year moving south and taking the lands of Palestine and then Egypt. Tyre, with its island fortress held out the longest, but Alexander had stones thrown into the Mediterranean Sea paving a way for his army. Many of the cities and regions yielded peacefully, including Egypt who welcomed Alexander as a liberator. Alexander established the city of Alexandria in Egypt, perhaps the most successful of his Hellenistic cities.
6. Alexander moved north again through Syria and met Darius in battle once more, this time at the city of Gaugamela on the banks of the Tigris River. From there he took Babylon and the Persian capitals of Susa, Ecbatana, and Persepolis.
7. Alexander continued pushing east, all the way to the Indus River, but his troops would go no further. As he was returning to Greece, Alexander died of a fever in the city of Babylon. He was only 33 (323 B.C.), but he had conquered the known world in only 11 years!

5While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

6He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.

7I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

21 “The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

### **Alexander's empire divided (Daniel 8.8, 22 NASB95)**

Historical sketch:

1. Alexander's death was recounted in 1 Maccabees 1.1-10.
2. “When Alexander died suddenly in 323 at the age of 33, the two who could claim ancestral rights to the kingdom (his illegitimate half-brother, Philip Arrideus, and the son of Alexander and Roxane, Alexander IV, born two months after his father's death) were installed as figureheads while the operation of the kingdom was entrusted to three experienced officers, Antipater (viceroys of Macedon), Perdiccas (head of the armies) and Craterus (in charge of the treasury and advisor to Arrideus). By 321 these three regents had sufficiently antagonized one another that a battle was instigated by a fourth player, Ptolemy, who had been given a position of authority in Egypt.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
3. The Greeks would war with each other for ~20 years, but eventually 4 kingdoms arose from Alexander's empire:
  - Macedonia and Greece, ruled by Cassander
  - Thrace and Asia Minor, ruled by Lysimachus
  - Northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and regions to the east, ruled by Seleucus
  - Southern Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, ruled by Ptolemy.
4. The Jews would first be ruled by the Ptolemies, then by the Seleucids. The wars and intrigue between these two kingdoms is described in greater detail in Daniel 11.



8Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

22“The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.

### ***Antiochus IV exalts himself (Daniel 8.9-19, 23-26 NASB95)***

Historical sketch:

1. The Ptolemy and Seleucid kingdoms had been rivals since the Greek Empire was divided after Alexander's death (323 BC). It had been decided that Palestine would fall under the Seleucid kingdom, but Ptolemy occupied Canaan before Seleucid could. This would remain a bitter source of resentment.
2. In 223 B.C. a new king took control of the Syrian kingdom, Antiochus III, the great. He was only 18 years old when he took power, but he proved to be quite able. He initially had to put down revolts in the eastern portion of his empire, but after those territories were secured he turned his attention south to Palestine and Egypt. Several attempts to take Palestine were made in the following years, but none were successful.
3. However, in 198 B.C. the Syrian and Egyptian kingdoms met in battle at Panion, near the headwaters of the Jordan River. Syria soundly defeated Egypt and Palestine passed into Syrian control.
4. Shortly after Antiochus III had defeated Egypt, he became involved in a war with the rising power of Rome. Some hold that this was spurred on by Hannibal, who had fled to Syria after being defeated by Rome. Others hold that various Greek states pleaded for help from Antiochus against Rome.
5. Antiochus was soundly defeated by Rome in 190 BC, and had to accept their terms of peace. “He agreed to evacuate all his territories west of the Taurus mountain range, which were divided between the Rhodians and the Pergamenes, to surrender all his elephants and most of what remained of his fleet, to agree to recruit no soldiers from Greece and the Aegean lands, and to pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents...the indemnity, which was to be paid in installments over 12 years, was the heaviest known in ancient history.” (FF Bruce) Of course, the funds would be raised from taxing other portions of the kingdom, including Palestine.
6. Antiochus III's son, Antiochus IV, was also sent to Rome and held hostage until the tribute could be paid.
7. Antiochus III died and was succeeded by another son, Seleucus IV. Seleucus arranged for his brother Antiochus to be released from Rome. When Seleucus died, Antiochus became king of Syria. The year was 175 BC.
8. Sometime during his reign, Antiochus IV took for himself the title “Ephiphanes”

which means “the illustrious”. He used this title as a sign of deity, but the Jews nicknamed him “Epimanes”, “the madman”.

9. Antiochus IV removed Onias from being high priest and appointed Jason (actually a brother of Onias, but one who favored Hellenism) high priest. Jason had offered a large sum of tribute money, and the cash-strapped Syrians needed the money. This move outraged the pious Jews.
10. Jason did many things to encourage Hellenism, including building a Greek gymnasium, where Jewish boys would exercise in the nude. The Hasidim (pious ones) arose during this time, as strong opponents to Hellenism.
11. In 171 B.C. Antiochus appointed Menelaus as high priest. Menelaus was not of the tribe of Levi, but of Benjamin. He had agreed to pay even more money in tribute. This only further outraged the pious Jews.
12. Around 170 BC Antiochus IV turned his attention towards Egypt. Antiochus secured control of Egypt through treaty in 169. However, the Romans did not want Syria to control Egypt. Word was sent to Antiochus that he must withdraw from Egypt, or face open war with Rome. Antiochus withdrew from Egypt, now fearing for his kingdom. He realized the importance of a strong buffer zone between Egypt and his kingdom. His attention turned to firming his hold on Palestine.
13. During the conflict b/w Syria and Egypt, the pious Jews had rebelled, deposing Menelaus and reinstalling Jason. Antiochus marched toward Jerusalem determined to wipe out Judaism, believing it necessary in order to secure the complete loyalty of the people.
14. “He decided to abolish Judaea's former constitution as a temple-state, and to establish a Greek city-state in its place, controlled by men whom Antiochus could trust...Orders were given that the temple ritual must be suspended, the sacred scriptures be destroyed, the Sabbath and other festival days be no longer observed, the strict food laws be abolished, and the rite of circumcision be discontinued. These steps were taken towards the end of 167 BC. The culminating attack on Jewish worship came in December of that year, when a new and smaller altar was erected upon the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court, and solemnly dedicated to the worship of Olympian Zeus...his cult was solemnly inaugurated with the sacrifice of animals considered unclean by the Jewish law.” (FF Bruce) This was referred to by the pious Jews as “the abomination of desolation”.



9 Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land.

- You may recall that the 4th beast in chapter 7 also featured a “little horn” (7.8). However, there are some differences between the two:
  - » The 4th beast in chapter 7 likely refers to Rome. This little horn is definitely a Greek king.
  - » The little horn in chapter 7 uprooted 3 other horns. There is no parallel in chapter 8.
  - » The saints who were persecuted by the little horn in chapter 7 would receive the Kingdom. There is no mention of the Kingdom in chapter 8.
  - » “We are being introduced to a recurring historical phenomenon: the clever but ruthless world dictator, who stops at nothing in order to obtain his ambitions” (Baldwin 162)
- The “Beautiful Land” refers to Israel (see Daniel 11.16,41).

10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.

- “The God of Israel is sometimes called “Lord [Yahweh] of hosts” (2 Sam 6:2; Isa. 6:3). Judges 5:20 speaks of the stars fighting from heaven on behalf of Israel, and it is clear that here the “host of heaven” is also fighting on the side of Israel. The phrase expresses the transcendent dimension of the conflict between Antiochus and the Jews. The language of this verse is reminiscent of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

- By taking the title “ephiphanes”, Antiochus magnified himself to a position of deity.
- “Regular sacrifice” likely referred to the regular morning and evening burnt offerings (see Numbers 28.3,10).

12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

- This verse is significant. Why was Antiochus able to persecute the Jews in such fashion? Because of their transgressions!
- See also vs. 23.

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place

and the host to be trampled?"

14He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

- "Many commentators think the "evenings and mornings" refer to the offerings of the daily sacrifice (see 8:11), making the period 1,150 days or about three years and two months. Antiochus had pagan sacrifices offered in the temple on the 15th of Chislev, 167 b.c., and the Jews reconsecrated the temple on the 25th of Chislev 164 (1 Macc 1:54; 4:52), but he had stopped Jewish rituals sometime before the 15th of Chislev (1:44-51). Others, taking the period as 2,300 days, have suggested it is the period between the removal of the High Priest Onias III from office in 171 b.c. and the rededication of the temple. It may be that the number has a symbolic meaning that is now not clear to us." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

15When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.

16And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision."

- This is the first mention of an angel's name in Scripture. Michael will also be named in Daniel 10.13; 12.1.
- It was Gabriel who announced the births of John the Baptist (Luke 1.19) and Jesus (Luke 1.26).

17So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end."

- "the time of the end" refers to different events in Scripture (note Amos 8.2; Ezekiel 7.1-9; 21.25,29; 35.5).
- The point would seem to be that the point of the vision is what occurs at the end of the vision. In other words, the emphasis of the vision is on what Antiochus IV would do to God's people. Compare Habakkuk 2.2-3.

18Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

19He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

23"In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue.

24"His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.

- Note that his power is not his own. Jehovah retains sovereignty, it is He who gives dominion to kings.

25“And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.

- Antiochus IV died of disease in late 164 B.C.

26“The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future.”

- Compare with Revelation 22.10.
- Daniel received this vision in 550 BC and was completed in 164 BC, so less than 400 years. Yet, Daniel was told to keep it secret because the vision was about many days in the future.
- The message of Revelation cannot be about events of our time, for the Lord told John to not seal his vision, because the time was near!

### ***Take comfort, God knows what will be!***

Daniel knew that various kingdoms of men would arise, but ultimately God’s Kingdom would be establish and triumph over all (chapters 2,7). But God’s ultimate triumph didn’t mean His people wouldn’t suffer. Thus, it would seem that the main point of this vision, and of subsequent visions, was to reassure Daniel (and the faithful who would read these words) that the Lord knew the trials that await. And if He knows, then His people can patiently endure with the assurance that His will is done and His Kingdom will endure.

Yet, such knowledge is difficult to comprehend (8.27). And I fear many today not only relate to Daniel, but remain fearful of the future. They fear what is happening in society, they fear that America will no longer be “Christian”. Such knowledge is difficult, but take comfort. Our God knows what will be, and if He knows what will be then we can be assured that His Kingdom will endure!



## Daniel 9.1-23

The year 539 BC was a momentous one. Daniel had served in the court of the Babylonian king ever since the first captives were taken (605 B.C.) and had witnessed Babylon's fall to the Persians (Daniel 5.30-31). But to Daniel that year wasn't important merely because one empire had fallen and another had risen in its place, but because he understood the time had come for the captivity of his people to end. Even though Daniel would have been considered righteous, he recognized that God's justice had come as result of the peoples' sins. Thus, he offered a prayer of confession, a prayer that can teach us much about confessing our iniquities.

### ***Setting of Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9.1-3 NASB95)***

1In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—

- As we noted at the conclusion of Daniel 5 and the beginning of Daniel 6, this Darius could have been the regional ruler over Babylon, or this could have been another name for Cyrus. In favor of Darius being the regional governor is the fact that Cyrus is mentioned by name in Daniel 10.1. However, we cannot be certain.
- The year would have been 539 B.C.

2In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

- Daniel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, knew him to be a prophet and searched his writings (see 1Peter 1.10-12).
- God declared through Jeremiah that the Jews would remain in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 25.11-12; 29.10).
- From the time when Daniel was taken captive (605 B.C.) to the first year of Cyrus' rule over Babylon (539 B.C.) was not quite 70 years, so it could be that 70 was used simply because it was a round number.
- However, we will note a greater significance of the 70 years when we examine vss. 24-27.

3So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

- Remember that captivity was a specific punishment for covenant unfaithfulness (Leviticus 26.33-34).
- But that same covenant stated that if the people confessed their sins, God would restore them to the land (Leviticus 26.40-42; see also 1 Kings 8.46-53).
- “when Daniel begins to pray in 9:4, we immediately see that it is a prayer of repentance and confession of sin on behalf of the whole nation, and that it was intended to meet the specific legal terms of the covenant and thus trigger the restoration of the nation.” (Phil Roberts, 1986 Florida College Lectures).

***Daniel contrasts the unfaithfulness of the people with the faithfulness of God (Daniel 9.4-10 NASB95)***

4I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

5we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

6“Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

7“Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

8“Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

9“To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

10nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

**Note the contrasts in this passage:**

1. Vss. 4-6

- Description of God:
  - » Lord: the term Yahweh, one associated with God’s covenant faithfulness, is used 7 times in this prayer, but nowhere else in the book.
  - » He’s the “great and awesome God”, a description often associated

with His mighty acts (see vs. 15)

» He keeps His covenant... (see Deuteronomy 7.9)

- Israel:

- » They sinned, committed iniquity and acted wickedly (note 1Kings 8.47)

- » They rebelled by turning aside from His commandments, thus breaking covenant

- » They did not listen to His prophets (cf. 2Chron. 36.16)

## 2. Vss. 7-8

- Righteousness belongs to God. Even His driving the people out was an act of righteousness in keeping with the covenant (see Leviticus 26.31-39).
- Open shame belonged to the people because of their sins and “unfaithful deeds”

## 3. Vss. 9-10

- Compassion and forgiveness belong to God, also a part of His covenant faithfulness.
- Yet, Israel had rebelled and did not obey His voice.

**The point:** If ever our transgressions seem to us, we should view them in light of God's holiness and covenant faithfulness!

### ***Daniel acknowledges the righteousness of God in punishing Israel (Daniel 9.11-14 NASB95)***

11 “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

12 “Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem.

13 “As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.

14 “Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

- Israel had broken the covenant by turning aside from God's law (vs. 11)

- God poured the curse on them, even as He declared in the law of Moses (vss. 11-13; Leviticus 26.14-39; Deuteronomy 28.15-68)
- Israel could have sought the Lord's favor by turning from their iniquity and following His truth, but they refused (vs. 13).
- Thus, the Lord is "righteous with respect to all His deeds..." (vs. 14).

***Daniel appeals to God's righteousness for forgiveness (Daniel 9.15-16 NASB95)***

15 "And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked.

16 "O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us.

- First, Daniel acknowledges how God had delivered His people once before (vs. 15). Perhaps the point was that if the Lord had done this once, He could certainly do it once more.
- Daniel then confesses the sins and wicked behaviors of the people again (vs. 15).
- He then asks the Lord to turn His anger and wrath away from Jerusalem (vs. 16)
- Because this would be in accordance with God's righteousness (vs. 16)
  - » He was righteous by bringing calamity on them (vs. 14)
  - » And the same righteous nature of God would result in His confirming His word to restore the people!
  - » This was the reason why Daniel was praying (vss. 1-3)

***Daniel prayed for more than forgiveness, but for a restored relationship with God (Daniel 9.17-19 NASB95)***

17 "So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

18 "O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

19 "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own

sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

- Aaron was to bless Israel by praying that the Lord would "make His face shine on you" (see Numbers 6.24-26)
- Daniel was praying that not only would the guilt of their sins be removed, but that they would experience the true blessing of God shining His face on His people, hearing them and seeing them!
- And the ultimate result would be God's glory (vs. 19)
  - » Moses entreated God on the basis of His name (Exodus 32.11-13)
  - » Hezekiah prayed that God would deliver Judah from the Assyrians so that the earth would know He is God (2Kings 19.19)
  - » God promised that He would redeem His people not on their own merit, but for His own name's sake (Ezekiel 36.20-23)
  - » Daniel now prays that God would forgive and take action not because of any merits they possessed, but because they are called by His name!

### ***The Lord answered immediately! (Daniel 9.20-23 NASB95)***

20Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

21while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

22He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

23"At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

- We will discuss God's answer in our next lesson (the 70 weeks, vss. 24-27).
- However, we should not the speed with which God responded.
  - » In vss. 20-21 we read twice that Gabriel came to Daniel while he was still praying! Gabriel even says that he was sent "at the beginning of your supplications" (vs. 23).
  - » When one is truly penitent and confesses his sins, he has assurance that God forgives (1John 1.9). He forgives because He is faithful to His covenant.
- Fact is, He probably forgives before the prayer is even finished!



## Daniel 9.24-27

The 70 “weeks” prophecy is one of the more challenging passages in Daniel. Various interpretations have been given to the prophecy, and we simply do not have the time to discuss them all. However, when kept in context, the meaning of the prophecy becomes more clear and I hope and pray that this lesson will provide insight and not confusion. I would highly recommend reading Phil Roberts’ 1986 Florida College lecture on the subject. His insight aided me greatly in my study of the passage. (<https://bookstore.floridacollege.edu/product/52045/LEAVING-A-MARK/>)

Daniel 9:24–27 (NASB95)

24“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

25“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

26“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

27“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

### ***The prophecy is God’s response to Daniel’s prayer.***

We must not forget that the bulk of this chapter is devoted to Daniel’s prayer which he made once he understood that the 70 years of captivity had been completed (vs. 2). We mustn’t forget that God had warned that captivity would be the result of covenant unfaithfulness (Leviticus 26.34). But God had

also promised that when the people confessed their iniquities, He would restore them to the land (Leviticus 26.40-42). Daniel's prayer was the exact kind of prayer God was looking for, thus the Lord sent a response to Daniel even before he was finished praying (vss. 20,21,23). This is important to keep in mind because it places the beginning of the 70 "weeks" at the time when Daniel uttered his prayer (539 B.C.).

### **Why 70?**

- First, let's consider that while many of our most prominent English translations read "Seventy weeks" (NASB, ESV, NKJV), the NASB includes a footnote stating "or units of seven" and this is reflected in translations such as the NIV (seventy sevens) and NLT (seventy sets of seven). I believe this is the better way of reading the text.
- Now consider the significance of 7 units of time in the Mosaic covenant:
  - » Israel was to observe the Sabbath, every 7th day (Exodus 31.13).
  - » The land was to "rest" every 7th year (Leviticus 25.3-4).
  - » Seven sabbath years, i.e. every 49 years, was a year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25.8ff).
  - » "This whole complex of sabbath keeping—days, years, and Jubilees—was especially well-suited to be a sign of the covenant because of the faith it demanded on the part of the Israelites. Consider the faith required for the people of an agricultural economy to go without cultivating their land for an entire year, not to mention the two years of the Jubilee. Surely one of the first laws to be ignored during periods of unfaithfulness would be the sabbath, and especially the seventh-year sabbaths." (Phil Roberts)
- And what would happen when Israel was unfaithful to their covenant? Ultimately, they would be taken out of the land and the land would be allowed to "enjoy its sabbaths" (Leviticus 26.34). With that in mind, consider what was written when God's people went away into Babylonian captivity: "... until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete." (2Chronicles 36.21). Thus, if each year of captivity was to fulfill one sabbatical year, then 70 years of captivity were the result of 490 years of covenant unfaithfulness.
- Returning to our text, Daniel prayed for forgiveness and restoration once the 70 years of captivity were coming to an end, each year of captivity representing one missed sabbatical year. Israel was punished for the prior "seventy sevens" of disobedience, and now God was revealing what would take place during the course of the next seventy sevens. "Just as the preceding epoch of Israelite history had culminated in failure and

captivity because of the unfaithfulness of Israel, now a new epoch of seventy times seven will begin which will culminate in salvation and redemption because of the faithfulness of God to his part in the covenant." (Phil Roberts)

- \* I do not take this to mean that the vision was fulfilled in an exact seventy sevens (490 years), nor do I believe we were intended to reach that conclusion. The captivity did not last an exact 70 years, but the 70 year number represented something of significance, for not only did 70 years of captivity mean the land had been deprived of 70 sabbaths, but 10 years of Jubilee were also skipped. Israel was punished for the last seventy sevens, but what would the next seventy sevens hold?

## **Jubilee**

- As we've already seen, the Mosaic Law stated that every 7th sabbatical year (7 sevens) a year of Jubilee was proclaimed (Leviticus 25.8ff).
- That the concept of Jubilee is prevalent in the vision seems evident. Consider that the seventy sevens are broken down into 3 parts: 7 sevens, 62 sevens and 1 seven. The first part, 7 sevens, is the time of Jubilee. And as we've already seen, 70 sevens comprises 10 periods of Jubilee (7x7x10).
- But what was so significant about Jubilee?
  - » First, let's consider that each sabbath day not only commemorated rest (Exodus 20.11) but deliverance (Deuteronomy 5.15).
  - » The dual concepts of rest and deliverance were central to the sabbatical year as the land rested, slaves were released and debts were canceled (Deuteronomy 15.1-18).
  - » And these concepts culminated on the year of Jubilee as the land and inhabitants rested and as they proclaimed "a release through the land to all its inhabitants." (Leviticus 25.10).
  - » "It is because of sin that man has to labor by the sweat of his brow to obtain his food. Because of sin men and women are enslaved to sickness and disease, from which they long to be delivered, as was the woman of Luke 13:10-17. And because of sin the Israelites had to be sent into the bondage of the Babylonian captivity. In short, sin brings bondage and enslavement; deliverance from sin brings rest." (Phil Roberts)
- Now note what the Lord declared would happen in the vision of 70 sevens:
  - » "finish the transgression" Perhaps bringing an end to the transgressions of the Jews.

- » “make an end of sin” Either by forgiveness or judgment... or both.
- » “make atonement for iniquity” Via the sacrificial death of Christ.
- » “bring in everlasting righteousness” Through faith in Christ, as opposed to the condemnation experienced by the Jews in Daniel’s day.
- » “seal up vision and prophecy” Signifying the completion of God’s will.
- » “anoint the most holy place” “The grammar is ambiguous and could refer to the anointing either of a person or of a place. And both temple and Messiah are part of the context of this passage. It is my belief that the reference is to Jesus as the Messiah, but with the realization that he is also the true temple or “Most Holy” who would, in his own person, replace the physical temple of the Jews (cf. John 2:19–21).” (Phil Roberts)
- » In short, the vision was about deliverance and rest! “Because of sin, the preceding epoch of ten Jubilees had not brought liberty, but a return to bondage—the very antithesis of what the sabbath law stood for. So now the angel announces to Daniel a new epoch of ten Jubilees to bring in the true salvation and deliverance from bondage that God was preparing for his people.” (Phil Roberts)

### **70 sevens in three parts**

God’s people were in captivity for 70 years because of unfaithfulness, but the vision of 70 sevens emphasizes God’s faithfulness to His promises and the blessings that would come on His people. Significantly, the period of 70 sevens is broken down into 3 parts, each showing a different way in which God would bless His people. Let’s note these using the NLT translation:



Daniel 9:24–27 (NLT)

24“A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

25Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times.

- » 7 sevens: Jerusalem rebuilt and restored, God's answer to Daniel's prayer (vss. 17-19).
- » 62 sevens: coming of Messiah the Prince, God's promise of the One who would rule over His everlasting Kingdom (7.13-14).

26 "After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end.

27 The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him."

- » 1 seven: destruction of the desolater. Recall that God revealed the 4th beast (world empire, Rome) would wage war against the saints (7.21,23-25), but the 4th beast would be destroyed (7.11,22,26-27).
- » You will note that the killing of the Anointed One is not attributed to the "ruler" that would arise. Perhaps, the Lord intended for it to be understood that the killing of the Anointed One was the culmination of Jewish rebellion and sin.
- » The ruler who would arise (Rome) would destroy both the Temple and Jerusalem, bringing an end to the Jewish state.
- » Vs. 27 could still be talking about Rome's treatment of the Jews, but it seems more likely that this references Rome's treatment of Christians. Rome sought to impose its will on God's people (the idea behind making a strong or firm covenant), sought to stop Christian worship (i.e. put an end to the sacrifices and offerings) and enforced the worship of Caesar (object of desecration or abomination).
- » But Rome's fate was decreed, the one that brought desolation would be destroyed!



## Daniel 10

In our study of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9.24-27) we proposed that the vision encompassed the time from when Daniel received the message (in the first year of Cyrus, 539 BC) until the time when God would bring His vengeance on the “one who makes desolate”. It seems that Rome is intended, the 4th empire in the visions of Daniel 2 and 7. That empire would oppose God’s rule, but would be destroyed in turn. Many things would occur in the span of that “70 sevens” including the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah, His death and the destruction of Jerusalem.

One may be tempted to assume that the final vision of the letter (Daniel 10-12) would be concerned with the final portion of the 70 sevens prophecy, but that is not the case. Just as Daniel’s vision of the 4 beasts (Daniel 7) was followed by a vision concerning the 2nd and 3rd empires (Daniel 8), the final vision of Daniel concerns the activities of Persia and Greece. Daniel would come to understand that hardship and suffering were in store for his people, yet he could also know that his God still ruled over the realm of mankind.

### ***Prelude to the vision (Daniel 10.1-4 NASB95)***

1In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

2In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.

3I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

4On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

- The third year of Cyrus was 537 BC. By this time the first group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem (see Ezra 1).
- Interesting that this is the only time Daniel’s Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, is used after the 5th chapter. Perhaps it is used because he remained in the land of Israel’s captivity.
- We are not told why Daniel was mourning for three weeks. Given that the three week period ended on the 24th of the first month (vs. 4), we can know that the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread occurred during

this period of mourning. Perhaps news of opposition to the building of the temple had reached Daniel (see Ezra 4.4-5).

- Verse 3 details various ways in which Daniel mourned. Significantly, we can see that Daniel's eating only vegetables (1.12,16) was a temporary measure.

### ***Vision of the man dressed in linen (Daniel 10.5-9 NASB95)***

5I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.

6His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

7Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.

8So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.

9But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

- The identification of this "man" is difficult. Most believe it is an angel, possibly Gabriel. Others believe it is a theophany, an appearance of God. Some believe the "man" in this passage is different from the "man" in vss. 10-21.
- Linen garments were the clothing of priests (see Leviticus 6.10; 16.4).
- The descriptive features in vs. 6 have parallels the creatures in Ezekiel 1.
  - » Body like beryl (Ezekiel 1.16)
  - » Face like lightning (Ezekiel 1.13-14)
  - » Eyes like torches (Ezekiel 1.13)
  - » Arms and feet like bronze (Ezekiel 1.7)
  - » Voice like a tumult (Ezekiel 1.24)
- The response of Daniel and his companions is similar to that of Saul and his companions in Acts 9.3-7.
- Finally, note the similarities between this "man" and the description of Christ in Revelation 1.12-16.
- For my part, I conclude that the "man" in vss. 5-9 is the same as the one in vss. 10-21. The vision is not of God Himself, for this is a messenger sent to Daniel (vs. 11). However, the messenger is certainly heavenly. Perhaps it is an angel, perhaps it is the Son of Man (7.13-14).

### ***The message for Daniel (Daniel 10.11-21 NASB95)***

10Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

11He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

12Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

- Three times in this passage the divine messenger touches Daniel to impart strength (vss. 10,16,18).
- Note that Daniel was held in high esteem (ESV "loved") because of humbleness.
- Remember that Daniel had been mourning for 3 weeks (vss. 2-3). The messenger was sent to Daniel when he first started to mourn (compare 9.20,21,23).

13"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

14"Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future."

15When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

16And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, "O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.

17"For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me."

18Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me.

19He said, "O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!" Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, "May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

20Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.

21"However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.

- The crux of this message is that the divine messenger was delayed because of conflict with the prince of Persia, but “Michael your prince” came to his aid. The conflict would continue with the prince of Persia and then with the prince of Greece (vs. 20). So, what is all of this about?
- Already Daniel had been shown that rulers of this world would be at war with God and His saints (7.21,25; 8.24-25; 9.26-27). And now the message the divine messenger bore would also indicate how human rulers would afflict God's people (11.33-35).
- The point of this passage is to show that a spiritual conflict lay behind these earthly ones.
  - » Remember, our conflict is a spiritual one (Ephesians 6.12).
  - » I see a parallel between this and Revelation 12. In the preceeding chapters John recorded how God's people were being persecuted by the rulers of that day (Rome) and how God was going to respond. Then in chapter 12 we see behind the curtain: Roman persecution of God's people was in actuality Satan's opposition to God and His saints. Significantly, Michael waged war with the dragon and the dragon was cast down (Revelation 12.7-9).
  - » Michael means “who is like God?” and thus is a fitting name for the protector of God's people (see 12.1). Persia and Greece may be mighty powers, but God fights for His people and there are none who can stand up to Him!
  - » “A representative of Persia in the heavenlies is intended; Greece also has an angelic counterpart (20), and Michael, one of the chief princes, belongs to Israel. Evidently the hierarchy in the heavenlies is not a replica of that on earth, where little Israel had no prestige and Persia was the great dominating power... The heavenly warfare is to be directed against first Persia and then Greece, because each of these in turn will have power over God's people. Though apparently defenceless, they have on their side the divine Messenger, who is assisted by Michael. The conflict will be such as to cause doubt as to whether God's people can survive, and the vision is intended to give unshakeable assurance that, desperate as the situation will be, God is so fully in control as to be able to disclose the sequence of events before they happen.” (Joyce Baldwin, Tyndale Commentary).
- Finally, note that the divine messenger will tell Daniel “what is inscribed in the writing of truth” (vs. 21). While every word of God is true, the idea seems to be that God knows what will happen in advance, thus the message of future days is “true” (see vs. 14; 11.2).

### **Takeaways:**

- 1. Human nations are generally against God.** God used the Persian king to release His people from captivity (see Isaiah 44.28-45.1), but that doesn't mean Persia was on the side of Jehovah. This vision coupled with the other visions (chapter 2,7,8) paint the picture of world kingdoms being opposed to Jehovah God. That is the general truth of this world. Yes, there may be some blessings found in some nations and kingdoms which are not found in others, but we mustn't think that any nation of man is allied with Jehovah God. The "princes" of this world are at war with Him, but He is on our side!
- 2. God's rule is assured.** His rule is emphasized in this passage because while the princes of Persia and Greece may oppose His messengers, they are not victorious. Furthermore, God's knowing what will take place in the future (vss. 14,21) shows His sovereignty over what will transpire, and the assurance that He can and will deliver His people.
- 3. Thus, Daniel could "take courage and be courageous".** Knowing that God rules and that He aids His people was the source of Daniel's courage... and ours.



## Daniel 11.1-20

In our study of Daniel 10 we saw that a divine messenger was sent to Daniel so that he would have “an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days...” (Daniel 10.14) and that Daniel would be told “what is inscribed in the writing of truth” (Daniel 10.21). God, the Ruler of the realms of mankind, knew what would transpire in the future thus His message to Daniel was true. And as we will see, the Lord knew the details of what would transpire and how these events would affect His people.

### Daniel 11:1 (NASB95)

1 “In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

Rather than offer commentary on individual verses, our aim in this lesson will be to provide a sketch of the historical events covered in these verses. But before we look at these events we should note that vs. 1 ties us back to the end of chapter 10. That chapter concluded with the divine messenger revealing to Daniel that only Michael stood with the messenger against the princes of Persia and Greece. Now we see that in the first year of Cyrus (Darius either being a governor under Cyrus or another name for the Persian king), this messenger arose to encourage and protect Michael (the “him” in this verse refers back to Michael, not to Darius). The point would seem to be that even though it was Cyrus who proclaimed a release to the Jewish captives (Ezra 1), this occurred only because the forces of the Lord were fighting for them.

### Daniel 11:2–4 (NASB95)

2 “And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece. 3 “And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. 4 “But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

Cyrus was succeeded as ruler of the Persian empire by Cambyses,

Smerdis, Darius and then Xerxes. These are the kings referenced in Daniel 11.2 and it was Xerxes who was arguably the richest of the Persian kings and the one who was most involved with battles against the Greeks. This verse spans about 70 years of Persian history. Then we skip ~130 years to the time of Alexander the Great who took the throne of Macedon in 336 B.C. (Daniel 11.3). Within 5 years he had toppled the Persian empire. However, Alexander died in 323 B.C. and a 20 year struggle for the throne ensued. Ultimately, Alexander's descendants would not rule and the Greek empire was parceled out among his generals (Daniel 11.4; cf. 8.22). "Two of those divisions were in the Aegean region (Cassander had Greece and Macedonia; Lysimachus had Thrace), while the other two divided up the Near East (Ptolemy had Egypt and Palestine; Seleucus had Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia). The Ptolemaic line is going to be represented by 'the king of the South,' while the Seleucid line will be represented by 'the king of the North.'" (IVP Bible Background Commentary)



### Daniel 11:5-9 (NASB95)

5 "Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed. 6 "After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times. 7 "But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. 8 "Also their gods with their met-

al images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. 9 "Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

Ptolemy I was a key figure in the 20 year power struggle that followed Alexander's death. Seleucus I served as a general under Ptolemy. Ultimately, Ptolemy was able to proclaim himself as king of Egypt in 306 B.C. and Seleucus gained control of Babylon and the territory to the east (Daniel 11.5). Significantly, Palestine was supposed to be part of Seleucus' territory, but Ptolemy claimed it for himself before Syrian forces could take control. For the next 40 years Egypt (Ptolemy) and Syria (Seleucus) would be at war. However, "About 252, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246) sent his daughter, Berenice, with her entourage to marry the Seleucid king, Antiochus II Theos (261–246), and thereby to establish an alliance between their kingdoms. The alliance would give Ptolemy control of Syria and Antiochus control of Asia Minor. The fragile relationship held for a couple of years, and Berenice had a child, but a former wife of Antiochus, Laodice, whose sons had been cut off from succession, allegedly poisoned Antiochus and consequently had Berenice and her son (along with many from her entourage) murdered. Ptolemy II also had died in that year. Needless to say, the alliance crumbled and the next fifty years are full of tumultuous warfare between the two kingdoms." (IVP Bible Background Commentary). These are the events related in Daniel 11.6. The new king of Egypt, and brother to Berenice, responded by invading Syria, conquering much territory and taking much plunder (Daniel 11.7-8). In 243 B.C. Seleucus II, son of Laodice, unsuccessfully attempted to fight against Egypt and to gain control of Palestine. (Daniel 11.9).

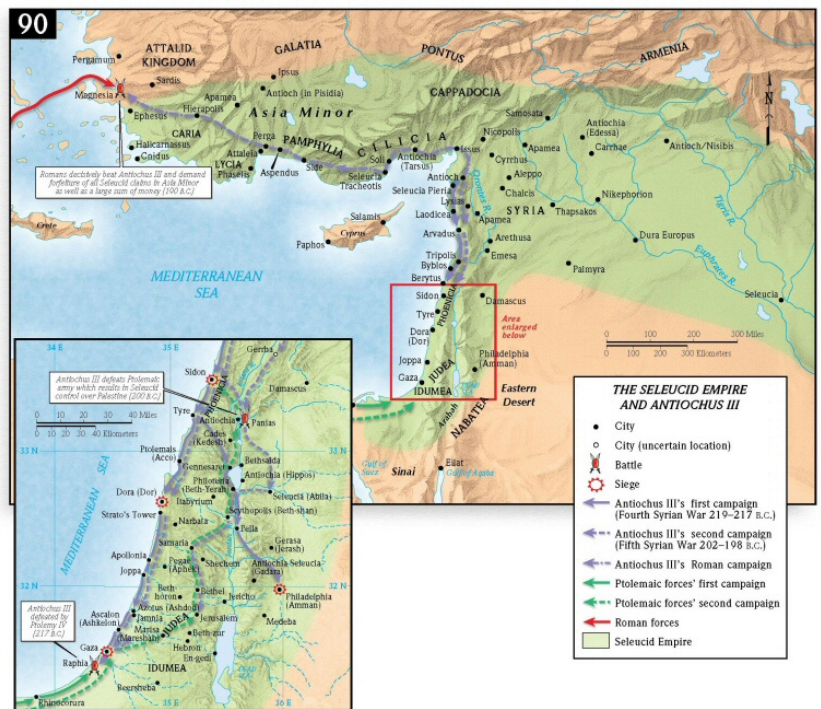
#### Daniel 11:10–19 (NASB95)

10 "His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress. 11 "The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. 12 "When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 13 "For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment. 14 "Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. 15 "Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. 16 "But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and

no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. 17 “He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side. 18 “Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. 19 “So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

Seleucus II was succeeded for a brief time by his son Seleucus III, but after he died in battle another son of Seleucus II took the throne. This was Antiochus III the Great who ruled over Syria from 223-187 B.C. This “king of the North” is the main subject of Daniel 11.10-19.

- Daniel 11.12-13 - “In 217 Ptolemy IV engaged Antiochus III at the Battle of Raphia for what would turn out to be the climactic battle of the Fourth Syrian War. Raphia was a traditional dividing line between Palestine and Egypt, about twenty miles southwest of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. Antiochus claimed an army of seventy thousand, but even with the superior size of his armies he was beaten badly by the Egyptians. This victory restored Syro-Palestine to the control of the Ptolemies. This status was maintained until the death of Ptolemy IV in 204. The suspicious circumstances of the death of Ptolemy IV (still in his thirties) brought his six-year-old son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180), to the throne of Egypt. Antiochus took the opportunity of conflict over who was in charge to initiate the Fifth Syrian War (202–200), allied with Philip V of Macedon.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- Daniel 11.14-16 - Antiochus was able to gain temporary control of Palestine in 201, but he was ultimately pushed back by Egyptian forces. However, at the Battle of Panion in 200 B.C. Antiochus defeated the Egyptians and took firm control of Palestine. Vs. 14 speaks of “violent ones among your people”. Historically, it is unclear of any specific event that this verse may reference. The point would seem to be that the opinion of many



Jews was against the Ptolemies and they were now in favor of Syrian rule. "Josephus (Ant. 12.3.3–4) says that the Jews in Jerusalem were divided into pro-Ptolemaic and pro-Seleucid factions. According to him, when Antiochus visited Jerusalem after gaining control of Palestine, he was well received and guaranteed the Jews freedom to live by their ancestral laws." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

- Daniel 11.17-19 - While the message to Daniel concerned itself with events between Egypt and Syria (because Jerusalem lay between the two powers), other events were transpiring in the world that would shift the balance of global power. Rome had been encroaching on Greek territory and had established control of mainland Greece by 196 B.C. Some Greeks appealed to Antiochus for help and he was willing. But first, he needed to neutralize Egypt. He sought to do so by sending his daughter, Cleopatra, to be Ptolemy V's bride. Antiochus had hoped that his daughter would spy for him, but instead she chose loyalty to her husband. Meanwhile, Antiochus suffered a string of defeats at the hands of the Romans who were under the command of Scipio. A much smaller Roman force soundly defeated the larger army of Antiochus at Magnesia (~ 50 miles north of Ephesus). Antiochus was forced to accept the Roman terms of surrender, including sending his son Antiochus IV to Rome as captive. "By the Treaty of Apamea in 189 Antiochus became a vassal of Rome, had to send twenty hostages to Rome, and paid a huge indemnity. This left him humiliated and short of funds... In 187 B.C. Antiochus and his followers were assassinated by the local people when he tried to plunder the treasury of the temple of Bel in Elymais in Persia in order to pay his tribute to Rome" (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

#### Daniel 11:20 (NASB95)

20 "Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

Antiochus III was succeeded by his son, Seleucus IV (187-175 B.C.). His reign was relatively peaceful, but he did on one occasion send an official to Jerusalem to seize funds from the Temple treasury. Jewish literature claims that the official was prevented from doing so by a divine vision. Seleucus was later assassinated by the same official he had sent to loot the Temple (Daniel 11.20). He would ultimately be succeeded by his brother, Antiochus IV. Much of the remaining message concerns this wicked king.

#### **Takeaways:**

**1. The case for Divine inspiration.** As we noted in the introductory material

to Daniel, the date for the composition of the book has been the topic of much debate over the last few centuries. As discussed then, the evidence points to the book being written by Daniel in the 6th century B.C. Yet, many advocate for an author in the 2nd century B.C. Their reason? They do not believe in predictive prophecy; they do not believe in a sovereign God. One of the chief values of this book for us is that it shows there is a God who knows what will transpire and can reveal that to His servants. The detail of the revelation in Daniel 11 should only bolster our faith.

- 2. God always rules in the realm of mankind.** When Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself against Jehovah God, he was humbled until he recognized that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” (Daniel 4.17,25,32). It would seem that the point of the visions in the latter portion of Daniel is to emphasize that not only did Jehovah rule in the days of Babylon and Persia, but His sovereign rule would continue. He did not necessarily determine what nations and kings would do (note that Nebuchadnezzar had the opportunity to repent and not suffer God's wrath, see Daniel 4.27), but He knew what would transpire and how the events of the future would affect His people. This fact should give God's people needed perspective. Our God knew everything that would transpire last year, last decade, last century. He knows what will transpire this year, this decade and this century. That knowledge is not given to us, yet we can take comfort in knowing that if we follow Him, He will take care of us day by day.



## Daniel 11.21-45

In previous visions it had been revealed to Daniel that future rulers and kingdoms would continue to oppress his people. In chapter 7 he was told that rulers of the 4th kingdom would wage “war with the saints and overpower them” (7.21). In chapter 8 Daniel was told that a Greek ruler would “destroy mighty men and the holy people” (8.24). And in chapter 9 it was revealed that in the future the Messiah would be cut off and Jerusalem destroyed (9.26-27). Chapters 10-12 contain the last vision revealed to Daniel, a vision where he would come to understand what would “happen to your people in the latter days” (10.14). In our study of Daniel 11.1-20 we’ve had a brief sketch of Persian (11.1-2) and Greek rule (11.3-20), focusing mainly on the conflicts between the kings of the South (Ptolemies) and the kings of the North (Seleucids). But starting with 11.21 we see how some of these rulers would oppress God’s people.

### ***Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Daniel 11.21-35 NASB95)***

This king was already the subject of a vision, the ruler who would “destroy mighty men and the holy people” (8.23-26). Yet, the rule of Antiochus IV would not have seemed certain to most. We noted in 11.18-19 that Antiochus III the Great was soundly defeated by the Romans in 190 B.C. Besides a huge indemnity which was placed on Antiochus, he was forced to send hostages to Rome. These hostages would not be released until the indemnity was paid in full. One of the hostages was Antiochus IV. Yet, this son would become king and his zeal for power would have ramifications not only for the king of the South, but for God’s people.

21 “In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

- Antiochus IV had been released, in exchange for another hostage, shortly before Seleucus IV was murdered by Heliodorus (vs. 20). The legal heir to the throne was Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV, but it was Demetrius who was sent to Rome as hostage in place of Antiochus IV.
- Antiochus IV arrived with an army and Heliodorus fled. Antiochus was supposedly ruling as coregent with his nephew, but the nephew was murdered a few years later, leaving Antiochus IV as king.

22 “The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.

23“After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

24“In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

- “Antiochus III’s policy of allowing the Jews self-government made the high priest the local ruler. When Antiochus IV came to power, the high priest was Onias III. He opposed the inroads of Hellenism in Judea. Soon after Antiochus IV’s accession, Onias’s brother Jason offered the king a large bribe and the promise that he would pursue a policy of hellenization if he were made high priest. Antiochus agreed and deposed Onias. In 172 B.C. Menelaus, who was not of the high priestly family but from the rival Tobiad family, offered the king an even bigger bribe, and he was made high priest in Jason’s place. Onias publicly accused Menelaus of stealing some golden vessels from the temple and fled to the sanctuary at Daphne for safety. Menelaus had him lured from the sanctuary and murdered in 171. This seems to be the one specifically identifiable event in verses 22–24, which otherwise seem to give an overall impression of Antiochus IV’s rule.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

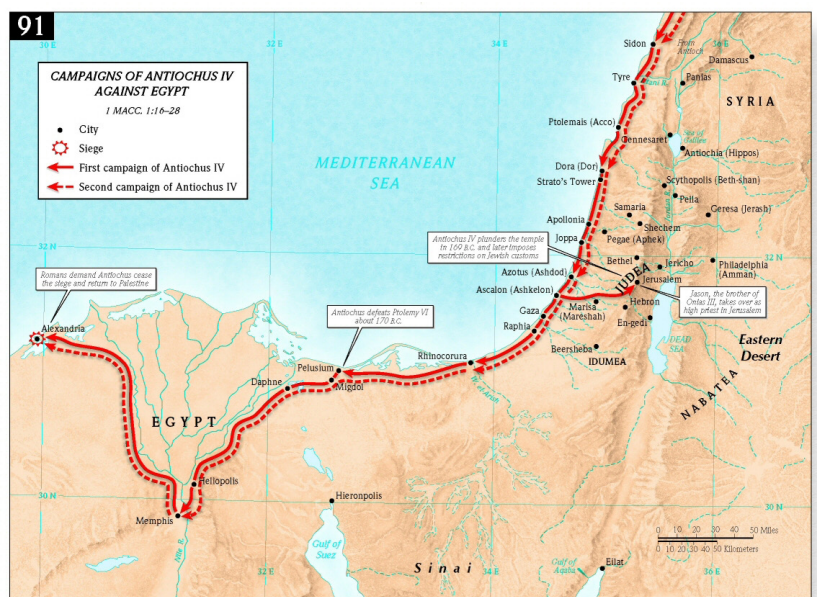
25“He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

26“Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain.

27“As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

28“Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

- These verses detail the first invasion of Egypt by Antiochus IV in 170 B.C.
- Ptolemy VI was very young when he was made king of Egypt. Two of his counselors provoked him to try and recover Palestine (vs. 26), which may



have been what provoked Antiochus' invasion.

- Antiochus IV invaded in 170, defeated an Egyptian army near Pelusium and then captured Memphis (vs. 25). Alexandria did not fall to Antiochus and they declared Ptolemy VII, younger brother of Ptolemy VI, as the new king of Egypt.
- Antiochus set Ptolemy VI as a puppet king in Memphis, but Ptolemy VI and VII allied with each other, becoming joint rulers of Egypt (vs. 27)
- On his way back to Syria, Antiochus IV stopped in Jerusalem and raided the Temple treasury (vs. 28).

29“At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before.

30“For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

- Antiochus returned to Egypt in 168 B.C., quickly subdued Memphis again and then lay siege to Alexandria.
- However, Egypt had appealed to Rome for help and the Roman consul Gaius Popillius Laenas arrived as Antiochus was laying siege to Alexandria. The mention of “ships of Kittim” in vs. 30 refers to this force from Rome. The Roman consul demanded that Antiochus leave Egypt, and when Antiochus replied that he must first consult with his advisors the consul drew a circle in the dirt around Antiochus and said he must give his answer before leaving the circle. Humiliated, Antiochus retreated to Syria.
- Rumor reached Jerusalem that Antiochus had been killed. Jason, the former high priest, took this as an opportunity to rebel against the current high priest, Menelaus. Antiochus put the rebellion down, massacring tens of thousands of Jews. It was probably at this time that the citadel of Syrian soldiers was set up at the edge of the Temple Mount.

31“Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

- This verse details how Antiochus IV turned his full fury against the Jews.
- “According to the book of Maccabees, an individual named Geron was sent by Antiochus to dismantle Jewish religious practice. It is possible that the Syrian military contingent, seeking accommodation for their own worship practice, was partially responsible for some of the changes described in the temple. In December 167 a systematic program of instituting Greek religious practices at the expense of Jewish ones began in earnest. The sacrificial system and the Sabbath and festival observances were halted. Worship sites were set up around the country and circumcision was forbidden. The temple was consecrated to Zeus and became a center of poly-

theism and prostitution." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

- On the 15th of Chislev, 167 B.C. an object of sacrilege was erected on the altar of burn offering. This is usually taken to be an idol of Olympian Zeus. Here, it is referred to as the "abomination of desolation."

32"By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.

33"Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.

34"Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy.

35"Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

- There were many Jews who favored the Hellenization process, foremost of whom was Menelaus the high priest. However, many others rebelled.
- "The main organized rebellion was led by the Hasmonean family. When a Syrian envoy came to their town, Modein, to enforce Antiochus's edict, the head of the family, a priest named Mattathias, killed him. The family fled and became the rallying point for other rebels. Judas, one of Mattathias's five sons, became the military commander and gained the nickname "Maccabeus" ("hammer") because of the defeats he inflicted on the Syrian forces sent against the rebels. In December 164 B.C., about three years after the desecration of the temple, Judas regained control of Jerusalem, purified the temple, and resumed the sacrifices. This event is not recorded in Daniel 11." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)



### ***The King (Daniel 11.36-45 NASB95)***

Opinions differ on the identity of "the king" in these verses. Perhaps the most natural reading of the text would be to see these verses as still relating to Antiochus IV. Indeed, there are several points that fit:

- Antiochus began including "God manifest" (Epiphanes) on his coins, thus exalting himself above every god (vs. 36).
- Antiochus promoted the worship of Olympian Zeus, whereas his forefathers viewed Apollo as their patron. Thus, he did not worship the god of his fathers (vs. 37).

- Worshipping a god of fortresses (vs. 38) may refer to Antiochus' quest for power, thus ambition was his true god.

However, there are many aspects of this passage that do not point to any known aspect of Antiochus' rule. Thus, many conservative commentators believe that the focus of the passage has shifted from Antiochus to Rome. This makes sense in the overall scheme of the book as the visions of chapters 2 and 7 foretold of four world empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). Furthermore, the 70 weeks prophecy encompassed events of the Roman Empire (9.26-27). So, it would make sense that this final vision also encompasses what would happen to God's people during Roman rule.

36“Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

- Pompey took control of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. Thousands of Jews were killed and Pompey forced his way into the holy of holies.
- Various Roman emperors would continue the process of magnifying themselves above all other gods and opposing the true God.
- However, as this passage makes clear, the power of Rome would come to an end (Daniel 2.44; 7.11,26).

37“He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

38“But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

39“He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

- The chief god of Roman emperors was power. In their quest of power, they would magnify themselves above all other gods.
- Receiving the help of “a foreign god” may reference Rome's willingness to ally herself with other nations to achieve her aims. It could also reference the fact that Jehovah God was still sovereign and so what came to pass was by His permission.
- Herod was one such vassal of Rome who received “great honor” and the right to “rule over the many” because of his alliance with Rome.

40“At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many

ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.

- The “end time” here could refer to the end of the Egyptian kingdom.
- The Ptolemies moved against the Romans, led by Cleopatra and Mark Antony. However Octavian was victorious over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium 31 B.C., bringing an end to the Ptolemy kingdom.

41 “He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

- Roman rule over Palestine was reaffirmed following the battle of Actium.
- Herod, who had been a friend and ally of Mark Antony, swore fidelity to Octavian and received the right to rule over Palestine.
- This verse may refer to the fact that there was no formal action against Edom, Moab and Ammon, or that since they were located in the desert they did not figure into Roman plans.

42 “Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape.

43 “But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

- These verses have no parallel in the life of Antiochus IV, and so give weight to Rome being the correct interpretation.
- Only Rome gained control over all of these regions.

44 “But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.

- A possible reference to the numerous troubles the Romans would have with the Parthians (east) and Barbaric tribes (north) through the years.

45 “He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

- Homer Hailey sees this verse as referring to AD 70 when a Roman encamped around Jerusalem and then destroyed it. This event was also foretold in Daniel 9.26.
- Yet, Rome would not rule forever. Its rule would come to an end, and since that end was decreed by God, no one could help.



## Daniel 12

While 2 years elapsed between the visions of Daniel 9 and Daniel 10-12, it seems that the visions were connected. Recall that Daniel concluded his prayer by petitioning the Lord to hear and forgive, “because Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Daniel 9.19). The Lord responded by sending Gabriel to communicate the “70 sevens” prophecy to the prophet. “70 sevens” were decreed for Daniel’s people and his city (vs. 24), but within the last seven the city would be destroyed (vs. 26). God’s message to Daniel was one of hope but also of concern: yes, God had heard and He was going to restore His people, but the city Daniel loved would be destroyed and the his countrymen would undergo tribulation.

Daniel 10-12 elaborates on the “70 sevens” prophecy, giving more details about how Daniel’s people would suffer and the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem. Just as the “70 sevens” prophecy terminated with what happened to the Jews during Roman rule, so it would also seem that the vision of Daniel 10-12 shifted to Roman rule beginning in Daniel 11.36. As we begin Daniel 12, what would befall Daniel’s kinsmen during the time of Roman rule is still under consideration. Difficult days were ahead, but there was hope...

### ***The End (Daniel 12.1-4 NASB95)***

“The end” is referenced 4 times in this chapter (vss. 4,6,9,13). But, what end; does the “end of time” in vs. 4 refer to the final judgment? This is when we need to remember the scope of the book. Chapters 2 and 7 speak of God’s Kingdom being established in the days of the 4th world empire (Rome) and the “70 sevens” prophecy foretells the death of the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem and the punishment of Rome. The book has not looked beyond those events! Furthermore, Daniel was to be given “an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days” (Daniel 10.14). So, “the end” in this chapter is not the end of the world, but the end of what God was foretelling regarding His people (note vs. 6, “the end of these wonders”).

1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

- “Now at that time” points us back to the conclusion of chapter 11. Even though his end was decreed, the king (Rome) had come to the holy land (11.45).
- During that time there would be “a time of distress such as never occurred...”
  - » Ezekiel used similar language when speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 BC (Ezekiel 5.8-9).
  - » Of greater significance, Jesus referenced this prophecy when foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 (Matthew 24.15-21). The prophecy of Daniel was looking forward to that climatic event.
- But there was hope:
  - » Michael would arise. Recall that Michael was the one who aided the divine messenger in his struggle with the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece (Daniel 10.13,21). His rising indicates that God’s aid was still present during this time of great distress.
  - » Those “found written in the book” would be rescued. Recall that in Daniel 7.10 “the books were opened” as a prelude to the 4th beast (Rome) being judged. Now we see that God also records the names of His faithful ones. Judgment is certain for any that oppose the Lord, but salvation is assured for His people.

2“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

- Jesus foretold of two resurrections in John 5: would be a general resurrection of all, some resurrected to life while others were resurrected to judgment (John 5.28-29). I believe Jesus was speaking of the final resurrection in that passage. However, He also spoke of another resurrection: “an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (John 5.25)
- I believe this resurrection, which occurred during the days of Jesus, is the one predicted in this verse. God’s people were downtrodden and defeated, but those who responded to the gospel of Jesus would be granted eternal life! Those who refused Him would perish.

3“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

4“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

- Daniel had been told before to keep a vision secret because it pertained “to many days in the future” (Daniel 8.26). Now Daniel is twice told to con-

ceal and seal up this vision (Daniel 12.4,9). Why? Because these words applied to “the end”. Again, we must allow the book to define “the end” and it would seem that “the end” references the coming of Christ, the destruction of Jerusalem and the punishment of Rome, showing the eternal nature of God’s Kingdom. All of these events would occur within the next 500-700 years from when Daniel was prophesying.

- Contrast the charge to Daniel with the charge given to John in Revelation 22.10. John must not seal up the words because “the time is near”. Revelation was not a message regarding the distant future, but a message with primary application to what God’s saints were experiencing in the 1st century.
- The last phrase, “many will go back and forth” is a difficult one and my refer to how many would almost frantically try to understand the vision. They would gain some knowledge, but not complete since the vision was concealed. We are reminded of Peter’s words of how God’s prophets searched to understand the meaning of what they wrote (see 1Peter 1.10-11).

### ***When? (Daniel 12.5-7 NASB95)***

5Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.

6And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”

- The “man dressed in linen” was introduced in Daniel 10.5-6. These other two figures are now introduced, although they are not identified.
- Of greater significance is the question: “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”

7I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

- There may be a parallel with what happened in this verse and what John saw in Revelation 10.5-7. There an angel declared that it would soon be that “the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.”
- “The Old Testament prophets never dealt with specific events beyond the coming redemption, the permanent establishment of the spiritual kingdom, the termination of the Jewish theocracy, the persecution of the saints, and the destruction of the fourth world empire (the Roman Em-

pire - see Daniel 2,7). This point considered further in the light of Revelation 11.15-19 seems clearly to establish the fact that this angel's message looked not to the end of time but to the completion of God's mystery, the gospel, the firm establishment of His kingdom and power, and the destruction of world powers." (Homer Hailey)

- Returning to Daniel 12.7, it was revealed to Daniel that the shattering of the holy people would be finished after "time, times and half a time."
  - » Note that the same time frame was found in Daniel 7.25 for the time when the 4th world empire would wage war against the saints.
  - » Furthermore, the same time frame is used in Revelation to describe the period of distress God's people would endure (see Revelation 11.2-3; 12.6,14; 13.5).
  - » I believe this time frame includes not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but the period of time God's people suffered at the hands of the Romans until He brought judgment on the empire.
  - » The main point: this period of tribulation was definite; it would not last forever.

### ***Final exhortation to Daniel (Daniel 12.8-13 NASB95)***

8As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?"

- "The Persian Empire was just coming into power; and Macedonia was probably in its infancy at that time. What could he understand of Alexander's greatness, his death, and his kingdom being divided into four major powers, and two of these engaging in a long state of war? ...to make a present day application to the things written by the apostles of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the new glorified bodies of the saints, the judgment, heaven and hell, how much did the writers understand, and how much do we understand about these? Like Daniel, one can accept it all by faith and wait for its realization in its proper time." (Homer Hailey)

9He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

10"Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

11"From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

- We will note the charge to Daniel in vs. 9 a little later.

- Once more Daniel was told that difficult days were ahead. Now, instead of “time, times and half a time” the period of tribulation was given as 1,290 days.
- That period commenced from the days of Antiochus IV, when he abolished sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation. It would continue through the time when the 4th world empire oppressed God's people.

12“How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

- Again, a message of hope!
- We are not given any significance for the 1,335 days other than it's a longer period of time than 1,290 days.
- The point is that those who endure the period of tribulation will be blessed! (see Revelation 2.10; 11.1-13)

13“But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

- So, what was Daniel to do? He was to “go your way” (vss. 9,13). Many terrible things would occur, but Daniel would enter his rest and then receive his reward.
- What can we do in an evil world with uncertain days ahead? We should go our way, following in the ways of God. And since He rules over the realm of mankind we can be assured of rest and reward in the end.
- Don't fret, worry or rail. Just go your way to the end...

