

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

DANIEL, whose book bears his name, means “My God Is Judge.” Taken into Babylonian captivity as a young man by King Nebuchadnezzar in 605 *BC* to enter the king’s service (Daniel 1:1-7),¹ Daniel was given the Babylonian name **Belteshazzar**. He lived and prophesied among the Jews in Babylon for nearly seventy years, likely as a eunuch. He remained in administrative governmental service his entire life,² often as advisor in the courts of foreign kings. When the Persians conquered Babylon, he was afforded a government position under the Persians.³

Daniel likely wrote the Book of Daniel near the end of his prophetic ministry. It was written in Hebrew, with the exception of Daniel 2:4-7:28, which was written in Aramaic.⁴ Regarding conditions for the Jews in Babylon, Wood notes—

- *The conditions for the captives proved to be remarkably good. The people were able to keep their own institutions of prophets and priests (Jer. 29:1). Also, the captives enjoyed freedom in their living conditions: Ezekiel had his own house (Ezek. 8:1) where elders came to visit him. The people were given correspondence privileges with their friends and relatives back in Judah...and the people seem to have had good employment opportunities.*⁵

Daniel personally exemplified deep piety and a sense of the presence of God in his life; he was a man of prayer as well. His refusal to bow down and worship a pagan king led to the famous den of lions rescue, the end result demonstrating God’s faithfulness to those

¹ All scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from *Today’s New International Version*.

² Daniel held the highest government post of his life when he was in his mid-eighties, the time of the first return under Zerubbabel (Daniel 6:2-3).

³ Daniel lived in Babylon under the Babylonian leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 *BC*); Nebuchadnezzar’s son, King Evil-Merodach (562-560 *BC*); Evil-Merodach’s brother-in-law, King Neriglissar (560-556 *BC*); Neriglissar’s son, King Labashi-Marduk (556 *BC*); and Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, King Nabonidus (556-539 *BC*) and his co-regent son, King Belshazzar (553-539 *BC*, whose mother was likely Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter). Daniel also lived under the Persian King Cyrus, who conquered Babylon in 539 *BC* and ruled until his death in 530 *BC*.

⁴ It is speculated that Aramaic, a cognate to Hebrew, was used when recording events pertaining to the Gentile world and its future. Aramaic was the international language of the Middle East through much of the Old Testament period.

⁵ Wood, Leon, *The Prophets of Israel*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., 1999 printing, pg. 346.

who trust in Him.⁶ His book contains some of the most detailed prophecies of human history in all the Old Testament, including the rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (nearly 400 years later),⁷ who **will destroy the mighty warriors, the holy people** (Daniel 8:24).

- *Through story and vision, Daniel communicates the most mysterious message of the Old Testament: the kingdoms of this world are not beyond God's control; in fact they one day will be replaced by God's own kingdom. The prophets give glimpses of this future. In the text of Daniel, however, this message is sustained despite the arrogance of world empire after world empire. It is revealed in visions that convey the passionate intent of God to reign as sovereign over his creation. It seems pitiful that a work of such grandeur has sometimes been ridiculed as the record of fantasies of a people too much oppressed, or used merely as the vehicle for speculation about the end of the world and the setting of dates for end-times events. Better to grasp the colossal promise of God who governs world history than to design caricatures that belittle this noble prospect.*⁸

Note this overall summary by Goldingay—

- *Daniel is set in the period of the Babylonian empire and the first years of the Persian era. After the scene is introduced in the opening story, Daniel takes center stage in chap. 2 outdoing the wisdom of the Babylonian sages by the power of God, and thus able to reveal how future political events are to unfold until God sets up His own rule and brings an end to all others. Chap. 2 thus opens up the book's two main themes, the exploits of Daniel and his friends as members of the royal court (chaps. 3-6) and the revelations regarding future events given to Daniel (chaps. 7-12)...[key theological truths are found in Daniel including] a consistent portrait of God as powerful, sovereign, and almighty...He is not merely a peculiarly Jewish god but the God in/of heaven, King/Lord of heaven, God of gods...awesome, and fiery. He controls history and can therefore reveal history...the book as a whole concerns how the rule of God becomes a reality of this world in contexts where Jews as such lack political power...the purpose of God is to be realized on earth, by the transcendent power of heaven...the events imply that the cynicism and the deceit that often seem to characterize politics will not have the last word. The incompetence and stupidity that often seem to characterize our leaders will not have their way...thus, the stories invite us to set Daniel's experience and testimony alongside the stories that emerge from our political experience and see what happens...Daniel also reminds us that there are often times when the*

⁶ Daniel's book became a great source of encouragement and comfort centuries later to those suffering under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

⁷ It is these detailed prophecies that has caused many scholars to date the writing of the Book of Daniel not by Daniel himself, but by a much later, unnamed scribe—after many of the actual events described (about 165 BC).

⁸ LaSor, William Sanford, et al, *Old Testament Survey*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI., 1996 edition, pg. 566.

*present can only be understood in the light of the past and the future. There is a time when the people of God experience conflict with the world, and a time when behind that they perceive a conflict with supernatural powers...finally, Daniel reminds us that ordinary believers live as children of this age, but also as children of an age to come.*⁹

DANIEL 1:1-2—

Daniel opens by giving the date of his deportation to Babylon¹⁰—**in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah** (vs. 1). This makes it 605 BC.¹¹ It happened in conjunction with King Nebuchadnezzar's first besieging of Jerusalem, a besieging which also included confiscation of **some of the articles from the temple of God [which] he carried off...and put in the treasure house of his god** (vs. 2). "Removing them is a sign of the victory of Nebuchadnezzar and his god over the Israelite king and his god. Wars were fought in a god's name and plunder thus belonged to him."¹²

DANIEL 1:3-7—

Daniel and three fellow members of Judean nobility—**young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace** (vs. 4)—were brought to Babylon for training under the oversight of **Ashpenaz**, King Nebuchadnezzar's **chief of court officials** (vs. 3). They joined similar young men from other vassal nations (Daniel 1:13), their deportation reinforcing Judah's vassal status; it was also King Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to Babylon-ize Judah's future leadership. They were each given Babylonian names (vs. 7)¹³ and were taught the **language and literature of the Babylonians...[and] assigned a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table** in anticipation of entering general royal service after three years (vv. 4-5).

⁹ Goldingay, John, *Daniel*, Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, TX., 1989, pp. xxv and 329-331.

¹⁰ **Babylon** was in the southeastern part of modern Iraq. It was also known as **Shinar** (Daniel 1:2, TNIV footnote).

¹¹ King Jehoiakim reigned from 609-598 BC. Daniel is using a Babylonian dating system, which counted the years of a king's reign from the first new year after he began.

¹² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 15.

¹³ The new names were to the Babylonians a sign of new ownership and anticipated future destiny. Daniel apparently did not object here because their Babylonian names "are all grotesque, silly names, which make fun of the gods whom they are supposed to honor...the four can use their foreign names without worrying about them, perhaps on the same basis that Paul can eat meat sacrificed to idols—because the idol is really nothing" (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 24).

DANIEL 1:8-21—

A **daily amount of food and wine from the king's table** (Daniel 1:5) was not only part of the regimen (thought to ensure the best of health [vs. 10]) but “honorific gifts from the royal table.”¹⁴ To refuse them was tantamount to refusing loyalty to the king; nevertheless, **Daniel resolved**¹⁵ **...not to defile himself with the royal food and wine** (vs. 8). His reasoning for refusing the food and wine is not given; it is likely best seen as that of a moral rather than dietary conviction, based either upon the fact that sharing such a meal meant sharing a covenant-like friendship with King Nebuchadnezzar or upon the fact that accepting the food would have meant denying their true identity because Israel's distinct food laws presuppose food in part determines identity. Risking his own head, Daniel **asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way** (vs. 8). Ashpenaz was in agreement (**God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel** [vs. 9]), so long as Daniel could come up with a plan that did not involve him or make the king ask potentially life-threatening questions (vs. 10).

Daniel devised such a plan (vv. 12-13), which more than worked—**at the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food** (vs. 15). **To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding** (vs. 17) served to reassure readers that devout Jews could survive in a foreign culture; it also reinforced the Source behind King Nebuchadnezzar finding the young men **ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom** (vs. 20). Daniel thereby **entered the king's service...and remained there until the first year of King Cyrus** (vv. 18, 21).¹⁶

DANIEL 2:1-11—

Daniel 1:17 had noted—**Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds**. We are about to see his God-given gift in action for the first of many times. It happened **in the second year of [Nebuchadnezzar's] reign...[he] had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep** (vs. 1). Summoning first the Babylonian sages (vs.

¹⁴ Baldwin, Joyce, *Daniel*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., 1978, pg. 81.

¹⁵ Being willing to submit to re-education and to a new name, Daniel had to draw the line somewhere. “Daniel does some deciding for himself...[and] seizes the initiative from the Babylonians, insisting on some determining of his own which counters that of Ashpenaz” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*).

¹⁶ This amounted to sixty-six years.

2),¹⁷ vv. 3-11 record a conversation between the highly frustrated King Nebuchadnezzar and the sages, in which each party grew more anxious and hysterical. Sensing the virtual impossibility of the king's request ("**Tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me**" [vs. 9]), the sages tried to buy time (vs. 8), knowing their lives were at stake (vs. 5). Their conclusion? "**What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among human beings**" (vs. 11). "This very statement, reflecting the bankruptcy of human wisdom, sets the stage for Daniel's divine revelation."¹⁸

DANIEL 2:12-23—

In response to the sages' objection, **the king [was] so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon** (vs. 12). This would include **Daniel and his friends** (vs. 13). Responding to the news **with wisdom and tact** (vs. 14), Daniel inquired as to why the king was so urgent about the matter (vs. 15). When informed as to why (vs. 15), **Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him** (vs. 16). Asking his companions to join him in **plead[ing] for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery**¹⁹ (vs. 18), Yahweh was gracious and **during the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision** (vs. 19). Daniel then blessed the Lord with a hymn of thanksgiving (vv. 20-23).²⁰

DANIEL 2:24-30—

Daniel requested an audience with the king, which he was quickly granted (vv. 24-25). Daniel announced that it would have been futile to have pressed the sages further, for "**no wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries**" (vv. 27-28). The dream concerned "**what will happen in days to come...what is going to happen**" (vv.

¹⁷ The king summoned **the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers** (Daniel 2:2).

¹⁸ Walvoord, John, *Daniel—The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL., 1974 printing, pg. 53.

¹⁹ The Hebrew word used here for **mystery** occurs only in Daniel 2 and 4:6. Outside the Old Testament, it was a technical term for an enigma that could only be interpreted by Yahweh's revelation.

²⁰ "To bless someone is to express in solemn words one's appreciation, gratitude, honor or recognition; it suggests an acknowledging of communion with the one who is named as the object in the light of what that one has come to mean to you" (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 47).

28-29). Regarding the phrase “**in days to come,**” Baldwin notes—

- *The meaning of this phrase in the prophets is often quite general and refers not strictly to the end of the world, but rather to what will happen ‘one day,’ a goal for history some time ‘in the future’ (cf. 10:14). Certainly it will not have meant more than that to Nebuchadnezzar, and the parallel expression in verse 29 [what is going to happen] bears this out.*²¹

Daniel surmised that the purpose for the dream was to answer King Nebuchadnezzar’s wonder regarding what would come next as far as his kingdom was concerned (vs. 30). “The dream was a means of divine revelation in which God had signally honored the Babylonian monarch.”²² The dream was likely troubling to the king (Daniel 2:3) not because he was totally without understanding of some of its meaning, but because he knew he had dreamed about his own future and it had unwelcome content—content which he apparently hoped would “go away” with interpretation.

DANIEL 2:31-45—

Daniel began by doing what the sages had said was impossible—recounting the dream itself. It involved “**a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance**” (vs. 31).²³ It was standing before King Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 31), but was soon destroyed by “**a rock...[which] struck the statue on its feet...and smashed them ...and [they] became like chaff on a threshing floor in summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace**” (vv. 34-35). The extraordinary nature of the stone is noted in that it “**was cut out, but not by human hands**” (vs. 34); after destroying the statue, it “**became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth**” (vs. 35).

As for the statue itself, it was composed of various metals—“**the head...was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay**” (vv. 32-33).

- *The statue embodies a many-faceted power, splendor, strength, and impressiveness. Clay, however, suggests weakness and transience. Pottery is thus a quite alien element, the antithesis of the political power and strength implied by the four metals. It threatens the stability of the otherwise uniformly*

²¹ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 91. See also Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-61.

²² Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 62.

²³ “This dream and its interpretation anticipate the vision of the four beasts in ch. 7...the two must be considered together” (William LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 576). This does not mean, however, that the Empires of the statue are necessarily the same Empires represented by the beasts.

*overpowering edifice that towers above it.*²⁴

Daniel then told the king its interpretation (vs. 36). He began by reminding King Nebuchadnezzar that his kingship was under the sovereign oversight of Yahweh Himself, even though the king did not honor Him (vv. 37-38). Daniel noted that each metal in the statue represented a **kingdom**—beginning with King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (“**the head of gold**” [vs. 38]). There is considerable debate among scholars as to what Daniel intended by “**another kingdom...a third kingdom...a fourth kingdom**”²⁵ (vv. 39-40). Most scholars feel *malkut* references successive Empires, and that the four metals likely represented the successive world powers of ancient Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.²⁶ “The identification of the head of gold with Nebuchadnezzar is a reference to the empire as personified in its ruler.”²⁷ Others feel *malkut* references various rulers over Babylon. “Nebuchadnezzar personally is the head, so it is more natural to refer them to the reigns of four kings over a single empire, destroyed at a blow by the ‘rock’.”²⁸ (These Babylonian kings would have been King Nebuchadnezzar, King Amel-Marduk, King Neriglissar and King Nabonidus.)

Although the argument of the precise references of the various kingdoms cannot be settled with certainty, the intent either way is clear—King Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon would continue strong as long as he reigned, but no Empire/ruler could dominate the world scene (or God’s people) forever. Ultimately, all Empires/rulers have feet of clay. Not so the kingdom “**the God of heaven will set up**” (vs. 44). It will be “**a kingdom that will never be destroyed...it shall crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever**” (vs. 44). Clearly referencing the “**rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands**” (vs. 45), Daniel was noting Yahweh’s sovereignty—a sovereignty which would ultimately take shape in the kingdom of God as ushered in by Jesus Christ.²⁹ “This is the heart of the theme of the book...the

²⁴ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 49.

²⁵ *Malkut (kingdom)* can be translated royal authority, royal realm, an individual’s reign or an empire.

²⁶ See LaSor, *op. cit.*, pp. 576-582. Within this school are some scholars who see Rome not as historical Rome, but solely as eschatological Rome (see note #31 below).

²⁷ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 65.

²⁸ Goldingay, *loc. cit.*

²⁹ Those espousing that the statue represented four successive kings over Babylon see the stone as initially and historically represented by King Cyrus of Persia. Those who teach that the fourth kingdom is eschatological Rome (see note #31 below) see the stone as referencing Christ’s millennial rule.

book's aim is to display the kingdom of God as victorious over all the ages."³⁰

Daniel clearly spent more time describing the “**fourth kingdom**” than any of the others, noting that “**it will crush and break all the others**” (vs. 40). It is not clear why he did this, and detailed significance is again tied into one's view of whether this is describing the reign of a Babylonian king or some future Empire.³¹

- *Some commentators have thought that the division of the legs and toes in the last kingdom should be interpreted, but again these are part of the symbolism of a human figure, which would not be complete without them. The writer does not mention the number ten, nor seem to attach any special importance to it, any more than he mentions the division of the body into two legs.*³²

Daniel's ambiguity is best left as just that, with emphasis given instead to his clear intent—“it proves to be a mixture and not solid metal. It has therefore an intrinsic weakness, for potter's clay and iron do not bond together (vs. 42).”³³

DANIEL 2:46-49—

No doubt relieved because Daniel affirmed him as the head of gold and his reign secure, King Nebuchadnezzar responded to Daniel by acknowledging him as a remarkable source of revelatory wisdom (vs. 46); he then acknowledged the God who gave Daniel such wisdom (vs. 47). Though not giving up his polytheistic beliefs, King Nebuchadnezzar was clearly affirming Yahweh as the God of both current and future history. He followed up his affirmations by promoting Daniel (**the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men**³⁴ [vs. 48])

³⁰ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 577.

³¹ Dispensationalism in particular makes much of this aspect of the statue, seeing a substantial time gap between the third and fourth kingdoms and making the fourth kingdom an eschatological, revived Roman Empire, as opposed to historical Rome. Dispensationalism also purports to find significance in each of the ten toes (a confederation of ten nations during the Great Tribulation). “Probably the best solution [to identifying the fourth kingdom] is the familiar teaching that Daniel's prophecy actually passes over the present age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ, or more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church.” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 72). See Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-76 and Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, pp. 70-71 for further details of this perspective.

³² Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 94.

³³ *Ibid.*, pg. 93. Daniel also noted an apparent endeavor to fix its inherent fragility by intermarriage (Daniel 2:43 [NRSV], likely a reference to either political alliances through marriage or forced intermarriage of various conquered people's groups).

³⁴ Daniel does not comment on the complications posed by such a position. Undoubtedly, they were numerous because of Daniel's religious convictions.

and granted Daniel his request that **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** be appointed **administrators over the province of Babylon** (vs. 49).³⁵

DANIEL 3:1-7—

Dealing again with the pressure to assimilate during the Exile, this incident was an affront to pious Jews; it was apparently King Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to unite Babylon around one religion (vv. 5, 12). It involved falling down and worshiping the daunting **image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide**³⁶...that King Nebuchadnezzar [had] set up (vv. 1, 5).³⁷ Its dedication was austere (vs. 3), and the occasion for the announcement that **“whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace”** (vs. 6).

- *It was to be the most impressive statue that dispersion Jews would ever see, to be dedicated in the presence of as impressive a gathering of state dignitaries as they would ever witness, representing as many nations as they could ever envisage, at a ceremony heralded by as cosmopolitan an ensemble as they would ever hear.*³⁸

DANIEL 3:8-18—

Certain Babylonian informants, intent on denouncing the Jews, reported to King Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel's three compatriots were violating his decree (vv. 8-12).³⁹ They were apparently motivated by jealousy due to the success of some of the Israelites in Babylon. **“They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up”** (vs. 12).⁴⁰ It caused the king to be **furious with rage** (cf. Daniel 2:12), and command that they be brought before him (vs. 13).⁴¹ King Nebuchadnezzar reminded them of the decree, and then issued the boastful challenge, **“What god will be able to**

³⁵ **Daniel himself remained at the royal court** (Daniel 2:49) intimates a Cabinet position.

³⁶ This was approximately 90 feet by 9 feet.

³⁷ The text does not state whether it was a statue of King Nebuchadnezzar himself or perhaps of Babylon's chief god, Bel. The king's reaction in Daniel 3: 19 suggests that the statue embodied personal commitment to him. Nor do we know if the statue was solid gold or gold plated.

³⁸ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 72.

³⁹ It is not reported how Daniel evaded the issue.

⁴⁰ Tying together both religion and the State, the charges were a combination of disloyalty and impiety, as well as a personal affront against the king (Daniel 3:15). “The institution that claims absolute authority is inclined also to claim the sanctions of religion” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 73).

⁴¹ King Nebuchadnezzar knew he could not condemn them on hearsay alone, nor without giving them an opportunity to recant.

rescue you from my hand?” (vs. 15). Sensing no need **“to present a defense...in this matter”** (vs. 16 [NRSV]), the three declared that either Yahweh would deliver them from the furnace or He would not (vv. 17-18); regardless, they **“will not serve [Nebuchadnezzar’s] gods or worship the image of gold”** (vs. 18). “So strong is their sense of being close to Him, and their faith that their well-being is safe in God’s hands, that they cannot imagine any ultimate harm at all coming to them from the hands of a petty pagan emperor.”⁴²

DANIEL 3:19-30—

King Nebuchadnezzar was **so furious** at their response **that his face was distorted** (vs. 19 [NRSV]). Clearly gone is the recognition he’d given of Yahweh in Daniel 2:46-49, as he expected the Jews to declare they have no other god save him (*cf.* Daniel 3:15). **He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual** (vs. 19),⁴³ a move so motivated by rage that King Nebuchadnezzar failed to realize it would lessen their punishment.

- *His furnace was hot, but he himself got hotter! And when a man gets full of fury, he gets full of folly. There is no fool on earth like a man who has lost his temper. And Nebuchadnezzar did a stupid thing. He ought to have cooled the furnace seven times less if he had wanted to hurt them; but instead of that in his fury he heated it seven times more.*⁴⁴

The detailed description of the clothing they were still wearing when thrown in (vs. 21) serves to remind us that **because the king’s command was so urgent**, they did not take the customary time to strip them before execution (vs. 22). His enraged order also led to some of his key executioners being killed by the raging flames, as they hoisted the bound victims into the blazing furnace (vs. 22).

But the king met with an immediate surprise. Three men had been thrown bound into the furnace, but suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar saw **“four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed”** (vs. 25)⁴⁵ and he ascertained that **“the fourth looks like**

⁴² Wallace, Ronald, *The Message of Daniel*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., pg. 67.

⁴³ This is best taken as a proverbial expression for “extremely hot,” rather than a literal expression.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey King, quoted in Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁵ They looked as if they were enjoying a walk in the park!

a son of the gods” (vs. 25).⁴⁶ Coming out of the furnace at the king’s command (vs. 26), nothing had been damaged save the ropes that bound the three⁴⁷—**and there was no smell of fire on them** (vs. 27). “Only the ropes which bound them, the symbols of Nebuchadnezzar’s unbelief and wrath, were destroyed in the flames.”⁴⁸ They were not saved from the fire but in the fire...a subtle preview to the way of the Cross and a reminder that Yahweh is with His people regardless of what they face (*cf.* Exodus 3:12; Psalm 34:7). God not only reveals the mysteries of heaven but intervenes in individual and national affairs.

In response to their rescue, King Nebuchadnezzar affirmed the might of Yahweh,⁴⁹ decreed that anyone who blasphemed Him would be destroyed—**“for no other god can save in this way”** (vs. 29)⁵⁰—and promoted the three Hebrews.

Regarding lessons implied in their rescue, Goldingay notes—

- *Experiences such as the one that underlies Dan 3 evidence that God was always the God of resurrection...not that the all-powerful God’s intervening in the confessors’ extremity implies He can be expected to do so for all believers under pressure. Confessors often become martyrs, and their conviction that God can and will rescue from death has to be referred to that resurrection which Dan 12 envisages. But when believers face some white-hot furnace they may be encouraged to be faithful to Him confident that their God is Lord of death and that He will demonstrate that He is. The power of paganism offers no ultimate threat. When situations are utterly hopeless, they can trust Him to vindicate their commitment and His power by rescuing them one way or the other.*⁵¹

⁴⁶ Or possibly, **“has the appearance of a god”** (NRSV) or (less likely) **“is like the Son of God”** (NKJV). King Nebuchadnezzar would later identify him as one of Yahweh’s angels (Daniel 3:28).

⁴⁷ No further mention is made of the divine being.

⁴⁸ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 92.

⁴⁹ The king’s designation of Yahweh as **“the Most High God”** (Daniel 3:26) was a common pagan designation of Him as the highest among many gods.

⁵⁰ This decree elevated Judaism to the status of a recognized religion, with rights to toleration and respect.

⁵¹ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

OVERARCHING THEME OF DANIEL 4—

The big picture theme of Daniel 4 is that **“the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone He wishes”** (Daniel 4:17) and how King Nebuchadnezzar came to be reminded of this. “Whereas often it does not look as if God rules in history, occasional yet momentous events whose memory Scripture preserves give the grounds and the periodic reinforcement for the conviction that He does in fact rule.”⁵² Such understanding, however, requires prophetic insight...the revealing of mysteries...as given Daniel; without such revelation, history is enigmatic, even as the implications of Jesus’ death took revelation to gain significance.

DANIEL 4:1-18—

This pericope is presented in the form of a royal encyclical or confession, and concerns the kingship of both Yahweh (**His kingdom is an eternal kingdom** [vs. 3]; see also vs. 17)⁵³ and King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of a worldwide empire (vs. 1) who comes to acknowledge the ultimate sovereignty of Daniel’s God (vv. 34-37).⁵⁴ Central to the chapter is another of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams—a dream that **made [him] afraid...and terrified** (vs. 5), again because he sensed it pertained to him in some negative way. The dream came to him as he **was at home in [his] palace, contented and prosperous** (vs. 4). Unlike his previous challenge to relate to him both the dream and the interpretation (Daniel 2:9), this time the king related the dream to his sages, asking them only for its interpretation (vs. 7). When **they could not interpret it for [him]** (vs. 7), Daniel was summoned. King Nebuchadnezzar was certain Daniel⁵⁵ could help, because he perceived Daniel as **endowed with the spirit of the holy gods** (vs. 8).⁵⁶

The king related to Daniel that the dream involved **“a tree in the middle of the land.**

⁵² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 91.

⁵³ King Nebuchadnezzar came to this conclusion based upon **the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God...performed for [him]** (Daniel 4:2).

⁵⁴ We have no way of knowing for sure whether King Nebuchadnezzar converted to monotheistic Yahwism. Most scholars doubt such a conversion (see also note #56 below), but some entertain its possibility. “What effect [the events of Daniel 4] had on his belief in other deities is not stated, but it at least opens the door to the possibility that Nebuchadnezzar had placed true faith in the God of Israel” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 111).

⁵⁵ Note that Daniel was repeatedly referenced by King Nebuchadnezzar by his Babylonian name, **Beltshazzar**.

⁵⁶ Less likely is the NKJV—**the Spirit of the Holy God is in you**. “On a pagan’s lips, the plural (*elohim*) would usually mean ‘holy gods’...Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan faith has just been referred to, and expressions such as this are not used of the true God elsewhere in Daniel” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 80).

Its height was enormous...it was visible to the ends of the earth...[and] from it every creature was fed” (vv. 10-12). As the dream continued, **“there was a holy one⁵⁷ ...coming down from heaven”** (vs. 13) with orders that the tree be cut down and its branches chopped off (vs. 14).⁵⁸ But the tree was not totally destroyed. **“Let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field”⁵⁹** (vs. 15)—a stump and root system which quickly became personified. To the intended person, the **holy one** declared (with the full authority of God Himself [vs. 17]), **“Let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a human being and let him be given the mind of an animal”** (vv. 15-16); this horrific change of circumstance would be for an unspecified duration (**“till seven times pass by for him”** [vs. 16]), with the intent of showing **“that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of earth and gives them to anyone He wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people”** (vs. 17).

DANIEL 4:19-27—

So incredible was the interpretation that **Daniel was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him** (vs. 19). He was hoping against hope that it applied to King Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies (vs. 19), though he knew better (vs. 22). Presupposing and acknowledging both Babylon’s and King Nebuchadnezzar’s position as *the* world power of the day (vv. 20-22), Daniel related the dream’s meaning—**“You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone He wishes”** (vs. 25). But it will be neither the end of Babylon nor King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign—**“Your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules”** (vs. 26). Daniel then called King Nebuchadnezzar to

⁵⁷ A member of the Council of Yahweh (1 Kings 22:19-22), this supernatural figure acted “as God’s eyes, keeping Him informed on the affairs of His realm and seeing that His will is put into effect throughout it” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 88).

⁵⁸ “The first reason the pericope gives for the felling of the tree is that it will show that God rules. Its cause here is not Nebuchadnezzar’s pride; it is not for reasons to do with Nebuchadnezzar at all...the felling of the tree proves who is King. The tree speaks of a human authority that has its place but has to be kept in its place” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 93).

⁵⁹ This symbolized to King Nebuchadnezzar the fact that the stump would not be removed.

affirm the validity of his interpretation, and perhaps stay God's hand of judgment for a season, by **“renounc[ing] [his] sins⁶⁰ by doing what is right, and [his] wickedness by being kind to the oppressed”** (vs. 27).⁶¹

DANIEL 4:28-37—

A major component the chastisement was designed to change (pride and self-sufficiency) surfaced again in the king **at the end of twelve months** (vs. 29); looking over the city he declared, **“Is this not the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”** (vs. 30).

- *Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder. His father had raised Babylon from provincial status and he himself repaired it and protected it from flood waters and embellished it with an ostentatious display of authority and pride. He built palaces, temples and halls, laid out streets and constructed canals. With an eye for landscape reminiscent of the gardeners of C 18 England he devised the famous hanging gardens which consisted of terraces and water-courses and exotic trees and were classed by the Greeks as one of the seven wonders of the world.*⁶²

Obviously ignoring Daniel's warning (vs. 27), **even while the words were on his lips,**⁶³ **a voice came from heaven:...** **“Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox”** (vv. 31-32). **Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled** (vs. 33);⁶⁴ he found himself away from human society, acting like an animal as **his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird** (vs. 33). **“How quickly God can reduce a man at the acme of power and majesty to the level of a beast. The brilliant mind of Nebuchadnezzar, like the kingdom which he ruled, was his only by the sovereign will of God.”**⁶⁵

⁶⁰ This could also be translated, **“Break with the old habits.”**

⁶¹ Daniel's statement showed that King Nebuchadnezzar's sin was both pride/self-sufficiency and injustice/social unconcern.

⁶² Calvocoressi, Peter, *Who's Who In The Bible*, Penguin Books, New York, NY, 1987, pg. 174.

⁶³ This is meant theologically to have the same impact as **“when you eat of it”** (Genesis 2:17).

⁶⁴ It has been speculated that his insanity was either boanthropy (a psychological disorder in which one believes himself to be an ox) or lycanthropy (a psychotic or repressive delusion of thinking one is changing into an animal). The author's concern was not medical but theological. The king's irreligious insanity caused him to talk earlier as if he were the eternal king and Yahweh did not exist. He was now outwardly manifesting his already internal insanity.

⁶⁵ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 108.

At the end of that time (vs. 34), God determined that King Nebuchadnezzar had learned what was intended; God’s intent was recognition, not destruction, so the king’s **“sanity was restored, [his] honor and splendor were returned to [him] for the glory of [his] kingdom”** (vs. 36). “We are not told that the king repented first...we are told rather that God’s handling of him was effective.”⁶⁶ As noted, though we do not know the depth of the king’s personal conversion experience, what is obvious is that when God’s kingship is acknowledged, human kingship continues on well.

DANIEL 5:1-9—

The year was now 539 BC⁶⁷ and Daniel was working under a new administration, that of King Belshazzar who like King Nebuchadnezzar begins with a flourishing reign. King Nebuchadnezzar’s rule ended in 562 BC.⁶⁸ Following the rule of three successive kings (562-556 BC), King Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, King Nabonidus, assumed the throne in 556 BC. Three years into his reign, his son, King Belshazzar, began a fourteen year co-regency with his father (553-539 BC).⁶⁹ King Nebuchadnezzar was likely King Belshazzar’s maternal grandfather.

The events unfolded around an apparently drunk King Belshazzar (vs. 2),⁷⁰ who **gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father⁷¹ had taken from the temple in Jerusalem,⁷² so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them** (vs. 2).⁷³ **As they drank the wine, they**

⁶⁶ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 96.

⁶⁷ Daniel had been in Babylon for sixty-six years, making him over eighty years old at this time.

⁶⁸ In as much as we do not know when in King Nebuchadnezzar’s forty-three year reign the events of Daniel 4 happened, it is not known how many years have lapsed between Daniel 4 and 5. It was at least twenty-three years later.

⁶⁹ The co-regency was King Nabonidus’ doing, freeing him for a stay in Arabia for over a decade (likely for healing from a dreaded disease at an oasis at Teima, as reported in “The Prayer of Nabonidus” found at Qumran). King Nabonidus did not return to Babylon until after it was under Persian rule.

⁷⁰ This is likely the intent behind the Hebrew in the opening words of Daniel 5:2.

⁷¹ **Father** is to be understood as *forefather* (i.e., grandfather). There was no specific Aramaic word for grandfather.

⁷² See Daniel 1:2 and 2 Kings 24:13. They had been given to King Nebuchadnezzar by Yahweh (His instrument of judgment against Jerusalem) in sacred trust.

⁷³ King Belshazzar’s drunkenness is the best explanation for this brazen and blasphemous request, for superstition would have otherwise prevented one from putting sacred vessels to common use. In effect the king set the banquet in the context of faith (blasphemous faith in Yahweh’s eyes). “The chapter begins with a scene that can be read as one of ostentation, decadence, carousing, coarseness, wantonness, and self-indulgence, a scene that might have been designed to illustrate the wisdom literature’s warnings about power, sex, and drink” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 113).

praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone (vs. 4)—a further slight on the deity of Yahweh. “From self-indulgence issued sacrilege and blasphemy; what was wrong with the banquet was not the thing itself but where it led. It is in Belshazzar’s attitude to God and to his position before God that Daniel in due course explicitly locates Belshazzar’s sin (vv. 22-23).”⁷⁴

In a scene reminiscent of the terror experienced by King Nebuchadnezzar over his dreams, a portent appeared before King Belshazzar—**suddenly**⁷⁵ **the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace** (vs. 5). It caused the king’s face to turn **pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking** (vs. 6). He summoned his sages to read and interpret the writing (vs. 7);⁷⁶ once again the sages **were baffled** (vs. 9).⁷⁷

DANIEL 5:10-16—

It is unclear as to why Daniel was not summoned earlier (vs. 13). Speculations range from the historical (Daniel may have been in retirement, being over eighty years of age) to the psychological (King Belshazzar knew what kind of answer he was likely to get from Daniel on such matters) to the rhetorical (the successful interpreter is summoned only after the others have failed). Nonetheless, Daniel was introduced to the king by **the queen**,⁷⁸ who knew that **“he has the spirit of the holy gods in him”** (vs. 11)⁷⁹ and would be able to give an answer, thus solving the king’s dilemma (vv. 10-11). King Belshazzar offered to Daniel the same reward he had previously offered his Babylonian

⁷⁴ Goldingay, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ **Suddenly** indicates that this event was Yahweh’s response to the king’s brazenness, which had slighted His reputation and questioned His supreme power (*cf.* Acts 12:23). “His worship of lifeless gods provokes a hidden theophany in the form of a living hand, that hand which wrote at Sinai (Exod 31:18) but which now inscribes a more sinister message” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 114).

⁷⁶ The interpretation was likely to include recommended action to evade its fulfillment.

⁷⁷ We do not know why they could not even *read* the words; the most common assumption of scholars is that it was written in Aramaic characters of unusual shape...sort of like a person’s poor handwriting might be difficult to read.

⁷⁸ **The queen** likely referenced the Queen Mother and not one of King Belshazzar’s wives (*cf.* Daniel 5:2). Either the urgency of the matter gave her permission to override protocol and appear before the king without having been summoned, or the position of Queen Mother was one of a political advisor, who could appear before the king in times of emergency. Again, we do not know why she suggests his being summoned and not the king himself.

⁷⁹ See note #56 above.

sages (vs. 16).⁸⁰

DANIEL 5:17-31—

Daniel noted that he would indeed “**read the writing for the king and tell him what it means**” (vs. 17), but he wanted nothing to do with the rewards. (Such refusal gave him maximum freedom as a prophet; he could not be accused of tailoring his message for financial gain.)⁸¹ He began by rehearsing the splendor and authority of the kingship of King Nebuchadnezzar, including the divine judgment of his debilitating madness “**when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride**” (vs. 20). King Belshazzar was aware of all this, yet “[**had**] **not humbled [himself]**” (vs. 22), but rather exalted himself against Yahweh in the act of drinking from the sacred Temple vessels (vs. 23; see also note #68 above). Such refusal to honor Him led to the handwriting on the wall (vs. 23; see also Psalm 2).

Daniel then read (*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin* [vs. 25])⁸² and interpreted the riddle—“**God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end...you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting...your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians**” (vv. 26-28). His punishment would be greater than that of King Nebuchadnezzar’s.

- *God was going to dissolve his kingdom. This shall be effected by the Medes and Persians, and was so brought about when the Persian Cyrus with the united power of the Medes and Persians destroyed Babylon, and thus put an end to the Babylonian kingdom, where the kingdom was transferred first to the Median Darius, and after him to the Persian Cyrus.*⁸³

The word came to pass **that very night**, as **Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain** (vs. 30).⁸⁴ “Worldly empires are demonstrated to be subject to the God of the

⁸⁰ “**The third highest ruler in the kingdom**” may be intended to be taken literally. More likely, it referred to a high level military position.

⁸¹ He accepted the gifts only after he had freely prophesied (Daniel 5:29).

⁸² Like a dream the portent had a surface meaning and several possible allegorical meanings. Literally translated, it meant something like, “**Reckoned at a mina, a shekel, and two halves**” or “**Numbered, weighed and divided.**” **NOTE:** the transliteration of the last word in the NKJV (*Upharsin*) attaches the Aramaic word for “and” (**u**) to the last word, rather than translating it (“**and**”) as in the NIV and NRSV. It is left untranslated in the TNIV.

⁸³ Kiel, C.F., *Daniel*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI., 1978 reprint, pg. 190.

⁸⁴ The assassin is not named. Many scholars see in **was slain** a “divine passive,” indicating he was ultimately the victim of Yahweh’s judgment. “Belshazzar’s behaviour, and Daniel’s interpretation of it,

Judean exiles. He brings calamity to the conquerors He once used.”⁸⁵ Rulership over Babylon passed to one **Darius the Mede** (vs. 31). Herein is presented one of the more historical difficulties of Daniel. Such a Darius is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, nor in secular historiography.⁸⁶ Most scholars feel that **Darius the Mede** was either—**1**) Persia’s appointed Governor of Babylon during the reign of King Cyrus;⁸⁷ **2**) the actual king of Media, who ruled over Babylon for two years before it came under full Persian rule; or **3**) the first year enthronement name for King Cyrus himself.⁸⁸

DANIEL 6:1-9—

One of King Darius’ first acts as leader was to restructure the government. **It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel** (vv. 1-2).⁸⁹ Their function—the **satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss** (vs. 2).⁹⁰ **Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom** (vs. 3). This did not settle well with the other leaders—presumably due to professional jealousy and/or resentment, in that Daniel’s stellar leadership prevented them from using their office for illegal, personal gain (vs. 4).⁹¹ Unable to catch Daniel on professional grounds, they perceived that his vulnerability **“has something to do with the law of his God”** (vs. 5). They therefore played on the Median quasi-divine understanding of the State and King Darius’ vanity to manipulate him to issue an encyclical—**“...issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being**

helps us to understand the biblical teaching about what ‘sin’ really is in its essential nature. Daniel emphasizes that Belshazzar knew fully the implications of what he was doing (vv. 22-23). His sin was an absurd and deliberate choice of darkness over against the full shining of the light” (Ronald Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 98).

⁸⁵ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 117.

⁸⁶ He is not to be confused with King Darius I of Persia (522-458 BC), who is central to the Book of Ezra.

⁸⁷ This being the case, Darius would be either an honorific title for Governor Gubaru or a second name for him.

⁸⁸ See Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28 or Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-134 for details into the arguments. **Darius** means, “Holder of the scepter.”

⁸⁹ **Satraps** (literally, “Protectors of the realm”) were the king’s deputies in each province, responsible for security and for collecting tribute. **Administrators (presidents [NRSV])** translates an otherwise unknown position; their function, however, is clear in vs. 2—that of supervising the satraps.

⁹⁰ “That is, in territory due to uprisings, or in taxation due to graft” (Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 128).

⁹¹ No reason is directly stated for their action against Daniel, only vague inferences as stated. As noted below, Daniel 6:13 also hints at what we today call “anti-Semitism.”

during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den” (vs. 7).⁹² The interdict was irrevocable (vs. 8), even by the king himself (vs. 14). “The distress of the king, who had become trapped by his own legislation, reveals the dilemma of a ruler who wishes to pursue liberal policies, but who is under pressure from his court, and therefore less than free, although he seems to have all power.”⁹³

DANIEL 6:10-18—

Daniel continued his daily **three times a day**⁹⁴ prayer routine, in spite of knowing the consequences (vs. 10).⁹⁵ When the conspirators discovered Daniel violating the decree (**these men...found Daniel praying and asking God for help**),⁹⁶ they reported it to King Darius (vv. 11-12). Their reference to Daniel as **“one of the exiles from Judah”** (vs. 13) had hints of anti-Semitism, as well as implying that he could not really be trusted as a foreigner; they may even be intimating that his alien religious practice bordered on political rebellion (in spite of the fact Daniel had proven his political loyalty for nearly seventy years).

Caught by his own edict, the king **was greatly distressed** and tried to find a political loophole (vs. 14). “His displeasure was principally due to two facts: first, that Daniel, whom he respected so highly, was the one being charged with disloyalty; and, second, that he had himself been so shortsighted as to sign a decree that would entrap one with the dedication of Daniel.”⁹⁷ But King Darius could not ignore his edict for fear of risking the collapse of the social order or even the State itself. When the conspirators reminded the king of the decree (vs. 15), **the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and**

⁹² The issue this time was the private practice of religion, whereas before it had been a matter of the public practice of one's faith (Daniel 3:1-7).

⁹³ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

⁹⁴ We have no other biblical reference to the practice of prayer three times a day. It marked Daniel as extremely devout. “In spite of the pressures of being a busy executive with many demands upon his time, Daniel had retired to his house three times a day to offer his prayers for the peace of Jerusalem as well as for his personal needs” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 138).

⁹⁵ **The windows opened toward Jerusalem** gives us insight into exilic prayer times. Harkening back to a practice first mentioned in King Solomon's prayer at the Temple's dedication (1 Kings 8), the practice of facing Jerusalem/the Temple during prayer apparently took on added significance during the forging of Judaism in the Exile. Facing Jerusalem during prayer is continued to this day among devout Jews.

⁹⁶ The idea here is that of offering both formal, liturgical prayers and casting oneself on God's grace and pleading with Him. Familiar with the Book of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2), he may have had Jeremiah 29:12 in mind as he prayed.

⁹⁷ Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

threw him into the lions' den (vs. 16). (King Darius' determination to try to save Daniel **until sundown** [vs. 14] was based on Oriental custom that an execution of punishment had to be carried out on the evening of the day in which the accusation was made.) Wishing Daniel well (vs. 16),⁹⁸ the king had the den officially sealed (vs. 17; note the similarity to that of sealing Christ's tomb [Matthew 27:62-66]) and **returned to his palace and spent the night without eating...[as] he could not sleep** (vs. 18).

DANIEL 6:19-28—

Anxiously and hurriedly going to the den the next morning, King Darius discovered that Daniel had in fact been delivered by Yahweh (vv. 19-22). God had **“sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions...because [Daniel] was found innocent in His sight”**⁹⁹ (vs. 22). “By putting loyalty to God above loyalty to the state he has been loyal to the truth and thus more loyal to the state than those who make of it more than it is—and certainly than those who use it to serve their own ends, as his adversaries have.”¹⁰⁰ In keeping with ancient Persian culture, retribution was then executed on the conspirators and their families.¹⁰¹ This was also a fulfillment of the prophetic promise that as Israel was saved, her oppressors would be annihilated (Isaiah 41:11-12).

In a fashion similar to that of King Nebuchadnezzar at the deliverance of Daniel's three compatriots from the blazing furnace (Daniel 3:29), King Darius summed up what he had learned from the experience about the nature of Yahweh, and issued a public decree that He be properly recognized throughout the Empire (vv. 25-27). “Pagan powers do put believers under pressure, but these powers are destined to be defeated, and ultimately to bow before the name that is above every name.”¹⁰² Unlike much of Israel as a whole, Daniel was a light to the Gentiles. In this regard, the testimony of the pagan king is prophetic of God's inclusion of the Gentiles in the acknowledgement of His kingship (Ephesians 2:11-15).

- *In a context of imperial arrogance and cruelty, God pictured the great rulers*

⁹⁸ The pagan king's words (Daniel 6:16) are best taken as a wish (TNIV) and not a prediction (NKJV). In testing Daniel, King Darius knew that he was testing Yahweh.

⁹⁹ **Innocent** referenced the fact that Daniel was spared because he was not guilty of the charge. It was later expanded to include the fact that **[Daniel] had trusted in his God** (Daniel 6:23).

¹⁰⁰ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 134.

¹⁰¹ This same practice was part of ancient Israel's culture (see Joshua 7:22-26).

¹⁰² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 135.

*of the age yielding to his authority. Their condescension before—if not actual faith in—the God of Israel may be the visionary way of saying that an age is ending and another about to begin. From this age on, even gentiles must and will serve the God of Daniel. That God alone is worthy of the worship of the human race, for time and the times are in his hands. Kings and empires, so far as this declaration is concerned, are servants of the Almighty.*¹⁰³

As a result of his faith, **Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and¹⁰⁴ the reign of Cyrus the Persian** (vs. 28).¹⁰⁵ We do not know how much longer Daniel lived. It was at least until 536 BC (Daniel 10:1).

Though lengthy, Baldwin's excellent summary of Daniel 1-6 merits attention. It also serves to focus Daniel 7-12.

- *The dramatic interest in these stories consists precisely in the fact that Daniel and his friends represent the followers of the living God at the courts of the most powerful rulers the world had yet seen. Not since the sojourn in Egypt had such a confrontation taken place, but, whereas Joseph and his relatives had voluntarily remained in Egypt, Nebuchadrezzar had conquered Judah and, according to the understanding of that time, might have thought his gods superior to that of any conquered nation. In that respect the Babylon experience was new, and raised new questions for believing exiles. The writer of this book believes he has the answers to those questions. In every chapter his emphasis is on the superior might of the Most High God. Nebuchadrezzar did not have the decisive word in international affairs, for it was the Lord who gave Jerusalem into his hand (1:2), and in Babylon God gave His loyal followers a favourable reception (1:9) and equipped them with needed knowledge and insight (1:17).*
- *When the first great test came it was to the God of heaven that these men appealed for help (2:18) and to whom Daniel gave the credit for the interpretation of the dream (2:28). The central theme of chapter 3 is the ability of 'our God whom we serve' to deliver His servants out of the hand of the king of Babylon (3:17, 18), and in chapter 4 the dramatic intervention of the God of heaven in the life of that same king is calculated to bring even Nebuchadrezzar to the sanity of realistic self-appraisal and submission to the only God. In the presence of Belshazzar Daniel insists that the Most High God rules **in** the kingdoms of men (5:21), a fact which Belshazzar is at that moment facing along with his own guilt. The Most High God was giving him opportunity to repent on the last night of his life. Darius is different from either of the two previous kings, in that he is favourably disposed to Daniel from the start, and would have saved him from death if he could have changed*

¹⁰³ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 573.

¹⁰⁴ Those espousing that King Darius was another name for King Cyrus translate **and** (Hebrew, *waw*) as epexegetical ("namely").

¹⁰⁵ The invasion of King Cyrus had been prophesied by Isaiah almost 160 years earlier (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

his own decree. What the earthly emperor was unable to accomplish, the living God achieved; He shut the mouths of the lions and delivered His servant from death (Heb. 11:33).

- *The poems incorporated into the stories support the view that the writer's concern was the greatness of his God, for every one of them, whether in the mouth of Daniel (as in 2:20-23) or spoken by one of the kings of the nations (4 :3, 34, 35; 6:26, 27) is a hymn of wonder at the evidence of God's rule in earth and heaven. Though many a psalm had taken up this theme, never before had there been an opportunity to witness in such alien circumstances the triumph of God over powerful international regimes. It follows that there can never be an emperor so mighty that he is not under the control of the only God; not only will his end come when God sees fit, but meanwhile he will serve God's purposes, and if he persists in his arrogance he will be brought up short by God's intervention (4:28; 5:30).*
- *In the first part of his book the writer presents the situations out of which his theology has grown, and the lessons are plain for all to see. But from the very fact that his God is in control of time and circumstances in heaven as well as earth, any experience of His deeds, whenever it may have occurred, is valid for all time and even for eternity (6:26). It is on this firm theological understanding that the revelations of the second part of the book are made.¹⁰⁶*

OVERVIEW OF DANIEL 7—

The chapter revolves around a dream given Daniel...a dream in which future kingdoms are portrayed by various creatures coming up out of the sea; these kingdoms sometimes act as God's agent and sometimes act outside the boundaries He's designed for government (*cf.* Romans 13); the kingdoms' symbolically portrayed characteristics epitomize the characteristics of all historical kingdoms and their collective sense shows that "history will continue to be like [the] troubled sea" from which they arise, demonstrating "that the process of history is an unsavory, unnatural, dark, and unreassuring one, despite God's being Lord of it."¹⁰⁷ The dream also involved "**one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven**" (Daniel 7:13), who receives God's delegated authority to establish a distinctively different kingdom ("**an everlasting dominion that will not pass away....one that will never be destroyed...and [ultimately] all rulers will worship and obey him**" [Daniel 7:14, 27]).

¹⁰⁶ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁰⁷ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 185.

DANIEL 7:1-8—

Although Daniel 7 marks a clear turning point in the book, it has ties to earlier chapters (especially King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2). Also, most of the events in Daniel 7-12 belong sequentially within the events of Daniel 1-6. Built around four major visions given to Daniel, **Vision #1** (Daniel 7) and **Vision #2** (Daniel 8) belong sequentially between Daniel 4 and 5; **Vision #3** (Daniel 9) happened in conjunction with the events of Daniel 6; **Vision #4** (Daniel 10) was given after the events of Daniel 6.

Before looking into the events of Daniel 7-12, Wallace’s observation merits attention—

- *We now come to the less well-known and decidedly more daunting half of the book of Daniel. It consists of a series of visions very complex in their nature, and often far from clear at first as to their meaning. Scholars debate, more fanciful minds revel in speculation, and the ordinary reader tends to look quickly the other way. Yet all the material is equally part of the Word of God and is able to instruct us for salvation.*¹⁰⁸

The first vision given directly to Daniel (Daniel 7) puts us back in the year 553 BC—in **the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon** (vs. 1).¹⁰⁹ **He wrote down the substance of his dream** (vs. 1), making it “more solid, concrete, and certain of fulfillment; indeed, putting something into writing initiated its fulfillment.”¹¹⁰ Before looking at the four visions, let’s remember the upshot of Daniel 2 and 7-12—“the twofold truth that Daniel announces is 1) the Most High rules, and 2) his saints will one day inherit a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.”¹¹¹ “The key to Daniel 7 is the sharp contrast between the kingdoms of this world, pictured as animals or horns of animals, with the kingdom of God, pictured by a human form in a heavenly setting.”¹¹²

- *Despite the welter of interpretations there is one thing above all that [Daniel] is proclaiming quite unambiguously: the Most High is the reigning king in heaven and earth. There is an opposition to His rule, formidable in appearance and powerful, but all the time the Most High is in control, even when His opponents seem most successful (7:26). Therefore those who are allied with Him triumph also.*¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Wallace, Ronald, *The Message of Daniel*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., pg. 119.

¹⁰⁹ See page 22 above. Daniel had been in Babylon over fifty years.

¹¹⁰ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 160.

¹¹¹ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 570.

¹¹² Pickerill, Donald, *Notes on the Book of Daniel*, unpublished manuscript, Christian Assembly Foursquare Church, Los Angeles, CA., 1978. No page numbers are given.

¹¹³ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 137.

Daniel's first vision involved **“the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea”** (vv. 2-3). In the dream, **the four winds** symbolized God's controlling sovereignty over the whole earth (*cf.* Revelation 7:1). Daniel was about to get a glimpse of God's control of world history. **The sea** (vs. 3) was noted as the source of the creatures' kingdoms. “Since the beasts represent the forms of the world-power, the sea must represent that out of which they arise, the whole heathen world.”¹¹⁴ “The symbol of a stormy sea, with its wild, chaotic and unstable elements, is a powerful picture of human life and government on its own terms, outside the dominion of God...but note the four winds of heaven that churn the sea. Wild winds and stormy seas are not outside the ultimate control of heaven.”¹¹⁵

- **“The first [beast] was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle”** (vs. 4), symbolizing royal power, majesty, strength and ability to destroy.¹¹⁶ It represented a large and expansionist nation. **“It stood on two feet like a human being, and a human mind was given to it”** (vs. 4) indicated God had appointed this nation “to a humanlike position of honor, authority, responsibility, and caring for the world.”¹¹⁷
- **“There...was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides”** (vs. 5), symbolizing a source of fear to human beings second only to the lion (an obviously less formidable nation than that represented by the lion). The symbolism behind **it was raised up on one of its sides** (vs. 5) is lost to us. Some speculate it referenced the bear rising to pounce on more prey (see NEB); others speculate that it described an unknown political struggle within the empire, or possibly the supremacy of Persia within the Medo-Persian Empire it represented (*cf.* Daniel 8:3). Also unclear is whether **“it...had three tusks”¹¹⁸ in its mouth among its teeth”** (vs. 5 [NRSV]) or **“it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth”** (TNIV). What is clear is that this normally non-predatory animal was

¹¹⁴ Hofmann quoted in Keil, *op. cit.*, pg. 222.

¹¹⁵ Pickerill, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ Daniel 7:17 makes it clear that each beast represented a king and/or Empire (Daniel 7:23). See also note #139.

¹¹⁷ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 162. Other commentators see this as a negative experience and a likely reference to King Nebuchadnezzar's experience in Daniel 4 (see Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154).

¹¹⁸ Or **fangs**.

envisioned with an insatiable appetite to destroy—**“Get up and eat your fill of flesh!”** (vs. 5).

- The third beast **“looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads”** (vs. 6),¹¹⁹ symbolizing another fearsome predator enhanced by an unnatural capacity to see and swoop in any direction. Though powerful, God is still the ultimate Sovereign of history—**“it was given authority to rule”** (vs. 6).
- Things change with the emergence of the fourth beast from the sea. The most fierce and destructive beast (**“terrifying and frightening and very powerful ...it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left”** [vs. 7]), it was not likened to any known animal. In fact, **“it was different from all the former beasts”** (vs. 7). Its distinction lay in the fact—1) **“it had ten horns”** (vs. 7) and 2) **“there was another horn, a little one,¹²⁰ which came up among them...this horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully”** (vs. 8). Furthermore, **“three of the first horns were uprooted before it”** (vs. 8).

The obvious difficulty in interpreting this dream lies in knowing the *precise* point of reference behind each beast. From Daniel’s own words, we know **“the four great beasts are four kings¹²¹ that will rise from the earth”** (Daniel 7:17). But what four precise Empires did Daniel have in mind? Were they the exact same Empires as those likely behind King Nebuchadnezzar’s great statue (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome [Daniel 2]) or a slight variation (Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece)? These difficulties will be discussed below under Daniel 7:15-28.

DANIEL 7:9-14—

Before explaining the dream, Daniel’s attention was turned to a vision of **“the Ancient of Days”** taking His throne, as other **“thrones were set in place”** (vs. 9).¹²² He was clearly seeing Yahweh enthroned in heaven (see 1 Kings 22:19-22; Ezekiel 1, et al for

¹¹⁹ See Daniel 8:9.

¹²⁰ **Little** is likely a spiritual evaluation of its moral worth.

¹²¹ Or **empires** (see below on note #139).

¹²² Though intended to represent a heavenly court room from which God would dispense divine justice in the presence of witnesses (Daniel 7:10), we are not told who was intended to occupy these other seats.

similar descriptions). Its import before the explanation of the dream is obvious, especially in light of the arrogant speaking little horn Daniel just saw (see also vs. 11).

- *The first three beasts are worryingly fearsome, but their instincts are such that God could use. With the fourth, assertiveness against God and his glory is becoming overt. It is a moment when a nation threatens to make itself God, and when it least seems that God is in control. But this is the moment when God himself acts.*¹²³
- *God then began to seat himself, as he had previously appeared to be passive, and not to exercise justice in the world. For when things are disturbed and mingled with much darkness, who can say, “God reigns”? God seems to be shut up in heaven, when things are discomposed and turbulent upon earth. On the other hand, he is said to ascend his tribunal when he assumes to himself the office of a judge, and openly demonstrates that he is neither asleep nor absent, although he has hid from human perception.*¹²⁴

Ancient of Days (or **Ancient One** [NRSV]) is a very unusual expression for Yahweh, used only by Daniel. It was most likely intended to emphasize God’s eternity, wisdom, and respect to act judiciously; the dream also emphasized His purity, nobility and splendor (“**His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool**” [vs. 9]). Daniel notes that the data He would use in dispensing judgment was readily at hand (vs. 10; see also Revelation 20:12). As for the judgment itself, it was two-fold—1) because of “**the boastful words the horn was speaking...the beast was slain and its body destroyed**” (vs. 11); and 2) “**the other beasts [were] stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time**” (vs. 12).¹²⁵

As the vision continued, Daniel “**saw one like a son of man**” (vs. 13; or “**one like a human being**” [NRSV] or “**One like the Son of Man**” [NKJV]). The **Ancient of Days** is seen giving him “**authority, glory and sovereign power; [and] all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him**” (vs. 14).¹²⁶ The identity of this **one like a son of man** is highly debated and poses exegetical difficulties.¹²⁷ “This verse has been the subject of more scholarly papers than any other in the book, so indicating its

¹²³ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 188.

¹²⁴ John Calvin, quoted in *Ibid.*, pg. 189.

¹²⁵ The precise meaning of this will be discussed below when we examine possible interpretations of each of the beasts. Their identity affects one’s understanding of details of the judgment.

¹²⁶ The pronouns are purposefully not capitalized in this sentence, so as to first deal with the complexities.

¹²⁷ The difficulties lie chiefly in determining its meaning in Daniel, as opposed to its *sensus plenior* because of its use by Jesus.

centrality, not only for Daniel but for the New Testament also.”¹²⁸

Firstly, **a human being** (NRSV) is the literal translation of the Aramaic;¹²⁹ it was a common Hebrew and Aramaic idiom (cf. Numbers 23:19; Psalm 8:4), the translation **a son of man** (TNIV) being a literalistic Semitism.¹³⁰ Secondly, Daniel notes that he was *like* a **son of man** (italics mine). Though using an obvious idiomatic expression to which was attached dignity (humankind was made in God’s image), Daniel was hesitant to commit himself to this person being exclusively human (cf. Ezekiel 1:26). We are not sure why (perhaps he suspected deity; perhaps he was interested in contrast between this figure and those represented by the beasts). The figure is obviously shrouded in mystery, and we should remember this in forming exegetical conclusions. “While it might be that the vision’s interpretation was clear to author and original audience but unclear to us out of their context, its allusiveness makes it at least as likely that an element of mystery is built into the vision (cf. vv. 15-16, 28).”¹³¹ The point of the vision seems clear, however—Daniel was noting a contrast between the leaders of the earthly kingdoms (whose kingships resemble animal instincts more than noble, human instincts) and this figure, whom God intended to use as the agent of His **everlasting dominion** (vs. 14). “In Daniel the idiom ‘son of man’ is less than a messianic title. It is a form resembling a human being in contrast to the four beasts who have already appeared in the visions.”¹³²

Having established this much exegetically, we must now wrestle with the apparent¹³³ *sensus plenior*¹³⁴ of the text. **Son of Man** was Jesus’ favorite self-designation, used only by Him as a messianic designation. It allowed Christ the greatest flexibility of any known Jewish messianic title to shape His own understanding of His messianic Person and mission. The title emphasizes the serving aspect of the Messiah; the suffering and death

¹²⁸ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 142.

¹²⁹ Through the end of Daniel 7 is still in Aramaic.

¹³⁰ **The Son of Man** (NKJV, italics mine) is interpretive, in both the addition of **the** (the Aramaic has no definite article) and the capitalizations (see note #133 below).

¹³¹ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 169.

¹³² Ladd, George, *A Theology of the New Testament – Revised Edition*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI., 2000 reprint, pg. 146.

¹³³ We say *apparent* because it is not unanimously agreed that Jesus was referencing Daniel when He coined, re-shaped and made a title of the **Son of Man**. He may have been referencing Ezekiel, where the same expression occurs some ninety times, or (less likely) the Jewish apocalyptic, *Similitudes of Enoch*, where it is clearly a messianic title.

¹³⁴ *Sensus plenior* or *fuller meaning* references additional, secondary insights given various Old Testament texts by Jesus and/or the New Testament writers.

aspect; and the eschatological glory that shall be His. “The probable Old Testament background is the vision of Daniel...[and] we conclude that the Danielic son of man is a heavenly messianic eschatological figure who brings the kingdom to the afflicted saints on earth.”¹³⁵ Wood is even more certain—

- *Because Christ so frequently couched His language in Old Testament terminology, and since this instance is the only time the phrase is used in the Old Testament with possible reference to Christ, the likelihood is that He had this text in mind when He used the term for Himself. He was identifying Himself with the One whom Daniel saw.*¹³⁶

DANIEL 7:15-18—

Daniel now delves into “**the meaning of all this**” (vs. 16). He was so “**troubled in spirit...and disturbed**” (vs. 15) by what he saw that he couldn’t rest until God gave him understanding. The interpretation was disclosed to him by “**one of those standing there**” (an angel [vs. 16; *cf.* vs. 10], perhaps even Gabriel [Daniel 8:16]).¹³⁷ His explanation was remarkably brief—“**The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever**” (vv. 17-18).¹³⁸

As previously noted (see note #23 above), this dream is related to that of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. Although a minority of scholars believes the four metals of the Daniel 2 statue represent four different rulers over Babylon, the vast majority sees the metals as representing four successive Empires (see pages 11-13 above). Virtually all scholars agree that the **four kings** here (vs. 17) represented four Empires, not four monarchs of one Empire (Daniel 7:23).¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-147. It is this understanding that framed the translation of Daniel 7:13 in the NKJV.

¹³⁶ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 192.

¹³⁷ This guaranteed that the vision was from heaven and not from Daniel’s own insight or instinct.

¹³⁸ “At this point our attention is drawn to an important and helpful aspect of the thought of the Bible about the relation of Christ to his people...in verses 13-14 a single figure comes with the clouds, *one like a son of man*, to whom the kingdom is given. In verses 17 and 27, however, the same kingdom is given not to *one like a son of man*, but to *the saints of the Most High*, i.e. to the people of God...the second Adam, the true man or ‘son of man’ is regarded as representing and including in his person all the ‘saints of the Most High’” (Ronald Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128).

¹³⁹ The fact that **king** in Daniel 7:17b becomes **kingdom** in Daniel 7:23 shows the fluidity of apocalyptic. “The interpreter is made aware of the fluidity of thought which can move easily between an individual and a collective idea, and will take note that rigidity of interpretation is out of place here” (Joyce Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 144).

- *We are talking about the nature of world history and the forms it will take...the main thing is clear—human life and governments having a wild, chaotic sea as their origin can only produce predatory animals which become increasingly terrifying—lions, bears, leopards and finally some kind of dreadful monster that does not even qualify as a created animal.*¹⁴⁰

There is great diversity, however, in terms of identifying what those four Empires were/will be. Dispensationalists¹⁴¹ (and many other scholars since the Reformation) see the Empires in the two visions as identical (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome¹⁴²). “As noted in chapter two, the dream-image, in its four divisions, symbolized the four great empires—the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. The same is true in respect to the four beasts seen in the first vision.”¹⁴³

Goldingay does not agree.

- *Chapter 7 offers no specific indications of the empires’ identity. The chapter itself would permit the fourth empire to be Rome, as traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations held. But we have just noted that succeeding visions suggest that the four kings span the period from Daniel’s own lifetime to the Greek period. This would make one expect the fourth kingdom in chap. 7 to be Greece, which fits the chapter just as well. Greece is the general concern of the subsequent visions...it is as certain an exegetical judgment as most that the contextual meaning of Dan 7 is that the first empire is Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, the fourth is Greece. There is less certainty about the identity of the second and third kingdoms.*¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Pickerill, *op. cit.*

¹⁴¹ Dispensationalism is a theological thought system that grows out of two major hermeneutical principles—1) all as yet unfulfilled prophecy relative to Israel will be fulfilled literally in days to come and 2) one is to interpret Apocalyptic literature literally rather than symbolically, unless it becomes obviously absurd...i.e., **144,000 from all the tribes of Israel** (Revelation 7:4) represents a literal 144,000 Jews but Satan is not a **red dragon** (Revelation 12:3). From these hermeneutical principles come the major tenet of dispensational theology—“two different divine programs: one for Israel and one for the Church...such that the great conflict in Revelation is between antichrist and Israel, not antichrist and the Church” (George Ladd, *op. cit.*, pg. 673).

¹⁴² There is disagreement, however, among these scholars as to whether or not the fourth beast (like the fourth kingdom of King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in Daniel 2) is fundamentally eschatological Rome (dispensationalists; see Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 170) or the civilization created by historical Rome, which will be consummated in eschatological Babylon (“revived Rome”) of Revelation 17. The latter is most probable. “In a way, it is not quite accurate to talk about the ‘fall’ of Rome, for it is the last manifestation of world power up to the coming of Christ (Daniel 7:21). In actual history, Rome existed in its Western capitol until 476 AD and literally in its Eastern capitol until 1452 AD. Even then we have the so called ‘Holy Roman Empire,’ which is the essence of the West today. Roman law, language and culture still penetrate the fabric of Western society. Most of all the monster manifestation of human power has never changed. It will endure to the very end of human history as portrayed in its horns” (Don Pickerill, *op. cit.*).

¹⁴³ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 178. See also Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-170.

¹⁴⁴ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175. Most from this school of interpretation see the second kingdom as Media and the third as Persia.

LaSor is correct when he writes—

- *No choice among the options is free of difficulties. It is hard to split the Persian empire into two successive kingdoms, as do those who make the second and third kingdoms the Medes and Persians. But it is equally difficult to find the Roman empire in Daniel's dreams and visions. Again, whatever system of interpretation is chosen, close reading of the text puts the spotlight on the kingdom of God which replaces all these kingdoms.*¹⁴⁵

DANIEL 7:19-28—

Daniel was the most intrigued by **“the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, and most terrifying”** (vs. 19). Recapitulating some particulars while adding additional information (vv. 19-20; cf. vv. 7-8), Daniel observed that **“the other horn ...that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully...was warring against the holy people and was defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High”** (vv. 20-22).

- *In response to Daniel's desire to know more about the fourth beast (7:19), he is given a further vision. A beast with ten horns, and then another coming up, made war with the saints and prevailed over them “until the Ancient One came” (vv. 20-22). “One of the attendants” (v. 16; cf. v. 23) explains the vision: the fourth kingdom will be different from the others (v. 23), and will be exceedingly cruel and destructive. One of its kings is blasphemous, and persecutes “the holy ones of the Most High” (v. 27). This continues “for a time, two times, and half a time” (v. 25).¹⁴⁶ Then his dominion is taken and given to the saints of the Most High (vv. 26f).¹⁴⁷*

Again, which kingdom was Daniel referencing? Who was/will be the blasphemous (boastful) king? Is this **other horn** (vs. 20) the same ruler as **another horn, which started small but grew in power** seen in Daniel 8:9, or do they represent two different rulers?¹⁴⁸ What about the identity of the **ten kings**¹⁴⁹ and the **three kings** put down by

¹⁴⁵ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 577.

¹⁴⁶ This phrase has been variously interpreted. Some see it as a cryptic way of saying “3½ years” (GNB). Most likely it referenced an undetermined yet rather long period of time, which would come to a sudden end. “The king symbolized by the small horn has his time allotted; it is not without end” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 181).

¹⁴⁷ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pp. 577-578.

¹⁴⁸ This perspective is tied in to one's understanding of the identity of the fourth kingdom. Dispensationalists clearly identify the two horns as two separate rulers—the eschatological Antichrist (Daniel 7) and Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Daniel 8). Non-dispensational scholars who see the fourth beast as Rome see the Daniel 7 horn as any ruler of the Roman Empire, consummated in the Antichrist. Those

another king (vs. 24)?¹⁵⁰ Because the answer given to Daniel's inquiry is "enigmatic and quite indefinite" (Wallace), we simply do not know the answers to most of these questions; we should, therefore, avoid adamant conclusions regarding details, concentrating instead on the essence of the vision.

- *Who is the king, and what is the power represented by this beast, and identifiable with such a programme? Everything is simply left vague at this point. A case can be made out that the four beasts must refer to the same succession of kingdoms as are meant in the image of the colossus in the second chapter of the book. If this is so, then the succession could be 1) the Babylonian empire, 2) the Medo-Persian empire, 3) the Greek empire, 4) the Roman empire. The little horn would then refer to some great anti-Christian persecutor of the true church arising within the Christian era and within the civilization created by the Roman empire. This would fit in neatly with the interpretation given by the apostle Paul and the book of Revelation (chap. 13). Paul may be understood to expect that the 'man of lawlessness,' whom he seemed to identify with the person symbolized by this little horn, was going to develop within the Roman empire of this day, and do his devastating work on earth before being destroyed by Jesus at his second coming (2 Thes. 2:3-9). The book of Revelation, too, seems to identify the Roman empire, which was already persecuting the Christian church, with the last beast (Rev. 17:9 ff). Most traditional commentators have followed this scheme of interpretation, and many, of course, since the Reformation, have interpreted the beast as being the Roman hierarchy itself. It is to be noted, however, that in following-up this view we should have to suppose that the little horn of this chapter, since it arises as a development of the Roman empire, is different from the little horn of the next chapter which undoubtedly refers to Antiochus Epiphanes of the Seleucid-Greek empire (175-163 BC).¹⁵¹*

who see the fourth kingdom of Daniel 7 as Greece, see both horns as referring to Antiochus, who historically embodied antichrist dynamics. (See Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131 and Walvoord, *op. cit.*, 174-176 for details.)

¹⁴⁹ In keeping with the nature of apocalyptic, **ten** might be a round number that should not be pressed. "Here the number ten is a figure of speech...biblically, it can and does stand for the full complement or completion of a matter...so ten [here] stands for completion...a multiple form of political force growing out of the ancient Roman Empire" (Don Pickerill, *op. cit.*). Wood disagrees (*op. cit.*, pg. 187), noting that the number ten is to be interpreted literally and represents the same rulers as the ten toes of King Nubuchadnezzar's statue—a confederation of ten simultaneously ruling leaders during the Great Tribulation. This view also sees an extensive time gap between the kingdoms of the third and fourth beasts, as it does between the third and fourth kingdoms of the Daniel 2 statue.

¹⁵⁰ "The ten must be predecessors of the king symbolized by the small horn, and the three must be among the ten, not additional to the ten (cf. vv 7-8, 20)...we cannot press the symbolism of vv 7-8 to indicate that the ten kings must be contemporaries, on the basis that the small horn appears among the ten horns, as if they had grown simultaneously, any more than we can press the symbolism of chap. 2 to indicate that its four empires were contemporary, on the basis that the four metals appear simultaneously" (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 179). (See Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 175 for the view that the ten kings must rule simultaneously.)

¹⁵¹ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

- *It is possible to make out a plausible case for identifying Rome as the fourth animal; whether one finds later identifications (the Turks, Islam, the church, the pope, Nazism, communism, capitalism, the European Community, the United States) more or less plausible will depend on one's political and ecclesiastical commitments as much as anything else. The very use of symbolism in the vision encourages its reapplication to later embodiments of the same dark forces as Antiochus, initially Rome...even in his interpretation of the vision Daniel does not name its historical referents, and thus he permits its reapplication to subsequent situations where there is a reappearance of the pattern seen in the events of history...the process of such reapplication of Daniel's animal images to later empires reflects the fact that international history continues to be a process in which "one ethnic group, then another, becomes through rampaging expansion a monstrous coherence of power and peoples" (Aukerman).¹⁵²*
- *We do not underestimate the research, thought, observation and imagination of those who spend much time trying to trace exact historical identities. This kind of study has its own importance. But we must remember that Daniel in this vision saw these beasts and horns not simply as each having its own historical identity, but also as each being a typical example of the kind of empire and the kind of petty satellite power that can and will arise, here and there, now and then, in the field of human history under various different circumstances as time moves on to the fulfillment of God's great purposes with mankind...in interpreting the visions, therefore, let us follow in the example of Daniel himself. When he saw four beasts he made a fairly general inquiry about only one of them (verse 19). Let us at first not be too concerned about the exact significance of details, but let us store as many details as possible in our memory. Let us indeed often move as far back from the details as we can, to get as big a picture as possible of the whole canvas.¹⁵³*

The chapter closes with Daniel still somewhat perplexed—**“This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself”** (vs. 28).

DANIEL 8:1-27¹⁵⁴—

Daniel 8 deals with the second vision given to Daniel personally.¹⁵⁵ Sequentially, this happened between the events of Daniel 4 and 5—**in the third year of King Belshazzar's**

¹⁵² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pp., 187-188.

¹⁵³ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

¹⁵⁴ With Daniel 8, the book resumes in Hebrew.

¹⁵⁵ This is also the last of the book's symbolic visions. It is much easier to interpret than King Nebuchadnezzar's statue vision or Daniel's first vision, because its interpretation was given to Daniel with great detail (Daniel 8:15-26). Succeeding revelations are more verbal than visual and though cryptic, they are not conveyed through symbolism.

reign (vs. 1), which was two years after his first dream (Daniel 7:1). The fact that he notes it happened **after the one that had already appeared to me** (vs. 1) indicates that Daniel's second vision was dependent upon his first; both dealt with the oppression of governments and the surety of God's judgment against them. In the second vision, Daniel **saw [himself] in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal** (vs. 2). "Susa was in Jewish thinking *the* seat of the Persian empire,"¹⁵⁶ indicating that the matters of the vision were taking place far from Daniel's bodily setting and after the period of the exile.

Daniel found the vision difficult to understand (vs. 15).¹⁵⁷ It was while trying to understand that **there before [him] stood one who looked like a man** (vs. 15). He was identified by an unnamed **man's voice** (likely God Himself [*cf.* Ezekiel 1:26]) as **Gabriel**,¹⁵⁸ summoned to help Daniel understand (vs. 16). Daniel received Gabriel's explanation while **in a deep sleep** (vs. 18; **a trance** [NRSV])—"a coma-like state of deep sleep brought about by supernatural agency, especially in connection with visionary experiences."¹⁵⁹

The vision involved three symbolic elements—a **ram** (vs. 3); **a goat** (vs. 5); and **another horn, which started small but grew in power** (vs. 9). The **ram** (later identified as the kingdom of Media and Persia [vs. 20]) is said to have had **two horns...and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later** (vs. 3). "The horn is symbolic of power (1 Kgs. 22:11)...in Daniel 7-8 and Revelation 13 and 17, the horns symbolize rulers of empires."¹⁶⁰ Though not identified in the interpretation (vs. 20), these two kings are thought to be King Astyages (the reigning king of Media at the time of the Persian conquest¹⁶¹) and King Cyrus of

¹⁵⁶ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 208.

¹⁵⁷ In the end, Daniel described himself as **worn out** and **appalled**, so as to **lay exhausted for several days** (Daniel 8:27).

¹⁵⁸ Gabriel is the same archangel who also announced John the Baptist's birth to Zechariah (Luke 1:8-20) and Jesus' to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38).

¹⁵⁹ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 214.

¹⁶⁰ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 578.

¹⁶¹ "In 549 B.C. Cyrus defeated Media. Yet under the Persians, Media remained the most important province of Persia. As a conquest, the dual name, 'Medes and Persians,' remained for a long time" (*Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Ronald Youngblood, [General Editor], Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN., 1995, pg. 815).

Persia.¹⁶² The ram **did as it pleased and became great**, moving about the ancient world powerfully conquering (vs. 4).¹⁶³ “Nearly two hundred years of history and political aggrandizement, such as the world had not before seen, are summed up in vs. 4.”¹⁶⁴

As the vision continued, **a goat...came from the west...toward the two-horned ram...and charged at it in great rage...attack[ing] the ram furiously...and shattering its two horns (vv. 5-7). The ram was powerless to stand against it...and none could rescue the ram from its power (vs. 7).**¹⁶⁵ Identified later as “the king of Greece” (Daniel 8:21), the goat [then] became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off,¹⁶⁶ and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven (vs. 8). The referenced king was almost certainly Alexander the Great, who died in 323 BC (shortly after conquering Persia and the east). His territory was divided among four generals (Ptolemy I; Seleucus; Lysimachus; and Antipater). “He won victory after victory over the Persians, attacking at breathtaking speed in a brilliant series of battles from 334 BC on. With ever-increasing momentum he went on as far as India in the conquest of the world of his day.”¹⁶⁷

- *The irresistible power of the one **conspicuous horn** broke the two horns of the ram, but the goat’s horn was in turn broken. The sight and sound of horns breaking off typifies the brittle nature of political might, especially as the goat has his great horn broken **when he was strong** (8). The audio-visual impact of the vision has continuing relevance: great power, resulting in self-importance, invites a great reversal (Lk. 1:52).*¹⁶⁸

Attention was then given to **another horn, which started small but grew in power**¹⁶⁹ which came out of the **four prominent horns** of the goat (vv. 8-9).¹⁷⁰ The interpretation did not specifically identify this king, only his nature, tactics and ultimate destiny (vv.

¹⁶² Another possibility is that “the kings of Media and Persia are the whole number of the Medo-Persian kings as they succeed each other, *i.e.* the Medo-Persian monarchy in the whole of its historical development” (C. F. Keil, *op. cit.*, pg. 316).

¹⁶³ This likely referred to the Medo-Persia triumphs in Asia Minor and Babylon under King Cyrus.

¹⁶⁴ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 156.

¹⁶⁵ This likely referred to the Greek conquest of Persia in 332 BC by Alexander the Great.

¹⁶⁶ The fluidity of apocalyptic is again seen in the fact that the goat is both the kingdom of Greece and its prominent king (Alexander the Great). “The king of Grecia is an obvious reference to the kingdom as a whole, as the great horn between its eyes is identified as the first king” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 196).

¹⁶⁷ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 139.

¹⁶⁸ Baldwin, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶⁹ See note #148 above on the possible relationship of this horn to that of Daniel 7:20.

¹⁷⁰ These **four prominent horns** were later identified as **four kingdoms** which would arise out of Greece (Daniel 8:22).

23-25). He is usually identified as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a member of the Seleucid dynasty of Syria. One of the cruelest rulers of all time, his cruelty bordered on madness. He took on the surname **Epiphanes** (“God Manifest”), but the Jews called him **Epimanes** (“Madman”). His desire to unify his Empire by demanding its adherents to embrace Greek culture and civilization at the expense of their own brought him into direct conflict with the Jews (**the Beautiful Land** [Daniel 8:9]).

Daniel’s vision saw Antiochus IV as affronting God Himself—it **grew in power...until it reached the host of heavens...[and] it set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord**¹⁷¹ (vv. 9-11). Antiochus IV did so by exalting himself, by disrupting the worship of Yahweh’s people and by dragging His truth through the mud by abrogating the authority of the Torah over the Jewish people (vv. 11-12);¹⁷² in addition to being arrogant (vs. 11), he is also described as “**a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue...very strong...[able to] cause astounding devastation...[able to] succeed in whatever he does...and [able to] cause deceit to prosper**” (vv. 23-25).

“**Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power**” (vs. 25). “This came true in a sense regarding Antiochus, for, as stated in 1 Maccabees 6:8-16, he died of grief and remorse in Babylon,”¹⁷³ having left Israel after his defeat and dying a madman in Persia. As to the length of his tyrannical abominations, it is said to be “**2,300 evenings and mornings**” (vs. 14). The phrase is variously interpreted.

- *Some commentators think this means actually 2,300 days (i.e. between six and seven years) and refers approximately to the whole period of the intense persecution of the Jews by Antiochus. Others think that it means, rather, 1,150 days, and refers approximately to the actual time of the cessation of sacrifice*

¹⁷¹ This likely refers to God Himself, the intent being that the horn did not honor God or His role in the universe. (Note NIV—the **Prince of the host**; see also Daniel 8:25) Antiochus IV Epiphanes is known to have profaned the Temple in December, 168 BC, robbing it of its valuables, emptying it of worshipers, placing armed guards in the Temple area and setting up within it an idol altar. It was cleansed in 165 BC, as part of the Maccabean revolt; its cleansing is still observed annually by the Jews as the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah). “Antiochus exalted himself up to the point of claiming divine honor...[he] directed blasphemous opposition against God Himself and to this extent magnified himself against God as well as reaching toward the glory and honor belonging to God” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 187).

¹⁷² Daniel 8:12A is difficult to translate as the Hebrew text is ambiguous. **Because of rebellion, the Lord’s people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it** “is generally interpreted to mean that the people of Israel along with their worship are given over to the power of Antiochus Epiphanes with the resulting transgression and blasphemy against God” (Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 188).

¹⁷³ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 228.

*in the temple.*¹⁷⁴

One final note before leaving Daniel 8. Gabriel told Daniel, “**The vision concerns the time of the end**¹⁷⁵...it concerns the distance future” (vv. 17, 26). Its most obvious reference was the major lapse of time between the time of Daniel and that of Antiochus IV nearly 400 years later.¹⁷⁶ But within the larger context of Daniel 7-12, it also gives us insight into the fact that Antiochus IV embodied principles of all future “Antiochus-type rulers” and of the final “Antiochus” of history, the Antichrist of Revelation 13.¹⁷⁷

- *It is better to leave the [overall] message in a shape that appreciates its timeless form, that respects it sealing as the revelation of God. The ultimate fulfillment “refers to many days from now” (v. 26), but its purpose belongs to the people of God in any age. Their enemies are God’s enemies, and God’s kingdom belongs to a time when God’s eternity is experienced forever. The present comfort it provides is not a stoic set of the face; the destiny it promises is sealed in God’s own heart.*¹⁷⁸
- *The Book of Daniel gives us one of the clearest biblical insights into the nature and fate of the kingdoms of this world. The principalities and powers of this Age remain the same regardless of the historical forms they may take...who knows, for example, what really underlies the lives of nations today? How do we separate ourselves from the past? From Rome? From Greece? Or even Babylon and beyond? In the Book of Revelation, John pictures the principalities and powers as a combination of all historical forces of the past (Revelation 13:1-2). Daniel particularly notes the “war against the saints” and the final effort to “wear them out” (Daniel 7:21, 25). Daniel, of course, is a prime personal example of the conflict between the saints and world powers, and how one can triumph.*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 140. See also Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 213 for technical details regarding the various views.

¹⁷⁵ This phrase “does not necessarily mean the end of all things, but may refer to the question asked in verse 13” (Joyce Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 159).

¹⁷⁶ “**Seal up the vision**” (Daniel 8:26) referenced the fact it would have no immediate fulfillment.

¹⁷⁷ “The passage intentionally goes beyond Antiochus to provide prophetic foreshadowing of the final Gentile ruler” (Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 196).

¹⁷⁸ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 579.

¹⁷⁹ Pickerill, *op. cit.*

DANIEL 9:1-19—

Daniel 9 begins with Daniel reflecting on what he had **understood from the Scriptures**,¹⁸⁰ most particularly what he had studied in **Jeremiah the prophet** regarding the end of **the desolation of Jerusalem** (vs. 2). Daniel knew the Exile had to do with **seventy years** (vs. 2; *cf.* Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10) and he perceived its end was near. It was about 538 BC—the **first year of Darius son of Xerxes**¹⁸¹ (vs. 1; see pages 24-25 above on the identify of this Darius).

There is no easy way to calculate **seventy years**, but again, its intent is clear.

- *Jeremiah’s seventy-year period of Babylonian rule might be reckoned to begin with Judah’s submission to Babylon in 605 B.C. or with the fall of Jerusalem in 596 or 587 BC.; it might be reckoned to the end with the fall of Babylon in 539, the initiation of a Jewish return in 538, or the completion of the rebuilding of the temple in 517 B.C. It is thus possible to argue that Jeremiah was chronologically right. But it is unlikely that he intended the “seventy years” to have a precise chronological reference; nor is there reason to infer that Daniel necessarily understood it this way. “Seventy years” suggests a human lifetime.*¹⁸²
- *There are various ways of reckoning the years of exile, none of which comes exactly to seventy years; but theologically the important point was that restoration marked acceptance with the Lord, who, by restoring His people to their land, demonstrated that He had forgiven and reinstated them (Is. 40:1ff). It is possible to be so preoccupied with numbers as to miss the essential truth which those numbers declare.*¹⁸³

Realizing the importance of prayer in partnering with God for the release of His prophetic promises, Daniel **turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes** (vs. 3). His prayer (one of the longest recorded in any narrative section of the Bible) was largely a confession of Israel/Judah’s sin—acknowledgment of the fact his people **“have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes and our**

¹⁸⁰ “This suggests the existence of an identifiable collection of authoritative religious writings, though this need not imply a precisely defined and closed ‘canon’” (John Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 240).

¹⁸¹ **Xerxes** appears in the LXX. Most English versions follow the Hebrew, **Ahasuerus**; in either case he is not to be confused with the Persian king whom Esther married (Esther 2:17). (The TNIV also translates **Xerxes** throughout Esther.) It either referenced an otherwise unknown ancestor of King Darius, or it was a royal title meaning, “Hero among rulers.” On the two possible meanings of a **Mede by descent**, see Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 164.

¹⁸² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 239.

¹⁸³ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 164.

ancestors, and to all the people of the land” (vs. 6). As a result, **“We are covered with shame...[and You brought] great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem”** (vv. 8, 12); the shame could be reversed only by the mercy and forgiveness of Yahweh (vv. 9, 18)—a mercy and forgiveness which Daniel hoped to release on behalf of all Israel with his supplication—**“Turn away Your anger and Your wrath from Jerusalem...look with favor on Your desolate sanctuary...forgive!...hear and act!...do not delay, because Your city and Your people bear Your Name”** (vv. 16-19).

- *When Daniel started praying that day his mind had been set on knowing one thing, asking one question: what date had God really fixed for the return from exile? But reading the books and the realization that he was in the presence of God forced him to get his priorities right. Therefore he soon began to forget about the dates in the diary of God and found himself troubled in mind about a much more important and basic issue: could there be any hope of return at all for a people with a history and attitude like theirs?*¹⁸⁴

DANIEL 9:20-27—

The matter of Daniel desiring insight into the arithmetic of Jeremiah’s seventy years had not escaped God. Deemed an answer to his prayer (vs. 23), the understanding came to Daniel from **Gabriel** because he **“was highly esteemed”** (vs. 23). Theologically known as “the Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks,” it “raises so many new difficulties and is itself so full of ambiguities that we have the impression that God wishes to assure his people about the future without allowing them to become preoccupied with calendar matters.”¹⁸⁵ “Calculations of the ‘seven weeks,’ ‘sixty-two weeks,’ and the remaining ‘one week,’ which is divided in half (v. 27), have concerned a whole spectrum of scholarship. Lack of a common result raises doubts about the methods used. No compelling consensus has ever been reached.”¹⁸⁶ We offer here the most plausible.

1. Gabriel began by noting that the main issue was not just Jeremiah’s seventy years (vs. 24). The issue on God’s heart for Daniel was bigger than that.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 156.

¹⁸⁶ LaSor, *op. cit.*, pg. 579.

¹⁸⁷ “The enlargement of Jeremiah’s prophecy by Gabriel did not cancel out Jeremiah’s prophecy that the exile was to be for ‘seventy years.’ It actually lasted for more or less that time. All such numbers in Holy

It involved “**Seventy weeks**” (NRSV) or “**Seventy ‘sevens’**” (TNIV), which in effect amounted to “seventy times seven years” (490 years [vs. 24]). It would be divided into three phases (see below). The opening date of this 490 years was purposefully ambiguous (vs. 25), because 490 was not intended to be taken as a literal number to calculate a chronology of events.

- o *The number 490 is not an arithmetical calculation to be pressed to yield chronological information. It is a figure that puts together two symbolic figures, the seventy years (a lifetime) of Jer 25:11; 29:10 and the sevenfold chastisement of Lev 26:28. The result is a doubly symbolic figure extending from the beginning of chastisement in the exile to whenever it is seen as ending.*¹⁸⁸

2. Gabriel told Daniel that the vision had to do with “**your people and your holy city**” (vs. 24), not a worldwide perspective addressing the end of all history.
3. When the final events of the seventieth week were complete, six things will have been accomplished—there will have been the finishing of **transgression**, the putting **an end to sin**, the atoning **for wickedness**, the bringing **in [of] everlasting righteousness**, a sealing of **both vision and prophecy** and the anointing of **the Most Holy Place**¹⁸⁹ (vs. 24).
4. The first phase of this program would be the return of Judah **to restore and rebuild Jerusalem** (vs. 25). There is considerable debate as to the *terminus a quo* (the referenced beginning date) intended in the statement, “**...from the time the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem...**” (vs. 25). There are several possibilities (the decree of King Cyrus; the decree of King Darius; the decree of King Artaxerxes, etc.), and it may be that Gabriel intended Daniel to look at all of them as a unit.¹⁹⁰
5. The second phase was the period of Jerusalem’s restoration and rebuilding. It was said to last “**seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’**” (vs. 25), at

Scripture are approximate. But Gabriel’s word did give Daniel a needed reminder that God had even then bigger things to think about than the return across the desert and the rebuilding of Jerusalem” (Ronald Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 164).

¹⁸⁸ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 266.

¹⁸⁹ This most likely referred to the rededication of the Temple following the Maccabean revolt.

¹⁹⁰ See Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 260 for a complete list. Baldwin (*op. cit.*, pp. 169-170) feels the only two reasonable possibilities are either King Cyrus’ edict (539 BC) or the sending of Nehemiah (445 BC).

which time the next significant event would take place—the appearance of **“the Anointed One, the ruler”** (vs. 25).¹⁹¹ “The numbers are symbolic and not arithmetical; by the time sixty-nine sevens have passed, God’s allotted seventy is almost complete, and *an anointed one* is evidently significant in accomplishing the purposes outlined in verse 24.”¹⁹² As to who is exactly intended by **“the Anointed One, the ruler”** (**“an anointed prince”** [NRSV]; **“Messiah the Prince”** [NKJV]) is highly debated, though the TNIV and NKJV have taken a theological stance in their translations. The Hebrew literally reads, **“an anointed, a leader,”** and he is probably best understood as the same person referenced in vs. 26—**“the Anointed One”** (**“an anointed one”** [NRSV])—that is, the Messiah (NKJV). “Many evangelical scholars believe that the messianic interpretation [of Daniel 9:24-27]¹⁹³ fits the language better than an eschatological one.¹⁹⁴ It discloses God’s redemptive purpose...to put away sin as though it no longer had any existence.”¹⁹⁵ Pickerill has an interesting observation—

- o *A remarkable part of this prophecy is the link between Jerusalem and the Messiah. The issuing of the decree to build Jerusalem is measured up to the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah is “cut off” with a violent end, this in turn leads on to the city itself being “cut off” with utter destruction (Daniel 9:26). Both experience a “shocking” end. Though the restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity is emphatic (Daniel 9:25), its foundations will be laid “in a troubled time” (Daniel 9:25). This probably included the trouble recorded in the post-captivity books, but it undoubtedly included more. The deeper message is that even though Jerusalem is rebuilt and restored, it has trouble in its foundations! The earthly city will not live up to its name, which means salvation, wholeness and peace. If men are to find the source of salvation and hope to see an end to sin and experience everlasting righteousness, they must not look to the earthly city of*

¹⁹¹ **“After the sixty-two ‘sevens”** (Daniel 9:26) now became Gabriel’s major focal point. “Gabriel apparently saw no need to speak further of the first seven” (Leon Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 225).

¹⁹² Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 171.

¹⁹³ The messianic interpretation understands **“the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing”** (Daniel 9:26) to reference Christ’s death and utter rejection, which is here seen in conjunction with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (**“the people of the ruler who will come** [a different prince, likely the Roman general Titus] **will destroy the city and the sanctuary”** [Daniel 9:26]).

¹⁹⁴ See note #197 below for an understanding of the eschatological interpretation as it affects Daniel 9:27.

¹⁹⁵ Ladd, George, *The Last Things*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI., 1978, pg. 60.

*Jerusalem, for it is a troubled city. This is why the rebuilding of the city is dated to the coming of the Messiah. The focus is on Him, not it. The prophecy of the seventy sevens, therefore, has a strong weaning effect; it prepared the ancient people of God for the passing away of the Old Covenant, including the Temple with its sacrifices and offerings and even “Jerusalem.”*¹⁹⁶

6. The final phase (happening during Daniel’s seventieth week and completing God’s purpose) is said to further involve Messiah—**“He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ He will put an end to sacrifice and offering”** (vs. 27A). “Verse 27A is a reference to the new covenant and the abolition of the validity of the old sacrifices.”¹⁹⁷

- o *Literally translated, vs. 27A reads, “He shall cause the covenant to prevail.” The messianic interpretation sees the subject as Christ, who confirms and fulfills the covenant already in existence so that its terms and conditions are now to be made more effective. This is the covenant in Jesus’ blood which fulfills the covenant made with Abraham (Gal. 3:17). By his death he “shall make sacrifice and offering cease”: his death will put an end to the Jewish sacrificial system (see Heb. 8:13). As a result or consequence of the death of Messiah, “an abomination that desolates” (the Roman prince, Titus) appears “on a wing of the temple”...[meaning] he comes to completely destroy the temple.*¹⁹⁸
- o This Temple destruction Ladd references is in Daniel 9:27B where there is clearly a change in subject. **“And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him”** (vs. 27B). This was quoted by Jesus and applied in part to Titus’ destruction of the Temple

¹⁹⁶ Pickerill, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁷ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 169. The eschatological (dispensational) understanding of Daniel 9:27A is very different and sees a change in subject from Daniel 9:26. **He** then is not referencing Messiah but rather “a future prince who may be identified with the Antichrist who will appear at the end of the interadvent age just before the second coming of Christ” (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 233). “It is assumed that Israel has returned to Palestine as a nation, has rebuilt the temple, and reinstated the sacrificial system. Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel which is to last seven years, but in the midst of the seven years he will break his covenant, disrupt the sacrifices in Jerusalem, and launch a terrible persecution against the Jewish people” (George Ladd, *loc. cit.*). (NOTE: A minority of scholars sees the text as having neither a messianic nor eschatological reference but solely a 2nd century BC historical reference and fulfillment. Their conclusions are not discussed here.)

¹⁹⁸ Ladd, *op. cit.*, pg. 61.

(Matthew 24:15 with Luke 21:20).¹⁹⁹ “The followers of Jesus knew that the sacrilege standing in the holy place was foreign armies invading Jerusalem and the holy land during their life time. He told them to instantly flee at first sight of these armies (Luke 21:22).”²⁰⁰

DANIEL 10:1-9—

Daniel 10-12 constitutes a single unit, built around an incredible final **revelation** (vision [Daniel 10:1]) about the future of God’s people; it was given to Daniel **in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia** (Daniel 10:1).²⁰¹ “The climax of all Daniel’s experiences comes at the end of his book.”²⁰² Daniel knew the word had to do with a **great war** (vs. 1). “The thought is that the information given by the messenger involved great conflicts in history to come.”²⁰³

Daniel received this particular word during a three week period of spiritual mourning, which included a limited fast²⁰⁴ and refraining from the use of anointing oils (which one used as a symbol of rejoicing [vs. 3]). Some speculate he was fasting and praying for the welfare of the first returnees. The word was delivered to him by an unnamed angel of high standing (**a man** [vs. 5]), whose description was intended to note his purity, majesty and insight to address the matters at hand (vv. 5-6).²⁰⁵ “The intention of this manner of appearance was likely to impress Daniel with the heavenly origin of this one and his full authority to say what soon follows.”²⁰⁶

In a manner similar to Saul’s encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the Damascus

¹⁹⁹ This concept will be more fully explained under Daniel 11:31, where it occurs again, but note Baldwin, “Whatever the exact meaning, some coming leader is going to cause desolation, and the context suggests that this will be directed to God’s people and God’s cause” (Joyce Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 172).

²⁰⁰ Pickerill, *op. cit.*

²⁰¹ This would have been 537 BC (see note #11 above for Daniel’s system of reckoning dates), after the first returnees had returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar. Daniel had been in captivity about sixty-eight years. The word in part served to show that the prophesied end of the Exile did not mean the end of difficulty for Israel.

²⁰² Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 174.

²⁰³ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 266. Another possible understanding is that **great war** referred to the personal cost to Daniel in understanding the word (*cf.* NEB).

²⁰⁴ Apparently the refusal to eat the rich foods of Babylon (Daniel 1:8-17) lasted only a season.

²⁰⁵ **A belt of fine gold from Uphaz** (Daniel 10:5) is probably to be understood as a fine quality woven belt (**a belt of the finest gold** [NIV]) with gold threads and gold studs. **Topaz** (Daniel 10:6; **chrysolite** [NIV]) references a yellow stone with a gold luster.

²⁰⁶ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 269.

Road, Daniel alone saw the angel, but those around him perceived a supernatural visitation; as a result, **such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves** (vs. 7; cf. Acts 22:9). The appearance had a great impact on Daniel as well—**I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep,²⁰⁷ my face to the ground** (vv. 8-9; see also vv. 15-17).

DANIEL 10:10—11:1—

The angel's immediate response to Daniel's consternation was to touch and rouse him (10:10). Daniel was then told once again that he was **"highly esteemed,"** that he must **"consider carefully the words"** that were going to be spoken and that he had no need to fear (10:11-12). He stood **trembling** (vs. 11). The angel's assignment was **"to explain to [Daniel] what will happen to [his] people in the future,²⁰⁸ for the vision concerns a time yet to come"** (10:14).²⁰⁹

Before giving the vision, the angel let Daniel know why it had taken three weeks to respond to his prayers. It was because **"the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days"** (10:13).²¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the opposition was so great that eventually **"Michael, one of the chief princes,²¹¹ came to help"** (10:13)²¹² and the angel would need to return to the battle following his assignment to Daniel (as well as battle with **the prince of Greece** [10:20]).²¹³

- *The picture is apparently of the messenger returning to resume the fight to ensure that Persia continues to be restrained from adversely affecting God's purpose (especially for Israel), but then of the Greeks in turn taking up their*

²⁰⁷ See note on Daniel 8:18 (page 42 above).

²⁰⁸ **"In the future...yet to come"** is nebulous and should probably not be interpreted eschatologically.

²⁰⁹ This vision will be taken up in Daniel 11. It is later said that the revelation was in keeping with **"what is written in the Book of Truth"** (Daniel 10:21). "Though figurative, this aptly conveys God's control and knowledge of past, present and future" (Joyce Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 182).

²¹⁰ The messenger's subsequent statement, **"I was detained there with the king of Persia,"** likely references "that a victory of major character was won against the demonic forces which had previously controlled the kingdom of Persia, and the subsequent result was that the kingdom of Persia now would become the object of divine direction through angelic ministry" (John Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 247).

²¹¹ Jude 9 calls Michael an **archangel**.

²¹² The messenger had previously gone to aid Michael in a similar battle, at about the time of the first return (Daniel 11:1). It is speculated that Michael's battle was with King Cyrus over the decree to allow the return.

²¹³ The power of these spiritual princes was intended to relay the political power of each nation.

*attempt to implement their own will, which also threatens that purpose.*²¹⁴

There is difference of opinion among scholars as to the nature of these princes. Because the prince of Persia and Greece are said to oppose Michael and his angels, most scholars see them as “emissaries of Satan, one of the numerous fallen angels called demons”²¹⁵ who hold some sort of regional authority.

Four observations about this opposition merit attention—

1. We do not know the exact nature of the struggle. “The conflict referred to here may be a verbal/legal one with the representative of Persia (*cf.* Job 1-2), or one involving a warrior seeking to halt a messenger, or a ‘physical’ struggle between supernatural armies.”²¹⁶
2. Daniel was not involved in the territorial warfare and the angels’ victories were in no way related to his praying.
3. Though leaving us with many unanswered questions, the angel’s report does affirm the matter of spiritual realities (and warfare) behind the realities of life (*cf.* Revelation 12). “The most important aspect of this revelation is that the conflicts and tensions between earthly powers and the people of God are reflected in the heavenly realm, and are also being fought out there.”²¹⁷
4. Because of difficulties with the Hebrew text, we are not certain of the final detail of the described battle. Most likely, the messenger “**left [Michael] there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia**” (10:13C [NRSV]) while he came to speak to Daniel. Again, the messenger would later return.

As the messenger related why his delay, Daniel **bowed [his] face toward the ground and was speechless** (10:15). He required another touch before he could speak (10:16).²¹⁸ Acknowledging that he was virtually overwhelmed by this latest revelation (**vision**)—even to the point of shaking—(10:16-17), he asked, “**How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe**” (10:17). Daniel was so pained by the personal price the angel was paying on behalf of Israel when he was not

²¹⁴ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 292.

²¹⁵ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 272.

²¹⁶ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 292.

²¹⁷ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 179.

²¹⁸ Most scholars feel that **the one who looked like a man** (Daniel 10:16, 18) was the same angel who had been in dialogue with Daniel, although it is possible that it referenced another angel who came to assist.

paying a similar price, that he could not see himself as a participant in the revelation the angel was about to give. A third touch and discussion were required to finally convince him (10:18).

DANIEL 11:2-4—

Before looking at “**the truth**” (vs. 2) which the angel came to announce to Daniel, three introductory remarks on Daniel 11 are important.

- *This chapter, throughout its first thirty-five verses at least, retells the history of the period we already briefly reviewed in vision in chapter 8 as we watched the exploits of the ram, the he-goat, the four horns, and the little horn...this passage, read simply within the narrative as we have it, claims to be history told beforehand in fairly well defined detail.*²¹⁹
- *One aspect of the pattern of history as chap. 11 sees it emerges immediately. It is the story of the exercise of power, but the exercise of power leads only to external conflict (v 2b), internal dissolution (vv 3-4), or eclipse by a more powerful entity (v 5). It is the nature of kings not to recognize this; they always aspire to that elusive final victory. They seek it by marriage alliances, but fail (v 6). More commonly they seek it by the use of force, but that also fails (vv 8b-9). It may win famous victories, but these always turn out to be temporary (vv 7-8a, 10-12).*²²⁰
- *Whereas the exile had been explained by the prophets and accepted in the end by the people as a judgment well deserved, this coming terror is not presented in those terms. It is rather the brutal attack of a megalomaniac against “the holy covenant” (vs. 28)...his brief was to give divine warning that suffering was not always in the nature of divine punishment, as the Exile had been.*²²¹

Of first concern to the angel was Persia (the **ram** of Daniel 8), from the time of King Cyrus to the time it was conquered by Alexander the Great²²² of Greece (the **goat** of Daniel 8) in 330 BC (vv. 2-3). He compacted over 200 years of Persian history in two sentences because Persia was not his focal point. In that there were thirteen Achaemenid kings from King Cyrus to Persia’s conquest, the four kings mentioned after King Cyrus are not easy to explain. “The most natural explanation is that the four kings are the first four Persian rulers [after King Cyrus]...the point being that later Persian rulers were

²¹⁹ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 186.

²²⁰ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 293.

²²¹ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184.

²²² This is most certainly the **mighty king** of Daniel 11:3.

unimportant and in a state of decline.”²²³ The fourth of these (King Xerxes I [486-465 BC])²²⁴ was known to have engaged in war **“against the kingdom of Greece”** (vs. 2).

Following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, **“his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven”** (vs. 4).²²⁵

DANIEL 11:5-19—

The messenger’s prophetic insight and accuracy are astounding, affirming the fact that such prophecies come only by Yahweh’s revelation. His first historical concern was **“the South”** (Egypt [vs. 5]) and **“the North”** (Syria/Babylonia [vs. 6]), the two kingdoms that lay on either side of Israel. “The comings and goings between Egypt and Syria would necessarily harass the holy land and threaten its security.”²²⁶ He began with Ptolemy I Soter (**“the king of the South”** from 322-285 BC [vs. 5A]), and Seleucus I Nicator (**“one of [Ptolemy’s] commanders”** [vs. 5B]) and his military campaigns, in which he conquered Babylon from Antigonos²²⁷ (eventually conquering parts of Asia as well and ruling a realm larger than Egypt [vs. 5B]). Seleucus I, now a ruler in his own right, then entered a series of conflicts with Ptolemy I (particularly over rulership of Palestine).

The messenger continued—**“after some years”** (which amounted to about fifty years [vs. 6]), the then reigning king of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC), shall make an alliance with Syria/Babylonia by marrying his daughter, Berenice, to Antiochus II Theos (**“the king of the North”** from 261-246 BC [vs. 6]). It would be an attempt to mend fences, Antiochus II divorcing his first wife, Laodice, in order to marry Berenice. **“But [Berenice] will not retain her power, and [Antiochus II’s] power will not last. In those days she will be betrayed...”** (vs. 6) references the fact that “after two years, Antiochus II apparently went back to Laodice, who then had him killed, along with his son by Berenice, Berenice herself, and a number of her Egyptian attendants.”²²⁸

Sometime later, Berenice will be avenged (vs. 7). **“One from her family line”** (Berenice’s brother, Ptolemy III Eurgetes, the then reigning king of Egypt [vs. 7]) **“will**

²²³ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 256.

²²⁴ This is King Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6.

²²⁵ See Daniel 8:8. **The four winds** were his four generals who divided his kingdom among themselves (see page 43 above).

²²⁶ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 186.

²²⁷ Antigonos was one of Alexander the Great’s generals; he received Turkey, Syria and parts of the East.

²²⁸ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 296.

attack the forces of the king of the North...and be victorious” (vs. 7). He will have Laodice killed and **“seize their gods...and carry them off to Egypt”** (vs. 8)—a sign of subjugation and exercise of power (*cf.* Daniel 1:1-2). The next two years will see peace between the nations, after which Seleucus II Callinicus **“will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country”** (vs. 9), his army decimated.

The divine messenger next addressed (vv. 10-13) the activities of the Syrian king Seleucus III Soter and his brother, Antiochus III Magnus (**“his sons”** [vs. 10]). Of particular mention is Antiochus III’s²²⁹ invasion of Palestine and Ptolemy IV Philopator’s response in 217 *BC* (**“then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North”** [vs. 11]), in which Egypt again took control over Palestine. In conjunction with the ongoing conflict between Egypt and Syria, **“many will rise against the king of the South. Those who are violent among [Daniel’s] own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success”** (vs. 14). **“Those who are violent”** references Jews who decided to take matters into their own hands (rather than to trust Yahweh, which is why they failed) and joined Antiochus III’s campaign to rid Palestine of Egyptian control. (It is not clear why they felt Syrian control would be better.) **“In fulfillment of the vision”** indicates that they thought they were fulfilling God’s revealed will (such as stated in Ezekiel 7), but they were not.

Noted next is the fact that Antiochus III would go on to gain firm control of **“the Beautiful Land”** (Israel [vs. 16]).²³⁰ Fearing Roman intervention, however, Antiochus III held back from invading Egypt. Instead, the messenger told Daniel, **“He will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom”** (vs. 17). The reference is Antiochus III’s betrothal of his daughter, Cleopatra, to Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt. **“But his plans will not succeed or help him”** (vs. 17). “He hoped to further his designs on Egypt through her,²³¹ but she (Egypt’s first Cleopatra) became perfectly loyal to her husband and new homeland and encouraged an Egyptian alliance with Rome, which frustrated Antiochus’

²²⁹ Antiochus III became king of Syria in 223 *BC* when his brother was murdered during a military campaign in Turkey.

²³⁰ This happened shortly after his defeat of Egypt at Caesarea Philippi in 199 *BC*.

²³¹ This is the meaning of **“in order to overthrow the kingdom”** (Daniel 11:17).

continuing designs on the Ptolemaic area of the old empire of Alexander.”²³² Antiochus III ultimately returned to Syria, where he was assassinated in 187 *BC* while trying to rob the treasury of the god Bel to pay tribute to Rome (vs. 19).

- *The messenger has been overworking certain verbs throughout this prediction of future events: they are “arise,” “be strong,” “shall not stand.” “Arise” and “be strong” are used figuratively in this chapter to convey the idea of ruling with authority and power. Yet, despite the fact that rulers become strong, suddenly they stand no longer; their kingdoms are broken, they retreat, they fall.*²³³

DANIEL 11:20-39—

Antiochus III’s successor, Seleucus IV Philopator, faced paying the heavy tribute imposed on his father by Rome. He sent throughout his Empire **“a tax collector”** (his finance minister, Heliodorus [vs. 20]) to collect monies; Heliodorus is reported to have even attempted to pillage the treasury of the Temple. **“In a few years, however, [Seleucus IV] will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle”** (vs. 20) was the messenger’s reference to Seleucus IV’s ignominious assassination (engineered by Heliodorus).²³⁴ Rulership went to his younger brother, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (**“a contemptible person”** [vs. 21]),²³⁵ recently returned from Rome where he had been taken earlier as a hostage.

The messenger then gave Daniel an overall assessment of Antiochus IV’s character, stressing the treachery and intrigue by which he came to rule (vv. 21-24).²³⁶ It is in obvious contrast to his self-imposed title, “Epiphanes” (“God Manifest”). He also described Antiochus’ first Egyptian campaign in 170-169 *BC*, showing his mastery at being underhanded (vv. 25-28). **“His heart will be set against the holy covenant”** (vs. 28) likely references Antiochus’ 169 *BC* visit to Jerusalem, where he took part of the Temple treasury simply because he needed money.

“At the time appointed” (vs. 29) reminded Daniel of Yahweh’s sovereignty amidst all

²³² Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 298.

²³³ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 189.

²³⁴ It is reported that Antiochus IV Epiphanes was part of the plot. This is the likely reference to his assuming the throne **“through intrigue”** (Daniel 11:21).

²³⁵ See pages 44-45 above.

²³⁶ The angel announced that Antiochus IV would destroy **“a prince of the covenant”** (Daniel 11:22). It references his replacement of the High Priest Onias III because of his Egyptian sympathies. In his place, Antiochus installed a political sympathizer (Jason).

this. “It would seem that God saw this return campaign against Egypt as a necessary part in the overall activity of Antiochus.”²³⁷ Antiochus’ campaign against Egypt two years later would not be successful at all (vv. 29-30). As a result, **“he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant”** (vs. 30)—a reference to his return to Jerusalem with an even greater vengeance, seeking support from **“[Jews] who forsake the holy covenant”** (vs. 30). His campaign this time would include **“ris[ing] up to desecrate the temple fortress²³⁸...abolish[ing] the daily sacrifice...then set[ting] up the abomination that causes desolation”** (vs. 31). “The intention was to impose by force worship of another god.”²³⁹ (See also Daniel 8:23-25 and Daniel 9:27.)

- *In the process of his opposition to the Jews, Antiochus polluted the holy altar in the temple by offering a sow upon the altar and forbidding the continuance of the daily sacrifices (cf. 1 Mac 1:44-54). He also issued orders that the Jews should cease their worship and erected in the holy place an idol, probably the image of Zeus Olympius. This represents placing “the abomination that makes desolate,” mentioned in verse 31 to which Christ referred in Matthew 24:15.²⁴⁰*

As noted on page 52 above, Jesus taught that **“the abomination that causes desolation”** had another application—namely, the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70 AD (Matthew 24:15/Luke 21:20). Paul, obviously dependent on both Daniel and Jesus, makes an even further application when he wrote—**he (the lawless one) will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple,²⁴¹ proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

- *The profanation of the temple referred to by Daniel took place in 168 BC, accomplished by Antiochus Epiphanes as a part of his attempt to wipe out Judaism...Jesus adopts the same language to indicate that a similar desecration of the temple will occur...the Danielic imagery was familiar to Matthew’s readers. Now they were to know that what Daniel once referred to, fulfilled in the historical events of 168 BC, was prophesied again by Jesus.*
- *So horrific was [the event of Antiochus] that it became a convenient and*

²³⁷ Wood, *op. cit.*, pg. 300.

²³⁸ **The temple fortress** was a specially built building designed to resist invaders.

²³⁹ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 195.

²⁴⁰ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 268.

²⁴¹ This referenced eschatological temple is either metaphoric, graphic language for saying he plans to usurp God’s authority or it refers to some material building Antichrist will literally use as his spiritual base of operation. We cannot be sure. What is clear is that it does not refer to a rebuilt Jewish Temple.

*elastic symbol for the great evils that were to engulf the people in the future, evils that could point to the struggles prior to the eschatological era itself...when Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, he used the same symbolic language. So too in 2 Thess 2:4 Paul depends on the prophecy of Jesus, employing the same Danielic symbol, when he refers to the antichrist to come...Jesus' reference to something to be accomplished by the Romans in A.D. 70 does not prevent the elastic symbol from also being applied to something lying in the future.*²⁴²

The great suffering of the majority (loyal Jews) during Antiochus' campaign was also prophesied—**“they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered”** (vs. 33). **“They shall receive a little help”** (vs. 34) likely references the earliest resistance of Judean activists (1 Macc 2-4); **“until the time of the end”** (vs. 35) references the time needed for all God's purposes to be fully accomplished for refining, purifying and cleansing His people (vs. 35).

Vv. 36-39 speak further of Antiochus IV's character, especially his religious character (cf. Daniel 8:9-25 and comments on page 43 above). **“He will show no regard...for the one desired by women”** (vs. 37) most likely refers to Antiochus' disregard of Tammuz (a Babylonian fertility god), whose legendary death was mourned annually in Canaanite rituals. “The motive appears to be that the king must be more popular than the most popular of gods.”²⁴³ Ironically, **“instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses”** (vs. 38)—a reference to Zeus (the supreme god of the Greeks) whom he placed as *the* god of the Seleucid dynasty (in lieu of Apollo).²⁴⁴ “This man ‘turned god’ will put all his wealth and energies into the war-machine, accept help of *a foreign god* if it suits him, and bestow his favours in the form of subregencies over conquered lands (vs. 39).”²⁴⁵

DANIEL 11:40-12:4—

Daniel 11:40 is a difficult transition in the book and scholars are not agreed as to the point of reference of what follows in vv. 40-45. Historical data does not support that it

²⁴² Hagner, Donald, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, TX., 1995, pp. 700-701. This understanding also helps us to realize that the events delineated here find fulfillment in more than just Antiochus IV Epiphanes. They find fulfillment in any “Antiochus-type” ruler, and ultimately in the eschatological Antichrist. (This is the longstanding Church view, extending back to Jerome, Hippolytus, Theodotion and Chrysostom.)

²⁴³ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 198.

²⁴⁴ Antiochus IV apparently envisioned Zeus as being able to help him with his military campaigns.

²⁴⁵ Baldwin, *loc. cit.*

references the final days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and the language becomes the more systematized biblical phraseology of eschatological texts. In that Daniel 12:1-4 is clearly eschatological, many scholars feel that the prophecy takes a turn to “the bigger picture” at 11:40, that the messenger was playing off the person and dynamics of Antiochus to prophesy the dynamics of the eschatological Antichrist (whom Antiochus foreshadowed [11:40-45]) and aspects of the Great Tribulation (12:1-4).²⁴⁶ “They paint an imaginative scenario of the *kind* of issue that must come from present events.”²⁴⁷

Just what to make of the details of 11:40-45 is therefore extremely difficult. Endeavors to make “**the king of the South**” (vs. 40) a coalition of African armies or “**the king of the North**” (vs. 40) “all the political and military force of the lands to the north of the Holy Land...including Russia as well as related countries”²⁴⁸ are futile and totally miss the intent—“**he will invade many countries...he will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall**²⁴⁹...yet he will come to his end,²⁵⁰ and no one will help him” (vv. 40-41, 45). “[Antichrist] schemes against an unsuspecting and vulnerable people but finds himself God’s victim.”²⁵¹

Specifying details of the referenced events in Daniel 12:1-4 is equally difficult. It resumes the summary of eschatological events during the reign of the Antichrist in 11:40-45. “By now (12:1) we are definitely being told about what is to take place at the end of the world. What is said here has to be supplemented and explained by what the New Testament says.”²⁵² It references the time of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 8-18), and Daniel was being assured that God’s people would be protected—“**at that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people,**²⁵³ will arise” (12:1). They will not be spared difficulty (“**there will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the**

²⁴⁶ “**At the time of the end**” (Daniel 11:40) “is an expression which applies to the end of the reign of Antiochus, though it carries the secondary idea of the end of all things as well” (Joyce Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 202).

²⁴⁷ Goldingay, *op. cit.*, pg. 305.

²⁴⁸ Walvoord, *op. cit.*, pg. 277.

²⁴⁹ See Revelation 16:12-16 and 19:19, where the final eschatological battle is said to be demon driven.

²⁵⁰ This is most likely a reference to Christ’s victory over Antichrist at His Return (Revelation 19:11-21).

²⁵¹ Goldingay, *loc. cit.*

²⁵² Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 191.

²⁵³ The New Testament clearly teaches that by the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy “**your people**” is the Church.

beginning of nations until then” [12:1]²⁵⁴), but they will be delivered and resurrected to **“everlasting life”** (12:1-2). “The church will be fearfully persecuted far more severely than Israel was under Pharaoh in Egypt, or even the Jewish nation under Antiochus. Our Lord emphasized this point very strongly in his warning to his disciples about the days before his second coming (see Mark 13:19-20).”²⁵⁵ Additional comfort for God’s people is derived from knowing that at the same time, the wicked will also suffer and be sentenced to **“everlasting contempt”** (12:2).

The words of the messenger end with Daniel being told to **“close up and seal the words of the scroll”**²⁵⁶ **until the time of the end**” (12:4). Again, we are not exactly sure what this means. Most likely, the revelations of Daniel’s book (especially his last visions) were to be kept sealed until a later date in history (the time of Antiochus IV?), when their unsealing would provide much needed answers for God’s people.

DANIEL 12:5-13—

The Epilogue to the Book of Daniel is that of a final conversation between Daniel and the messenger (**the man clothed in linen** [vs. 7]), prompted by Daniel overhearing him making a final remark (vs. 7) to yet another angel who appeared (vv. 6-7). When asked by the other angel, **“How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”** (vs. 6), the messenger pronounced by way of a very solemn oath (vs. 7), **“It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed”** (vs. 7). **“A time, times and half a time”** is again mysterious (see Daniel 7:25 and note #146 above), here tied into **“the power of the holy people...finally [being] broken.”** In other words, divine intervention for the rescuing of God’s people will come, but not until they have been pushed to the limits.

- *The visible sign of that moment, of interest only to those enduring suffering, is the utter helplessness of believers in the face of their persecutors; thus, paradoxically, when they are enduring the greatest agony of unjust trial and torture they are to look expectantly for the promised intervention of God’s deliverance.*²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ See also Revelation 6:9-11.

²⁵⁵ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 192.

²⁵⁶ The idea behind sealing is to both preserve something and keep it a secret.

²⁵⁷ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pg. 208.

What Daniel overheard was a bit confusing for him (vs. 8). Therefore, he once again wanted to know the final outcome—“**My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?**” (vs. 8). The messenger never really answers him. “**Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end...go your way till the end...rest,**²⁵⁸ **and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance**” (vv. 9, 12).²⁵⁹ He did reiterate, however, that “**many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked...blessed [therefore] is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days**” (vv. 10, 12).

- *It is characteristic of much of our experience of the Word of God that we have to live with this gap between our seeing and our understanding. Sometimes the Word of God, as it comes to us, brings before us realities and promises, and indeed visions, the truth of which we can recognize and the reality of which we can grasp by our faith, even though at the same time they are immediately beyond the scope of our understanding and reasoning processes. Sometimes, therefore, what we know we “see” is much bigger and much more mysterious than our minds can master, or our understanding can unfold. Anyone who has begun to encounter the reality of God’s presence in Jesus Christ knows that what is “seen” here has a finality and fullness, and indeed a rationality, that is infinitely greater than the seeing and believing human mind can unfold. We are therefore at times in tension through having to wait so patiently and long, even in the midst of sincere and honest effort, to understand what we have seen. Yet at the same time our faith can live by, rest on, and rejoice in the truth of what it sees and hears before it understands. Daniel in his day experienced in the same way the seeing and hearing that come before understanding.*²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Daniel would have likely understood this to mean that he would die before all this came to pass.

²⁵⁹ The numbers that appear in the messenger’s response (Daniel 12:11-12) are once again symbolic, emphasizing an indefinite amount of time that would call for endurance to the end.

²⁶⁰ Wallace, *op. cit.*, pg. 196.