

# 38 Lessons on Daniel

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# LESSON 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Daniel is an Unusual Book**

On one hand, it contains accounts of lions' dens and fiery furnaces that we have known since we were children. On the other hand, it contains visions and prophecies that are some of the most difficult to unravel in all of the Bible.

On one hand, it contains examples of faith, conviction, and the power of prayer, yet the book also contains some of the most remarkable examples of predictive prophecy found anywhere in the Bible, which is why it has been viscously attacked by liberal critics, perhaps more so than any other book in the Bible. One book that I have on that subject is entitled *Daniel in the Critics' Den!*

Many commentators today would tell us that the prophecies in Daniel are all about the end of the world — and maybe some of them are. We will see as we work our way through the book — but many of those commentators go a step further and tell us the end is very near.

Walvoord writes:

The rapidly increasing tempo of change in modern life has given the entire world a sense of impending crisis. ... How long can world ten-



sions be kept in check? ... As alarming as these events are, they really are not surprising in light of the Bible's end-time prophecies.

Let me read next from the introduction of another end-is-near book:

It is impossible for the most thoughtless to overlook the impressive and almost unprecedented character of the age in which we live. Events, as rapid in their succession as they are startling in their magnitude, ... chase each other like waves on the sea... .

And where did that second quote come from? From another modern end-is-near bestseller? No. It came from *The Great Tribulation, or Things Coming on the Earth* by John Cumming, which was published in 1863 in New York at the height of the U.S. Civil War!

Ronald Reagan said, "I sometimes believe we're heading very fast for Armageddon," and he told *People* magazine in 1983 that:

Theologians have been studying the ancient prophecies—what would portend the coming of Armageddon—and have said that never, in the time between the prophecies up until now, has there ever been a time in which so many of the prophecies are coming together. There have been times in the past when people thought the end of the world was coming, but never anything like this.

President Reagan was right about most things, but he was not right about this. The end of the world will not be preceded by signs. How do we know that? For starters, we are told repeatedly that the end will come like a thief in the night — how often have you had a thief leave you a sign the day before he strikes? Also, only the Father knows the day when Jesus will return — do we really think we can figure it out when even Jesus does not know the day? Signs were given for a purpose. The signs in Matthew 24 were for the end of Jerusalem in AD 70, not for the end of the world. Those signs were needed because they allowed the Christians to escape the city — there will be no escape at the end of the world, so there is no need for any signs.

We will meet some very interesting historical figures during our study. We will meet Cleopatra in Chapter 11, along with many others. In the very first verse of Daniel, we will meet two historical kings: Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and the Chaldeans. One of those two men is one of the most despicable men in the Bible, and hint — it is not Nebuchadnezzar (although he would come close)!

One of the people we will meet is also discussed in the New Testament.

**Daniel 7:24-26** — *And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws.*

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** — *For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

**Revelation 13:5-7** — *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.*

And who is this person? I think we will see that he is Domitian, the eleventh Roman emperor who died in AD 96. The New Testament prophecies about Domitian are remarkable, as they were written *decades* before Domitian came to power — but the prophecies about Domitian in Daniel were written *centuries* before he came to power!

The first eleven Roman emperors were: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero (Julio-Claudian dynasty); Galba, Otho, Vitellius (civil war emperors, AD 69;

the year of four emperors); Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (the Flavian dynasty). We will meet them all in Daniel — written 600 years before they came to power!

### **Let's Begin Our Study of Daniel in First Peter**

There is a verse in First Peter that is the perfect jumping off point for our study of Daniel.

**1 Peter 5:13** (King James Version) — *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.*

**1 Peter 5:13** (American Standard Version) — *She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son.*

The word “church” is not in the Greek, as shown by the italics in the KJV. Instead, there is just the feminine article, as translated by the ASV.

**Who or what is “she”?** Some have suggested that she was Peter’s wife (1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 8:14). But why wasn’t she named? And how would she have been linked to Babylon? And why include the phrase “elect together with you”?

A much more likely option is that “she” is the church, or, more specifically, a local congregation of the church that is sending its greetings. Elsewhere the church is referred to in feminine terms (John 3:29, Ephesians 5:25-33, 2 John (“elect lady”)). And Peter elsewhere uses the language of this verse in reference to the church (1 Peter 2:9 — a “chosen” generation; 1 Peter 1:1-2 — “elect”).

But where is this church, and why use “Babylon” to describe the location? There are at least three possibilities.

It could be a literal city named “Babylon,” one of which was a Roman garrison town in Egypt. But this option can be quickly dismissed — there is no evidence Peter was ever there.

The second literal option is that this Babylon is the ancient city of Babylon on the Euphrates in Mesopotamia — the same city that we will soon be studying about in Daniel. There had been a Jewish settlement there up until at least a short time before 1 Peter was written. Josephus tells us they had left for Seleucia during the reign of Claudius. Babylon the city was largely in ruins at the time 1 Peter was written. It became a ghost town by AD 115. There is no record that Peter was ever there, much less that Peter was there with Silvanus and Mark.

We are left with one option — Babylon is a figurative reference to Rome, the city where Peter would soon be martyred and where Eusebius tells us Peter wrote his first letter. Babylon was a common figure for Rome, in both Christian and Jewish sources. Early Jewish writings use Babylon to refer to Rome under Nero (Sibylline Oracles) and Rome under Vespasian (2 Baruch).

**Revelation 14:8** — *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

**Revelation 17:5** — *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

**Revelation 18:2** — *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.*

But how do we know that Babylon means Rome in Revelation? Let's start with the clues in the text itself.

**Revelation 17:9** — *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*

**Revelation 17:18** — *And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

A coin minted during the reign of Vespasian (the time when Revelation was written) depicts the goddess Roma sitting upon the seven hills that surround the city of Rome. Chapter 17 depicts “Babylon” as a bloodthirsty harlot sitting upon seven hills. If you lived in the first century, if you had that Roman coin in your pocket, and if you read Revelation 17, who would you think John was writing about? How could there be any answer other than Rome? If anyone ever tells you that “Babylon” means something else (Jerusalem, for example), they need to explain to you how a first century reader with that coin in his pocket would have understood this image to mean anything other than Rome.

Perhaps no point is more obvious in Revelation than this one:

Rome is the one city in history that has been distinguished for and universally recognizable by its seven hills. ... Suetonius and Plutarch record for us that in the time of Domitian the festival of Septimontium (“the feast of the seven hilled city”) was held annually in December to celebrate the seven hills enclosing Rome. ... This point is well nigh indisputably certain. Indeed, “there is scarce a poet that speaks of Rome but observes it.”

There is little doubt that a first-century reader would understand this reference in any way other than as a reference to Rome, the city built upon seven hills.

But we are still left with a question — why is Rome referred to as “Babylon.”

As with most everything else in Revelation, the answer is that Babylon is used as a figurative symbol for Rome — but why that figure?

To answer that question, we need to look at the Old Testament (which should always be the first thing you do to understand what a figure means in Revelation).

Babylon was a place of exile.

**Psalm 137:1** — *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,  
yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*

Babylon was a wicked and haughty city.

**Isaiah 13:11** — *And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; And I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.*

**Jeremiah 50:29** — *Call together the archers against Babylon: All ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; Let none thereof escape: Recompense her according to her work; According to all that she hath done, do unto her: For she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel.*

**Jeremiah 51:13** — *O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, Thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.*

Babylon was a place of persecution. We will study this point as we study Daniel. Babylon carried away God's people into exile, Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and Babylon persecuted the people of God while in exile. In some ways the persecution under Babylon was very different from the persecution under Rome — but both were persecutors of God's people.

There are other comparisons between Babylon and Rome: Both were centers of pagan idolatry, both were hostile to God, both were hostile to God's people, both were hostile to God's plan.

### **What is the history of Babylon?**

As we study Daniel, we will often pause to consider the history of a city, a nation, or a king. Let's briefly do that with Babylon, which will be central to our study of Daniel.

Babylon flourished for thousands of years, starting at least as early as 3200 BC and continuing through 323 BC when Alexander the Great died there, having captured the city in 331 BC.

Babylon makes an appearance in the Bible in Genesis 10 and 11.

**Genesis 10:9-10** — *And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was **Babel**, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

**Genesis 11:8-9** — *So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called **Babel**; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

Babel is the Hebrew term for Babylon, and it means “gate of god,” although Genesis engages in some word play to also have it mean “confusion.” God saw Babylon very differently than Babylon saw itself — and that has been true of every other “Babylon” that has since arisen.

Babylon did not have a good beginning. Genesis 11:4 has been called the first public declaration of humanism: “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

### **Who has ruled over Babylon?**

First we need to keep in mind that Babylon is a city, and that city has been ruled by many different nations:

- **Sumerians** (3200 BC)
- **Akkadians** (2300 BC)
- **Amorites** (1890 BC) — Hammurabi
- **Assyrians** (900 BC) — Isaiah; Nahum describes the fall of the Assyrians
- **Chaldeans** (625 BC) — Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Habakkuk (who called the Chaldeans a “bitter and hasty” people in 1:6)
- **Medes** and **Persians** (539 BC) — Cyrus (Daniel 5 describes the transition from the Chaldeans to the Medes and Persians)
- **Greeks** (333 BC) — Alexander the Great
- **Parthians** (141 BC) — Enemies of Rome
- **Muslims** (AD 650) — Up until present day (Iraq)

We will have much to say about the Medes and the Persians, but we should stress now that they were a combined nation at the time they defeated the Chaldeans. They had combined in 553 BC when Cyrus rebelled against his grandfather, the Mede king. But the Medes retained a prominent place in the combined empire.

We will also have much to say about the interaction of these kingdoms with the Jews. The Chaldeans captured Jerusalem in 597 BC (2 Kings 24 and 2 Chronicles 36). Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC.

That was how Babylon began — how did it end? Zosimus tells us that by AD 363 the city had become a wild animal park for the Persian king Shapur I. Who would have thought that when Babylon was at the height of its power? Jeremiah knew all about it 1000 years earlier.

**Jeremiah 51:37** — *And Babylon shall become heaps, A dwelling place for dragons, An astonishment, and an hissing, Without an inhabitant.*



## **Why Study Daniel?**

The first reason should perhaps be the only reason — it is the word of God. But there are some other reasons to study Daniel.

If you love history, you will love Daniel.

If you love languages, you will love Daniel — it is one of the few books in the Bible originally written in more than one language.

If you love math and puzzles, you will love Daniel — how do we unravel the 70 weeks in Daniel 9?

Studying Daniel can be a great tool for personal evangelism. People have questions about Daniel and Revelation, and if you can answer those questions, they will perhaps trust you on other issues about the Bible. One of the best ways to open doors is to leave a commentary on Daniel in your office — people will notice it and ask you about it.

If you ever study with an atheist, one of the first things you will need to do is convince them that the Bible is not from man. To do that, I would turn first to Daniel. If we can show that Daniel contains specific prophecies of certain Roman emperors (and we can), then Daniel is not from man because we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea scrolls that predate those Roman emperors. Daniel 11 is perhaps the most impressive predictive prophecy in the Bible.

Studying Daniel will help us understand the book of Revelation. Those two books are bookends, and we can't understand one apart from the other.

Studying Daniel will teach us about the church. In Daniel 2:44 and 7:14, 18, and 27 we will learn that the church is not just a Jewish kingdom, that it is not man made, that it is victorious, that it is eternal, that it is immovable, that it is powerful, that it is important, that it was planned, and that it was established during the Roman empire.

Studying Daniel is endlessly fascinating, and perhaps there is no more fascinating book in the Bible. We will be pausing to take numerous side trips — we will spend several lessons on the kingdom, we will dive into the meaning of Daniel's 70 weeks, we will take some time to see how Revelation deals with some of the issues discussed in Daniel, we will take some time to study Roman history and the Roman emperors, and we will take some time to carefully consider the foreknowledge of God when we get to Chapter 11.

### **Why Was Daniel Written?**

What did the book mean to its original audience? This question is the key to unraveling its meaning.

Contrary to all of their expectations, God's chosen people had been uprooted from their promised land and transported to Babylonian captivity. Of course, this should not have been unexpected. They had been warned by Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and many other prophets (all the way back to Moses) that because of their flagrant apostasy and immorality, the city and the temple would be destroyed and they would be carried away in captivity. (Yet I imagine it came as a big surprise anyway.)

2 Chronicles 36:16 tells us why they were in captivity.

*But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.*

Jeremiah 5:15-19 tells us who led them away.

*Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. 16 Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. 17 And they shall eat up thine*

*harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. 18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you. 19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.*

Here is how the world saw these events: The God of the Hebrews had been completely discredited. The mighty gods of Assyria and Babylon had burned his temple to the ground and led his people away in chains, and God was apparently powerless to stop them.

Of course, the truth was that those foreign people and their false gods were serving God's purpose by bringing punishment upon his people. God was still totally in control and in charge even though it may have appeared otherwise. In Jeremiah 25:9, God refers to King Nebuchadnezzar as "my servant."

The events in Daniel had a dual purpose:

- To convince the faithful Israelites that God had not forgotten them — and that they should not forget him. One day they would be vindicated.
- To show the pagan nations that God was truly sovereign and preeminent, and that any power they had was given to them by God and could be taken away anytime he desired.

The faithful Jews of Daniel's day either knew that God had not forgotten them, or they *should* have known that. Why? Because of Psalm 89.

Psalm 89 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible when it comes to the church. Why? Because Psalm 89 contains an unconditional promise by God to David about the church.

We are familiar with conditional promises in which God promises to do something if his people remain faithful. We are studying about one of those in Daniel — the people were being taken from their promised land because of their sin and their idolatry.

But there is a promise in Psalm 89 that is not conditional.

**Psalm 89:3-4** — *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, And build up thy throne to all generations.*

**Psalm 89:29-34** — *His seed also will I make to endure for ever, And his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, And walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, And keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

In short, God promised King David that his throne would be eternal and that his line could not ever come to an end. Daniel knew that, and the other faithful Jews either knew that or should have known that. The Jewish royal line would continue forever.

Psalm 89 sheds some light on a puzzling passage in the New Testament. Acts 1:3 tells us that Jesus taught the apostles about the kingdom of God for 40 days. How then do we explain their question in verse 6?

**Acts 1:6-8** — *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Were the apostles mistaken? We often say that they still expected an earthly kingdom, but where is the word “earthly” anywhere in verse 6? And does Jesus’ answer give any indication that their question was a bad one? Does he call them hard of heart and slow to understand? No, Jesus just tells them that it was not for them to know the time or the seasons.

I think we may have been much too hard on the Apostles in verse 6. Before we accuse them of getting it all wrong, we need to remember that they had just had a graduate level course on the kingdom from the King himself! Perhaps we are the ones who have it wrong!

But what did they mean in verse 6? “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

Look at the next chapter:

**Acts 2:30** — *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*

What is that if not a restoration of the kingdom to Israel?

Psalm 89 promised that David's throne would be eternal. A throne requires a kingdom. When the kingdom was established in Acts 2, David's throne was once again occupied by one of his descendants — the kingdom had been restored to Israel.

Jesus must have told them all about this — they just wanted to know in Acts 1 when it would happen. And it happened in Acts 2.

**Luke 1:32** — *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.*

How is that not a restoration of the kingdom to Israel, just as the Apostles asked? The throne of David was restored just as God had promised.

Daniel is going to tell us much more about that eternal kingdom.

### **Three Great Theological Principles**

There are at least three great theological principles that run through the book of Daniel.

**The Absolute Sovereignty of God:** The affairs of men and kings are subject to God's decrees, and he is able to accomplish his purposes despite the determined opposition of the mightiest men. This is a message we need to hear today. The clear message of scripture is that the kingdoms of earth are raised up and taken down to serve God's purpose.

**The Power of Prayer:** Throughout the book we see that God acts in response to prayer. Again, this is a message we need to hear today. If we feel powerless it may be because we have become prayerless.

*Charles Hummel:* The worst sin is prayerlessness. We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft among the worst, but the root of all sin is self-sufficiency — independence from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength, we are saying — with our action if not our lips — that we don't need him. We can go it

alone. The opposite of such independence is when we acknowledge our need of God's instruction and supply.

*Samuel Chadwick:* The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.

*Corrie ten Boom:* When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops reading the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.

If we get nothing else from the book of Daniel and all of the many things that we are going to look at in this book, I hope we all gain an appreciation of the incredible power and importance of prayer.

*A. J. Gordon:* You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.

**The Long Range Nature of the Plan of Redemption:** God has been working to bring about our redemption since the fall, and, in fact, he had a plan in place before the foundation of the world. We see in this book just how great a plan it is, and we see the extraordinary lengths to which God went to bring Jesus into the world at the perfect time and in the perfect setting. We also see the supreme importance of his kingdom, the church. (It was not just a haphazard decision on God's part!)

# LESSON 2

We talked in our last lesson about the modern end-is-near attitude, and we saw that it was not that modern. We looked at a book written during the U.S. Civil War that conveyed the same end-is-near attitude.

Another book, *AD 1000: Living on the Brink of Apocalypse*, describes the “end is near” pandemonium that occurred 1000 years ago at the turn of the *first* millennium.

A century later during the Crusades, many believed the retaking of Jerusalem would usher in the end of the world. They also believed the end would not come until all had been converted, which led to forced baptisms and intense Jewish persecution.

Daniel is filled with historical characters, many that Daniel tells us about before they were even born!

We looked at a coin showing Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome, whom I believe we will see is mentioned in both Daniel and Revelation, and is also the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2.

But Paul tells us that that man of sin “as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Was that true of Domitian?

Look at two of the coins on the handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)). On one coin, Domitian is referred to as *Divi Filius* (“DIVI F”) — son of the divine, or son of god. On the other, his own infant son (who died very young) is referred to as “The Divine Caesar, Son of the Emperor Domitian.” The child sits on the globe and stretches his hands out toward seven stars. A divine child who holds seven stars in



his hand — where else have we seen that? Speaking of Christ, Revelation 1:16 says, “and he had in his right hand seven stars.” These similarities are unmistakable.

Domitian must have seen in Christianity a threat to his own claims of divinity for himself and for his own son. Look again at what Paul say about him:

**2 Thessalonians 2:4** — *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

Read that and look at those coins!

Babylon was a common figure for Rome in the first century — why? How do we know the “Babylon” in Revelation was Rome? We talked about another coin — one showing the goddess Roma sitting upon the seven hills that surround Rome. (See the handout.) We compared that coin with the description of Babylon in Revelation 17 as a bloodthirsty harlot sitting upon seven hills.

What was the history of Babylon? We talked about the difference between the city and the many nations that have ruled over the city. We traced the history of the city all the way back to Genesis 10.

### **How are Daniel and Revelation Related?**

One commentator has said that “the book of Daniel is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament.” I agree, but probably not for the same reasons that commentator had in mind.

As we will soon see, Daniel has suffered about as much at the hands of careless commentators as Revelation has. We will need to proceed carefully and pay close attention to the historical context of the book and the time frame that is given for the prophecies.

Revelation and Daniel have one important thing in common. As we study either book we should keep in mind Mark Twain’s advice: Whenever you find yourself on

the side of the majority, it is probably time to change sides! The sensational end-is-near approaches to Daniel and Revelation will always draw a bigger crowd — but they do so at the expense of the truth.

In at least one way, however, the two books are different. Daniel is NOT primarily a message for those who are suffering in the midst of deadly persecution (although some, as we will see in our study, certainly did suffer deadly persecution) but rather for those who are living in a settled condition yet within an alien culture.

In Jeremiah 29:7, God told the exiles to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” This is very different from what God said about Rome in Revelation (but not that different from how Rome was viewed earlier in the first century, before Emperor worship and persecution really took hold).

In other ways, however, the books are very similar. Many similar symbols are used, and each book helps us understand the symbols in the other. Each book has much to say about the early Roman empire and its relation to the church.

Keep in mind that while the two books say the same thing about this period, Daniel was written 600 years earlier. And, in some ways, Daniel is more detailed than Revelation about Rome during the time frame in which Revelation was written!

I have mentioned several times that Daniel and Revelation are bookends. We can see that from the text itself.

**Revelation 13:2** — *And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

That verse describes Rome in figures representing the evil regimes that preceded it: Greece, Medo-Persia, and the Chaldeans.

These descriptions point us unmistakably back to Daniel 7. The fourth kingdom in Daniel 7 is Rome, with the first three kingdoms being the Chaldeans (shown as a lion in Daniel 7:4), Medo-Persia (shown as a bear in Daniel 7:5), and Greece (shown as a leopard in Daniel 7:6). Daniel 7:12 tells us that these beasts lost their dominion but didn't die.

We will learn about the first two kingdoms firsthand from the book of Daniel. Chaldea (sometimes just called "Babylon"), the first of the four kingdoms, was the invading power that carried Daniel and his three friends off to exile. The Medo-Persians, the second kingdom, was the one that came to power after Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall in Daniel 5. The third kingdom was Greece, which conquered Persia under Alexander but then fell into four parts after his death. Rome was the fourth kingdom.

The beast in Revelation 13 (which is Rome) is pictured as being part leopard, part bear, and part lion. Rome had the tearing power of the lion (Chaldea). Rome had the crushing force of the bear (Medo-Persia). And Rome was swift and ferocious like a leopard (Greece). Rome, the fourth beast in Daniel 7, embodied all of the wickedness of the first three beasts and much more. Thus, it is described as being composed of pieces of the previous three kingdoms.

But how does this show that Daniel and Revelation are bookends? Look at the order in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. Daniel 7:4-6 — lion in verse 4, bear in verse 5, and leopard in verse 6. This verse looks forward: Chaldeans, Medo-Persia, Greece. Revelation 13:2 — leopard, bear, lion. This verse is looking backward: Greece, Medo-Persia, Chaldeans.

### **The Big Controversy: When Daniel Was Written?**

The early date position holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century BC by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. The prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate.

Before I describe the modern liberal critic's position, let's stop and see if we can figure out what that position must be. I say "must" because once you adopt the assumptions of the modern liberal critic, you are pretty much in a straightjacket when it comes to the book of Daniel.

What do I mean? Daniel contains detailed prophecies about certain kingdoms that were to follow after the Chaldeans. That Daniel could know that any kingdom would follow the mighty Chaldeans was shocking enough, but Daniel provides intricate detailed prophecies about three subsequent kingdoms that look forward about six centuries.

How can modern liberal critics explain this? They would never admit that Daniel was inspired by God. They would never admit that Daniel was a prophet. But if Daniel was written before the Roman empire and if Daniel contains detailed prophecies about that empire written six centuries earlier, then Daniel must be from God.

What must the liberal critic do to get around this dilemma? They have two choices: They can move the date of Daniel until after the events that are prophesied, or they can change the prophecies so that they are referring to some earlier event (even if that change causes them to predict events that never actually happened).

And, in fact, liberal critics do both of those things. They tell us that the book was written around 168 BC, and they tell us the four kingdoms are Chaldea, Media, Persia, and Greece — that is, they split Medo-Persia into two separate kingdoms to avoid having the fourth kingdom be Rome.

Why do they split up the Medes and the Persians? Because we have copies of Daniel that predate the Roman empire, which means the liberal critics cannot push the date of Daniel far enough ahead in time to have it written during the Roman empire. (Pompey seized Palestine for the Romans in 63 BC.)

Do you really mean that they take prophecies that read perfectly on events in the Roman empire, and move them to instead refer to events in the Greek empire that

never occurred? That is exactly what I mean, and let me give you an example from the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, commenting on Daniel 11:40-45:

Predictions that Ptolemy will provoke another war with disastrous results, so that Antiochus will conquer Libya to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, but on his way back will perish somewhere along the coastal route. None of these predictions was fulfilled.

When we get to those verses in Daniel 11, we will find that they are discussing Rome, not Greece — and that they fit with the history of Rome. Why doesn't the Oxford commentator apply the verses to Rome? Because to do so would cause him to admit that Daniel was a genuine prophet, so instead he applies the prophecies to Greece, even though they do not fit with the history of Greece.

So here are the two positions: Again, The early date position holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century BC by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. The prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate.

The late date position (or Maccabean date position) holds that the book of Daniel was written in Palestine by an unknown Jew around 168 BC during the Maccabean period. The prophecies in the book concerning events prior to 168 BC were written after the fact and hence are not genuine prophecies. The other prophecies in the book were merely guesses of future events, many of which later proved to be inaccurate.

Although this view has been readily adopted by virtually all modern scholars, it is not a modern view. It was first put forth in the third century AD by Porphyrius of Tyre. It was quickly abandoned, however, after Jerome published a refutation. During the “enlightenment,” it was picked up again and popularized.

## Why do so many hold the late date view?

To answer that question, we need to understand the dual tenets of liberal theology (where by “liberal” here we mean those who do not accept the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture). Those tenets are:

- Supernatural explanations of historical events are not acceptable. Any event that requires such an explanation is not historical.
- Nothing in a general sense ever happens uniquely in history. All true occurrences must be repetitive in nature so that scientists may properly observe them.

Consider the following comment about the modern approach to Daniel:

Such amazingly accurate predictions defy the possibility of merely human origin. If these prophecies were composed in the lifetime of the sixth century Daniel, they would compel our acceptance of special revelation from a transcendent, personal God. No anti-supernaturalist position can reasonably be defended if Daniel is a genuine book of prophecy composed in 530 BC or in the preceding years.

Liberal theologians approach the Bible with the *a priori* assumption that the supernatural is impossible. From this assumption it must (and does, logically) follow that Daniel is a fraud. Let me allow you to hear it in their own words (from a commentary by W. Sibley Towner published in 1984):

We need to assume that the vision as a whole is a prophecy after the fact. Why? Because human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance and to say that Daniel could do so, even on the basis of a symbolic revelation vouchsafed to him by God and interpreted by an angel, is to fly in the face of the certainties of human nature. So what we have here is in fact not a road map of the

future laid down in the sixth century BC but an interpretation of the events of the author's own time, 167-164 BC.

Towner is correct when he says that “human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance.” But God can and does.

It is very important to realize that the liberal critics are forced to hold the late-date view. These critics say that they are simply seeking the best theories and when a better theory comes along they will accept it instead. DO NOT BELIEVE THEM! They are seeking the best *naturalistic* theory — and they will ignore all evidence to the contrary.

Evolutionists say the same thing. They claim to be seeking the best theory to explain their observations, but they aren't. They are looking for the best naturalistic explanation — and they have found it. Evolution is the best (in fact, only! — if they had another they would use it!) naturalistic explanation for how we got here — but it is not the *true* explanation for how we got here. The true explanation is a supernatural explanation, and they aren't looking for that. They are not seeking the truth.

What's the connection with Daniel? Atheists are forced to believe in evolution — they have no choice. The radical critics are forced to accept a late date for Daniel — they have no choice. Naturalism may be called science, but it is really a philosophy. In fact, in many ways it functions as a religion — complete with sacred books, unquestioned dogma, unquestioning believers, and a high priesthood.

## **The Evidence for the Early Date View**

### **The Testimony of Jesus supports the Early Date View**

Did Daniel exist? Was he an actual historical figure? Is the book of Daniel authentic? Was Daniel a prophet? Did Daniel speak from God? Does Daniel have anything to say about Rome? The liberal critic says no. But Jesus refers to Daniel in Matthew 24:15 (and also in Mark 13:14) and calls him a prophet.

*So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).*

Did Daniel predict specific events that occurred many years from the date in which he lived? Jesus mentions an event in Matthew 24:15 that had not yet occurred but would occur soon (see verse 34). We will see Daniel's prophecy of this event when we get to Chapter 12.

Did Daniel have nothing to say about the Roman empire as the liberal critics would have us believe? Not according to Jesus. According to Jesus, the fourth kingdom in Daniel was Rome. The liberal critic tells us it was Greece.

Isaac Newton (the greatest scientist who ever lived) said that "to reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion." I agree with this statement, because if we reject Daniel then we must admit that either Jesus was mistaken about Daniel or the gospel records are hopelessly flawed about what Jesus taught. Either way, Christianity tumbles.

The liberal critics simply discredit Christ as an authority on such matters. One even wrote that "Christ neither would nor could be a critical authority." On the contrary, Jesus said that he had all authority in heaven and upon earth.

Daniel 7:13 is the main source of the title "Son of Man," which Jesus applied to himself many times as a Messianic title.

*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*

Jesus said that Daniel was a prophet and Jesus said that part of what Daniel said was fulfilled *after* the Greek empire. Thus, the clear statements of Christ are in direct opposition to the modern scholars. Who are we to believe?



## **Daniel is accurate regarding Babylonian history**

The historical accuracy regarding Babylonian history makes it difficult to believe that the book was written 400 years after its historical setting.

Daniel 4:30 gives an accurate picture of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities:

*The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?*

One commentator has written:

The East India House inscription, now in London, has six columns of Babylonian writing telling of the stupendous building operations which the king carried on in enlarging and beautifying Babylon.

How would a late author have known that Babylon's greatness in the early sixth century was due to Nebuchadnezzar? Modern scholars didn't find about it until recently. (Keep in mind that whereas they discount the testimony of scripture, they trust ancient inscriptions completely!)

Belshazzar is mentioned only in Daniel and in the recently uncovered Babylonian records. How did the author of Daniel know about him if he wrote 400 years after the fact?

Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's friends thrown into a furnace yet Darius had Daniel thrown into a lions' den. Why? Darius the Mede was a fire worshiper. How would someone have known details like this in 168 BC?

Daniel tells us about the participation of women at royal banquets in Daniel 5:3. The Persians did not permit women to feast in the presence of men but the Chaldeans did.

Daniel uses the term Shinar to indicate Babylon in Daniel 1:2. This term was no longer used when the radical critics claim the book was written.

Daniel knew that it was impossible for anyone (even the king) to change a law of the Medes and Persians once it had been promulgated. How would a late date author have known these things?

Consider the following conclusions by several commentators:

*Lenormant:* Whoever is not the slave of preconceived opinions must confess when comparing [the first six chapters of Daniel] with the cuneiform monuments that they are really ancient and written but a short distance from the [time they describe].

*J.D. Wilson:* No Jew whose people had been living for centuries under Persian and Grecian rule could relate with such unconscious simplicity the actual condition of affairs in Babylon 370 years before his own time.

*Harrison:* The author possessed a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonian and early Persian history than any other historian since the sixth century BC.

### **Daniel is accurate regarding Nebuchadnezzar's lowly origin**

The description of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 4 ends with the following statement:

**Daniel 4:17** — *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*

The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father Nabopolassar was found in which he was referred to himself as "the son of a nobody" (of non-royal birth), "insignificant," "not visible," "the weak," and "the feeble." This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's

greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten — but the author of Daniel knew about it.

The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How could a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

### **The Fourth Empire in Daniel is the Roman Empire**

The visions in Chapters 2 and 7 speak of four empires. The late date theorists hold that the fourth empire is Greece, which means that the third is Persia, the second is Media, and the first is the Chaldean empire. This view is very widely held today, but it falls apart when you read Daniel. One commentator has said that this viewpoint is the weakest part of the late date theory.

There is no evidence that Daniel ever considered the Medes and Persians as separate empires whereas there is evidence that Daniel considered Medo-Persia to be a single empire.

In Daniel 8:20, we find a *single* ram with two horns representing the kings of Media and Persia. In 8:21, a shaggy male goat (Greece) with a prominent horn (Alexander the Great) tramples the ram.

Also, in chapter 5 when we read about the handwriting on the wall, the last word written is *Peres*, which is derived from the word meaning “to divide” but also is a reference to Persia. That is, Persia was depicted as conquering the Babylonians — making Persia second and not third.

If we can show (and we can) that the fourth empire is Rome then all of the arguments by the liberals to remove prophecy from the book fall apart. Copies of Daniel have been found that predate the Roman empire, and Daniel made specific prophecies about Rome.

I submit that any of these liberals would take the fourth kingdom to be Rome if they were given no information about when the book was written. But since they do have such information they must take the fourth kingdom to be Greece.

They will date the book after the prophecies were fulfilled no matter what evidence there may be to the contrary. Their basic premise about naturalism must not be violated!

Am I saying they are dishonest? Yes, I am saying they are dishonest. They accuse Christians of treating the Bible differently than all other books — and we do, rightly — but so do they. They treat the Bible differently than any other ancient source. In their minds, the Bible is automatically suspect and unreliable.

Finally, Daniel predicts that the Messiah and his kingdom would appear during the fourth empire, which of course it did if we take the fourth empire to be Rome. The liberals say that again Daniel was mistaken because Jesus did not appear until after the Greek empire!

Jesus in Matthew 24 said that some things that Daniel had written had not yet been fulfilled (but would be fulfilled within a generation). If Greece is the fourth empire, then Jesus must have been wrong.

One higher critic says that the “emptying” that Paul spoke of in Philippians 2 may have kept the incarnate Jesus from having complete knowledge about certain non-essential things. (The prophecies in Daniel are non-essential? Hardly!)

# LESSON 3

Last week we began by discussing the relation between Daniel and Revelation. We saw how the books act as bookends — Daniel looking forward in history from the Chaldeans, to the Medo-Persians, to the Greeks, and finally to the Romans, and with Revelation looking backward over the same kingdoms.

We then talked about the big controversy over when Daniel was written, describing the early date view and the late date view. And we discussed why it is important when Daniel was written.

We then began looking at the evidence in support of an early date for Daniel, and we started with the most important evidence — Jesus referred to Daniel in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and called him a prophet. And more than that, Jesus said that some of what Daniel prophesied had not yet occurred, but would occur during the first century lifetime of his listeners.

We also looked at some examples of historical accuracies in Daniel that would be difficult to explain had the book been written centuries after the fact by an obscure Jew in Palestine.

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls Support the Early Date View**

It has been said that history doesn't repeat itself, rather historians repeat each other. Nowhere is that more true than when it comes to ancient history. Many historians adhere blindly to the historical dogma — without regard to what the evidence shows.

For example, historians have long proclaimed that modern man, having emerged from the slime, progressed slowly on the evolutionary ladder until civilizations eventually began to form many millennia later.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that mankind has always been civilized. We had language from the day of our creation, and cities have existed ever since the city that Cain built in Genesis 4:17.

Which of those views is better supported by the evidence?

Gobekli Tepe is an ancient stone complex that has been found in Turkey, about 500 miles from Istanbul. It is twice as old as the Great Pyramid and thousands of years older than Stonehenge. It has been called the most astonishing archaeological discovery in modern times and perhaps the oldest advanced civilization on Earth.

And perhaps most astonishing of all — but not to Bible students — is that it is located just a few hundred miles from Mount Ararat, and it is filled with carvings of animals — bulls, foxes, cranes, lions, ducks, scorpions, ants, spiders, snakes, and many others.

Moving from Genesis back to Daniel, before the late nineteenth century, many liberal scholars said that Belshazzar of Daniel 5 never existed. But then ancient Babylonian inscriptions were found that mentioned him by name and confirmed the Biblical account.

See Box D on the Lesson 3 Handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)). This is called the Nabonidus Cylinder, and it includes a prayer for Nabonidus' son Belshazzar: "Guard me ... from offending against your divinity. Give me long life. Cause Belshazzar, my eldest son, to revere your great godhead."

Never bet against the Bible! Archaeology has confirmed the Biblical accounts over and over again.

In the spring of 1947, in the Judean wilderness near the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea, ancient manuscripts were found that have helped us reconstruct the his-

tory of pre-Christian Judaism and have also given us our oldest manuscripts of most of the Old Testament. The find has been called the most famous archaeological find of all time!

There are several stories of how the scrolls were discovered. Most of the stories involve an Arab boy named Muhammed-ad-Dhib (Muhammed the Wolf) who was herding goats in the area. When one goat wandered into a cave, the boy threw a rock in and heard a jar brake. Another story had the boy seeking refuge in the cave from a thunderstorm while smuggling goods across the Jordan to Bethlehem. (The second story may be the truth while the first was found more suitable for publication.)

The scrolls were brought to Bethlehem, the nearest market town, and attempts were made to sell them. At the time, the area was divided into armed camps, which made it difficult for the Bedouins to dispose of the scrolls. Eventually they were sold in two lots—one to the Hebrew University and one to a Syrian Orthodox Monastery which later sold them to the Hebrew University for about \$250,000. All of the scrolls from the initial find (Cave 1) are now located in the Shrine of the Book adjacent to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Some of the copies were a thousand years older than any that existed prior to the Dead Sea find. Before this find, our earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament was the Leningrad Codex of about AD 916. Thirteen copies of Deuteronomy, twelve of Isaiah, and ten of the Psalms were found. (In Luke 4:17 Jesus was handed a copy of Isaiah, which he then read aloud. The copies found in Cave 4 date back to around the same time.) To date, eleven caves have produced at least four hundred manuscripts.

The Scrolls have had a tremendous impact on the textual study of the Bible—and they have overwhelmingly confirmed the accuracy of the text that we have, and have shown God’s providential care in preserving the text.

But why hasn't such news been more widely reported? Let's turn that question around — if the Dead Sea Scrolls had turned up copies of the Scripture that differed dramatically from what we have today in our Bibles, do you think that news would have been widely reported? Of course, it would have been reported then, and it would still be making headlines today.

But instead the Scrolls confirmed the accuracy and fidelity of the Biblical text, and we hear hardly a word about it.

As one example of how the Scrolls confirmed the Bible's integrity, a popular theory among liberal critics is that Isaiah is really three books with the first ending at Chapter 39. This theory, which was first put forth in 1892 by Bernhard Duhm, initially claimed that the latter chapters of Isaiah (including Chapter 53) were added during the first century. The Isaiah scroll from Qumran has no break between Chapters 39 and 40.

As another example, seven copies of Daniel dating from the Maccabean period have been found in three of the caves at Qumran. This fact alone makes it very unlikely that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period.

The late date group are forced to believe that the Essenes at Qumran had near original copies of Daniel to retain their late date theory. A simpler explanation is that Daniel was written much earlier.

One non-Biblical manuscript found in Cave 4 refers to "Daniel the prophet." This fragment has been dated prior to 150 BC. Another sectarian document from the caves uses the imagery of Daniel to describe the final conflict between good and evil.

An honest scholar would accept the clear evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the modern scholars cannot accept it. They literally are unable to believe their own eyes because to do so would be to accept the supernatural source of the Bible.



The linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls overwhelmingly supports an early date for the book of Daniel.

Look at Boxes A, B, and C on the Lesson 3 Handout. One was written in 1755, one in 1864, and one in 2011. Which is which? Why is it so easy to tell that item A is the earliest and item B is the most recent? Why can we so easily date item C to the Civil War era?

The same sort of analysis can be done with Daniel and those writings from among the Dead Sea Scrolls that we know are from the Macabbean period.

With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have some scrolls that were unquestionably written during the Maccabean period, and we can compare those scrolls with the book of Daniel by looking at syntax, word order, morphology (structure of words), vocabulary, spelling, and word usage. What does that comparison show?

It shows that Daniel is linguistically older by at least several centuries. It also shows that Daniel was written in the eastern sector of the Aramaic speaking world (which includes Babylon) rather than in Palestine.

If anyone ever tells you that Christian faith is a blind faith that simply ignores all evidence to the contrary — ask them about Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls. If you want to see an example of blind faith ignoring evidence, then simply look at how modern liberal critics deal with Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls!

### **The Book of Ezekiel Supports the Early Date View**

In Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20, Daniel is listed with Noah and Job as an example of righteousness. Ezekiel 28:3 says, “Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel.” The representation of Daniel as righteous and wise fits perfectly with his description in the book of Daniel.

Most modern scholars accept an early date for Ezekiel. How then do they explain Ezekiel’s reference to Daniel if, as they argue, Daniel was written centuries later?

The liberal critics say that Ezekiel was not referring to Daniel but instead to Dan'el — a famous character from Ugaritic mythology. Is it even remotely believable that a pious Jew would refer to a legendary pagan figure as an example of wisdom and righteousness? Dan'el was an idol worshipper who offered blood sacrifices to Baal for weeks at a time. He was a vengeful drunkard who convinced his daughter to commit murder.

But since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, others argue that Ezekiel would not have pointed to someone then living for such a purpose. Why not? Why not point to Daniel as an example of righteousness? Why couldn't Ezekiel use both ancient and current examples to show the people that God was still at work among them?

One commentator has said that Noah, Job, and Daniel are spaced about 1500 years apart. Thus, Ezekiel gave an example of righteousness from three different eras.

### **The First Book of Maccabees Supports the Early Date View**

In this book, Mattathias (the father of the Jewish patriot Maccabean brothers) encouraged his sons in their revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes by recalling how Daniel for his innocence was saved from the mouth of lions.

Mattathias died in 166 BC — a year before the date that critics say Daniel was written. Their explanation? They say that Mattathias never said this!

### **Josephus Supports the Early Date View**

In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus relates a story that, if true, would prove that the book of Daniel existed during the time of Alexander the Great (330 BC).

Josephus tells us that Alexander was angry that the Jews would not give him their allegiance so he went to Jerusalem to punish them. Jewish priests met him and showed him in the book of Daniel how God had said that he would defeat the Persians. This pleased Alexander so much that he spared Jerusalem.

Josephus wrote:

The high priest then showed Alexander the passages in the prophecy of Daniel indicating that a Greek would destroy the empire of the Persians. Alexander, of course, accepted the prophecy as a reference to himself, and declared that God had ordained him to conquer Persia, which he proceeded to do. Furthermore, Alexander not only refused to execute any sanctions against Israel but bestowed upon that nation all kinds of favors and benefits, which was contrary to his usual custom.

History confirms that Alexander marched near Jerusalem on his way to Egypt and that he treated the Jews kindly. How else can we explain why Alexander spared Jerusalem the ravages that he inflicted upon Tyre and Sidon?

The consequence of this story is that it means that Daniel was known long prior to the year 334 BC and that even Alexander himself recognized that he was the one Daniel said would destroy the Medo-Persian power.

In addition, Josephus says that the Jewish canon was completed before 424 BC and that Daniel was a part of the canon. This was not just his opinion, but was the Jewish national position. He also speaks of many other books that were rejected — but not Daniel; it was in the Jewish canon long before the modern liberal critic says it was written.

What do the critics say about all of this? They reject Josephus whenever he contradicts their naturalistic world view, but they enthusiastically accept him on virtually everything else. (They never give the Bible the benefit of the doubt. It is always assumed to be unreliable.)

## **The Use of a Two-Horned Ram to Symbolize Medo-Persia Supports an Early Date**

After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him "Alexander, the lord of the two horns."

One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3,20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

If you read an article that compared the Eisenhower administration to the days of Camelot, would you conclude that it had been written before or after the Kennedy administration?

### **Responses to Late Date Arguments**

Why should we respond at all to these late-date arguments?

We must not ignore them. If our position is correct, then we certainly have nothing to fear by confronting these opposing positions. Indeed, a failure to confront them might indicate a fear that our own position might not withstand their arguments.

Also, in our outreach to others, we need to be able to answer whatever questions they might have about the book of Daniel.

### **The Claim That Daniel's Position in the Jewish Scriptures Implies a Late Date**

The Old Testament books in the Hebrew Bible are divided into three sections.

- The Law (Books of Moses)

- The Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets)
- The Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, DANIEL, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles) — called the Hagiographa (Holy Writings)

The liberal critics argue that because Daniel is not found in the second division (the Prophets) but rather in the third division (the Writings), it follows that Daniel was a very late addition to the Jewish canon.

But it is a mistake to assume that the books in the third division were written later than the books in the second division. In fact, Job, Ruth, Proverbs, and many of the Psalms were written before many of the prophetic books. Josephus says that no books were added to the canon after 424 BC — the death of Artaxerxes. Jewish tradition says that Malachi was the last written book in the Bible, which would mean that the second division was closed after the third.

The division is not based on the type of book but on the type of writer. The books in the first section were written by Moses. Those in the second section were written by men who had the prophetic office as well as the prophetic gift. Those in the third section were written by those who had the prophetic gift but not the prophetic office — inspired men but not “official” prophets. This explains why Ezekiel and Daniel, though contemporaries, are in different divisions.

But what do we mean when we say that Daniel was not “officially” a prophet?

Daniel does not introduce his book with his name, and he had no official position among the Jewish people. He did not live among the exiles as Ezekiel did, but he lived at the court of Babylon, and he dealt with heathen kings rather than with the people of Israel. Although he is called a prophet by Jesus in the New Testament, that has more to do with his inspired predictions than with any special prophetic office that he held. Note that David is also called a prophet in Acts 2:30. One who

held the prophetic office served as a spiritual mediator between God and the Israelites. Daniel did not do this.

We can turn this argument around on the radical critics! Why was Daniel added to the canon at all if it was not written until 160 BC? Listen to what R. D. Wilson has to say about this:

Now, the radical critics, without any direct evidence to support them, profess to believe that, into the midst of these sacred writings for which men readily died, a forged document of unknown authorship and (according to the critics) full of easily detected errors ... was quietly admitted as a genuine and authentic writing of a prophet hitherto unknown to history. ... They cannot believe in miracles and predictive prophecy ... but they can believe that a lot of obstreperous and cantankerous Jews who through all their history from Jacob and Esau down to the present time have disagreed and quarreled about almost everything, or nothing, could have accepted, unanimously and without a murmur ... a forged and fictitious document, untrue to the well remembered facts of their own experience and to the easily ascertained facts concerning their own past history and the history of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks of whom the author writes.

Paul reminds us in Romans 3:2 that the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God — and they took that responsibility very seriously.

### **The Claim That Jesus ben Sirach's Failure to Mention Daniel Implies a Late Date**

Jesus ben Sirach wrote Ecclesiasticus between 200 and 170 BC. At the end of the book, he reviews Israel's history, mentioning some of the men that God used to lead Israel. Daniel is not on the list.

Further, at one point he states that never had there been born a man like Joseph. (Daniel is similar in many respects to Joseph.) Daniel and Joseph both were exiles, both showed allegiance to God, both were falsely accused, both were vindicated, both interpreted dreams, both became confidants to the king, and both were given a high government position by the king.

The radical critics claim that this omission supports the late-date view.

But Daniel was not the only Old Testament notable that was omitted from this list. Jonah, Mordecai, Ezra, and Job were also left off. (No radical critic uses the omission of Ezra to deny the authenticity of his book.)

One commentator has noted:

It is a remarkable fact that he does not pay any regard to the great men who had exercised their functions outside the bounds of the land of Israel, such as Jonah at Ninevah, Daniel in Babylon, and Mordecai in Persia. In speaking of Abraham, he does not refer to his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees, nor his visit to Egypt. In speaking of Jacob, Joseph, and Aaron, he says nothing of the land of Egypt; nor does he intimate that Moses had ever been in Egypt.

His views might be characterized as Sadducean and nationalistic. When he gives an account of the great men of his nation, he selects ... those who had most distinguished themselves according to his ideas of what constituted greatness.

### **The Claim That Daniel is Mistaken about the Date of Nebuchadnezzar's Siege of Jerusalem**

Such a mistake would indicate a lack of knowledge about the history of the time, and thus would support a late date. But was Daniel mistaken?

**Daniel 1:1-3** — *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to*

*Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility.*

The Babylonian Chronicle makes no reference to an action by Nebuchadnezzar in Judah during the third year of Jehoiakim or to a siege of Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah 46:2, the battle that opened the way for a Babylonian invasion of Judah did not occur until the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, whereas Daniel 1:1 says that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign.

We need to consider three questions:

- When did Nebuchadnezzar arrive at Jerusalem and besiege it?
- When did he defeat Jerusalem?
- When did he carry away captives and sacred vessels?

Second Kings and Second Chronicles record three separate occasions when Nebuchadnezzar carried away people and articles from the temple.

- **2 Kings 23:36-24:5** and **2 Chronicles 36:5-8** — Jehoiakim gave allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar for three years and then rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar defeated his forces and took Jehoiakim back in chains along with some items from the temple.
- **2 Kings 24:8-16** and **2 Chronicles 36:9-10** — Jehoiachin succeeded Jehoiakim and reigned for three months while the servants of Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Again, the siege was successful, and Jehoiachin and much of the nobility were deported to Babylon.



- **2 Kings 24:17-25:21** and **2 Chronicles 36:11-20** — Zedekiah ruled for a few years and then rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. In the ninth year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem, which fell in the eleventh year of his reign (586 BC). The city was destroyed and most of the leading men were killed. The others were deported, and all articles from the temple were taken.

The best and most likely explanation is that Daniel 1:1-4 is intended to be a brief summary of these three events and is not intended to provide all of the details found in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

There are some additional points to consider.

Jerusalem was *besieged* — not *captured*. One critic has written that “Daniel begins with a glaring historical error, for Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim.” But Daniel never states that Jerusalem was captured at that time — only that it was besieged. In the middle of his Palestinian campaign, Nebuchadnezzar received news of his father’s death. He rushed back to Babylon to assume the throne and apparently abandoned the siege against Jerusalem before he captured the city.

Babylon used a different dating system. At first glance, Daniel 1:1 seems to be in conflict with Jeremiah 25:1 regarding the year of Jehoiakim’s reign when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine. But Jeremiah (writing in Jerusalem) used a different dating system than did Daniel (writing in Babylon). It was different in two respects — either one of which could explain the seeming discrepancy.

The Babylonian calendar began each year in the spring, and the Jewish calendar began each year in autumn. The Babylonian third year thus overlapped the Judean fourth year by about six months. In Babylon, the year in which a king began to reign was called “the year of accession to the kingdom,” which was followed by the first, second, and subsequent years of his rule. Thus, a Babylonian king’s third year of reign would correspond to the actual fourth year of his reign. Daniel may have

used the Babylonian system in verse 1. If this theory is correct it again points to an early date for the book. How could a Jew writing 400 years later have known about the Babylonian system of dating?

### **The Claim That Daniel’s Use of the Term “Chaldeans” Implies a Late Date**

Daniel 2:2 uses the term “Chaldeans” to denote a special class of wise men. However, the word originally had a broader meaning and referred to a particular group of tribes — those, who at this time, had control of the city of Babylon. The late-date proponents claim that only the original meaning was in use during the sixth century.

Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, was a Chaldean. Although “Chaldean” and “Babylonian” are not synonyms, they are sometimes treated that way since many Babylonian rulers were Chaldean. Jeremiah described Nebuchadnezzar’s army as the army of the Chaldeans. The term gradually came to mean a privileged class and then a special class of wise men. The question we must consider is when did this change occur?

The claim that a single word can help date a document is not without merit. For example, if you read an English passage containing the word “sputnik” you would be able to date it after 1957 because it was not until that time that the word passed into the English language.

Daniel uses the term “Chaldean” in BOTH ways — which destroys the liberal theory. In Daniel 1:4 we see the “language of the Chaldeans,” which is clearly an ethnic use of the term. In Daniel 2, 4, and 5 we see another use where the term is used to describe a specific class of wise men. Daniel was aware that “Chaldean” was an ethnic term for the race of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 5:30 refers to Belshazzar as the king of the Chaldeans. Both uses of the term were known when Daniel was written.

Herodotus, who wrote *The Histories* around 450 BC, implied that the term had been used to denote a class of wise men as far back as the time of Cyrus.

One scholar has written:

It is hard to prove a negative. Our knowledge of the Babylonian literature of the time of Daniel is not so complete that we can safely affirm that “Chaldean” never meant the caste of wise men in his time.

# LESSON 4

## **The Claim of Historical Errors in Daniel Regarding Belshazzar**

We have already talked quite a bit about Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean king of Babylon. Who came after him as king? (See Box F on the Lesson 3 Handout available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).)

The next to rule was Nebuchadnezzar's son, Amel-Marduk, which means "man of Marduk." (Marduk was the patron deity of the city of Babylon.)

Amel-Marduk was murdered by the next to take the office, Neriglissar, who was married to a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Neriglissar is mentioned in Jeremiah 39:13.

Next came Neriglissar's young son, Labashi-Marduk, who was murdered by the next king after only nine months.

That next king was Nabonidus, who may have been of Assyrian ancestry. Nabonidus was reigning as king when the Persians conquered Babylon under Cyrus.

Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. But Daniel 5:1 says that Belshazzar was king of Babylon when Cyrus conquered the city. And Daniel 5:2 says that not only was Belshazzar the final Chaldean king, but Nebuchadnezzar was his father. How do we explain this?

The modern liberal critic argues that these statements are historical errors in the book of Daniel and point to a late date for its authorship. Are they right? No. Let's see why.

**QUESTION 1:** Why is Nebuchadnezzar called the father of Belshazzar four times in Daniel 5 and Belshazzar called the son of Nebuchadnezzar once in that chapter?

One possible explanation comes from the fact that the Hebrew use of “father” and “son” can simply mean “ancestor” and “descendant.” It is possible that a genetic relationship existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus (Belshazzar’s father) had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar in order to legitimize his rule, then his son by her (Belshazzar) would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This view is strengthened by the fact that Nabonidus named one of his other sons Nebuchadnezzar. Also, as we have already said, an earlier king (Neriglissar) is known to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. If this conjecture is ever proved by archaeology it would point yet again to something that would have been impossible for a Jew living in Palestine in 165 BC to have known.

A second possible explanation is that the term “son” often referred to a successor in the same office, whether or not there was a blood relationship. This was most likely the usage found in Jeremiah 27.

*Jeremiah 27:7 — And all nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar], and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.*

**QUESTION 2:** Why does Daniel say that Belshazzar was king of Babylon?

Archaeology has shown that Nabonidus took up residence at Tema in north Arabia and left his son Belshazzar in charge of the northern frontier of the Babylonian empire. Thus, Belshazzar did become the de facto king of Babylon after his father left him in charge. See Box E on the Lesson 3 Handout, which shows Nabonidus worshipping the moon god, Sin. The king’s devotion to the moon god upset the local followers of the Babylonian god, Marduk. Some historians believe this is why Nabonidus moved the capital to Tema, leaving his son Belshazzar to govern the city of Babylon. The author of Daniel knew the historical fact that Belshazzar was in

charge of the city when it fell. How would the author of Daniel have known this had he been writing centuries later as the liberal critics argue?

One commentator has correctly written:

Belshazzar then, technically occupied a position subordinate to that of Nabonidus. Nevertheless, since he was the man in regal status with whom the Jews had to do, Daniel calls him king. This cannot justly be charged as an inaccuracy.

Further, tablets dating from 543 BC have been found showing that Belshazzar and his father were on equal footing. Daniel apparently knew what he was talking about!

The radical critics argue that Belshazzar's authority to appoint anyone he pleased as third ruler in the kingdom in Daniel 5:16 indicates that he was an absolute ruler, not a sub-king. (Just think for a moment about how silly that argument is!) This is very different from the offer that Pharaoh made to Joseph in Genesis 41:40 — he offered the second position. Why did Belshazzar promise only the third position and not the second position? Because he was already the second, and his father was the first! The third was the only open spot! How would a Jew writing 400 years later have known this?

Belshazzar was long thought to have never existed, until his name was found by archaeologists. Daniel tells us all about him!

Incredibly, one modern scholar has written:

We shall presumably never know how our author learned that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar, as the excavations have proved, and that Belshazzar was functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon in 538.

If that liberal scholar believed in God, he would know!

As an aside, the Dead Sea Scrolls included a fragmentary document containing the “Prayer of Nabonidus.” That document tells how Nabonidus was struck by a “dread disease of the most high God” and for seven years was “set apart from men.” This event is very similar to what happened to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:23-33.

### **The Claim That Darius the Mede Never Existed**

In Daniel 5:30-31 we read:

*In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.*

One critic has written that “the references to Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem in the book.”

The late-date proponents claim that:

- The author of Daniel incorrectly believed that a Median kingdom, under Darius, conquered Babylon and subsequently gave way to the Persian empire under Cyrus. (It is known that Babylon fell directly to Cyrus and the Persians.)
- Darius the Mede never actually existed but was a confused reflection of a later Persian ruler, Darius I (Hystaspes).
- The four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are thus Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece (meaning that, despite what Jesus said in Matthew 24, the book of Daniel nothing to say about Rome).

True, that view makes Jesus a liar, but it does keep the supernatural out of the Bible, which is all the liberal scholar really cares about.

The book of Daniel never claims that Darius was the king of Media but only that he was of Median descent. To say that Napoleon was a Corsican does not mean that Napoleon was the king of Corsica.

The author of Daniel says that Darius and Cyrus had different ancestries (Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede), not that they ruled separate kingdoms.

Daniel 6:12 says: “The king [Darius] answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” If Darius ruled an independent kingdom of Media then why was he subject to the law of the Persians?

Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall in 5:28 indicates that the Persians would be the main element of the empire that succeeded the Babylonians. (“PERES: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”) Daniel says that Babylon would be conquered not by the Medes alone but by the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians playing the greater role.

The vision in Chapter 8 depicts a combined Medo-Persian empire as a single ram with two horns. The horn depicting Persia comes up last, but BEFORE the ram sets out to conquer, which is precisely the order in which history tells us the events occurred.

Just because the name “Darius the Mede” has not been found in any ancient inscriptions does not mean that he did not exist. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The critics made similar claims about Belshazzar and Sargon and archaeology has now proved them wrong.

Who then was Darius? We don’t know for sure, but we will look at three suggestions that have been made by various commentators.

**Some suggest that Darius the Mede was actually Darius I, a later ruler of Persia.**

This view must be rejected for the following reasons.



It would mean that the author of Daniel was mistaken about the chronology of Persian rulers. Daniel calls Darius a Mede, and Darius I was a Persian.

Daniel says that Darius the Mede was 62 when he began to rule. Darius I was in his 20's when he began to rule.

Daniel 9:1 says that Darius the Mede “was MADE king” implying that he was appointed king over Babylon by some higher authority (Cyrus). Darius I, however, succeeded to the throne after the death of Cambyses.

Such confusion as to the true nationality and time sequence of Darius the Great would have been unthinkable in the second-century BC Hellenistic world. Why? Because in the Near East every schoolboy was required to read Xenophon, if not Herodotus, and other Greek historians from the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Even in Hellenistic Palestine, these authors were widely read and admired. It is from Xenophon and Herodotus that we gain our information concerning Cyrus and Darius. Any Greek-writing author who attempted to put Darius before Cyrus would have been laughed off the stage by the general public; and no credence would have been given to anything he wrote.

### **Darius the Mede was another name for Cyrus the Persian.**

Daniel 6:28 says that “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” This statement seems odd if the two men were the same person (but we will have more to say about this view in a later lesson).

### **The third option is likely the best option: Darius the Mede was an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus.**

The references to Darius in Daniel do not say that he ruled the Persian empire — only that he took control of the conquered Chaldean empire. It was a well-known practice of Cyrus to appoint Medes to high positions in order to foster goodwill and loyalty. Critics claim that Darius the Mede had too much authority to have been just a governor. Read Daniel 6:25–26.

*Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.*

Yet the phrase “every dominion of my kingdom” could simply mean all of the land over which he had been given authority. Remember that his land consisted of people from many different countries — such as Daniel and his friends.

Which governor was he? One commentator has written:

Gubaru the Governor of Babylon fits the Biblical description of Darius the Mede so remarkably that the writer believes he will be recognized in due time as the monarch who played such an important role in the life of Daniel and the fall of Babylon. ... We believe that this identification is the only one which satisfactorily harmonizes the various lines of evidence which we find in the book of Daniel and in the contemporary cuneiform records.

Why is he called Darius? The name seems to be related to the Persian word “dara,” which is a term for “king.” Like Augustus among the Romans, Darius may have been a special honorific title, which could also be used as a proper name.

Daniel’s failure to mention any date later than Darius’ “first year” (9:1) may mean that his reign was of very brief duration. If so, an empire that lasted for only a single year introduces an element of utter implausibility into the Maccabean date hypothesis. A one-year empire could hardly have been set up as number two in a series that included the Chaldean Empire, which lasted for 73 years, the Persian Empire, which lasted for 208 years, and the Greek Empire, which would have been around for 167 years by 165 BC.

## **The Claim That Events in Daniel Are Improbable or Absurd**

In Daniel 4:33 we read the account of Nebuchadnezzar's illness in which he roamed the fields thinking himself to be an ox.

*The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

Critics claim that the sickness of Nebuchadnezzar is too incredible to be true. Too incredible to be true? These critics need to pull their heads out of their books and watch a little daytime TV. If the talk shows on TV today do nothing else, they prove that nothing is too strange to be true. A man who thinks he is a cow? It wouldn't even make the first cut on the Dr. Phil show.

Not only is it NOT that incredible, but it has a name: *boanthropy*. R. K. Harrison speaks of an encounter he had with such a person in a British mental hospital. He ate only vegetation and drank only water. His health was excellent and the only physical abnormality noticed was the length and coarseness of his hair and the thickened condition of his nails.

No Babylonian record has been found that mentions any activity by Nebuchadnezzar during the period 582 to 575. Perhaps because during those years the king was outstanding in his field, or should I say out grazing in his field!

## **The Claim That Daniel Violates the Supposed Nature of Biblical Prophecy**

This is a classic straw man argument. The critics set up a straw man by defining prophecy and then seek to discredit Daniel because it does not fit their own definition.

One critic has written that “prophecy in the Bible is characterized by an absence of specific predictions. It is forthtelling and not foretelling.” The prophecy in Daniel is primarily of the latter variety.

What about Jesus? He made specific prophecies regarding his death, the manner of his death, the perpetrators of his death, his betrayal, the death of Peter, the denial by Peter, his resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem within a generation.

**John 14:29** — *And now I [Jesus] have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

What do liberals do with the host of predictions found in both the Old and New Testaments? They usually call in a late unnamed editor to deal with the problem. That is, they say that someone came along after the book was written and after certain events had occurred and changed the book to make it look like those events had been predicted long ago. (Those magical and convenient late editors solve a variety of problems for the liberals.)

### **The Claim That the Type of Aramaic Used in Daniel Indicates a Late Date**

Daniel 2:4b through 7:28 is in the Aramaic language. (The remainder is in Hebrew.) It was once claimed by some that the form of Aramaic used in Daniel was the type used in the third century BC and not the type used in the sixth century BC. But this argument fell apart in 1929 when a farmer discovered what were later called the Ras Shamra tablets inside an underground passage. The Aramaic in these tablets is similar to that in Daniel and they date back to 1400 BC.

It is also claimed that the Aramaic in Daniel is a western dialect that was only used in Palestine. Even if this were true it would not prove that Daniel was written in Palestine. The book was undoubtedly copied many times and the language may have been updated to conform to the common dialect. (For example, the original KJV Bible used an older form of English than we see in the KJV Bible today.)

However, many scholars dispute the claim that the Aramaic in Daniel is western. One has asserted that it predates the eastern and western distinction. Another has written that the Aramaic in Daniel is a form that originated in the courts and governments of the seventh century BC.

E. J. Young has written that “it is becoming more and more clear that the languages cannot be employed as arguments against the antiquity of the book.”

But this all raises another question: Why were two different languages used? It is NOT unique to Daniel. In the book of Ezra, four chapters are also written in Aramaic.

Some critics have claimed that there were two authors, but even most of the liberals reject that theory since the message of the book is clearly woven throughout the entire work. But part of Daniel is written in the third person. Doesn't this imply another author? No. It is common to switch between first and third person in the Bible. Even God does it in Exodus 20. (See verse 2 (first person) and verse 7 (third person).)

One commentator has written:

Even critical scholars admit that only one author produced Daniel. The identity of the author appears from the unity of the plan, the relation of various parts to each other, the gradation of the oracles from the uncertain to the certain, the remarkable uniformity of ideas, images, forms, symbols, and that even in two languages there is a remarkable similarity of style.

Why then are two languages used? A much better explanation than two authors is that there were two audiences — which we know was true.

One commentator has written:

The Aramaic chapters deal with matters pertaining to the entire citizenry of the Babylonian and the Persian empires, whereas the other

six chapters relate to peculiarly Jewish concerns and God's special plans for the future of his covenant people.

### **The Claim That the Type of Hebrew Used in Daniel Points to a Late Date**

The Hebrew language underwent a big change around the time of Nehemiah. The critics claim that Daniel's Hebrew resembles the later type and thus points to a late date for the book.

But, as we already mentioned, the book was undoubtedly copied many times and the language may have been updated to conform to the common dialect.

And, once again, this argument can be turned around. It is very telling that the Hebrew portion of Daniel contains no Greek words. That seems very odd if Daniel had been written after nearly 200 years of Greek rule in Palestine.

The political terms in Daniel are largely Persian, which one would expect if the book had been written during the reign of Cyrus.

Also, the Hebrew used in the Dead Sea Scroll sectarian documents does NOT resemble the Hebrew used in Daniel, which seems odd if they were written at about the same time.

One of the most radical critics has written that "from the Hebrew of the Book of Daniel no important inference as to its date can be safely drawn" (which means, if he were honest, he would agree that it supported an early date!). Any time a liberal critic concludes that no inference can be drawn based on certain evidence — it nearly always means that the evidence overwhelmingly supports the early date view!

### **The Claim That the Use of Persian Words in Daniel Indicates a Late Date**

Several words of Persian origin are present in the Hebrew and especially in the Aramaic parts of Daniel. The radical critics assert that the Persian language did not penetrate the Aramaic of Babylon until long after Cyrus' conquest. The Persian term "satrap" is used throughout Daniel as if it were a Babylonian title. The critics say that such usage points to a much later date.

But it is very possible that the term had already become a Babylonian title due to the Persian influence that already existed. Also, if Daniel wrote the book after the fall of Babylon then he might have substituted Persian terms in place of the older Babylonian terms.

Again, this argument can be turned against the late-date crowd. The first Greek translations of Daniel appeared around 100 BC (Septuagint and Theodotian). Many of the Persian words in these translations were MISTRANSLATED, which seems odd if the book had been written only 65 years earlier. Clearly, the words had been forgotten or had changed meaning since the time when Daniel was written, which points to an early date for the book.

### **The Claim That the Use of Greek Words in Daniel Indicates a Late Date**

Daniel 3:5 (in the Aramaic section) contains three words of Greek origin, all of which are musical terms. It is claimed that such words could only have been used after Greek influence had spread throughout Asia after the conquest by Alexander the Great — again indicating a late date.

But how much cultural spread does it require to learn three new words? If the book had been written 400 years later, then wouldn't we expect to find many Greek words instead of only three?

There are 20 Persian words and three Greek words in Daniel. Does this make sense if Daniel had been written during the Greek empire and long after the Persian empire? (By 170 BC, a Greek speaking government had controlled Palestine for 160 years.)

One author has said, “It is the fewness of the Greek words, coupled with the fact that they are only the names of musical instruments, that must prove fatal to the critics’ theory that the book was written in 165 BC.”

Experts now agree that Greek culture had penetrated the Near East long before the Neo-Babylonian period. The terms may have been introduced by Greek traders before the rise of the Persian empire. The Elephantine papyri is a fifth century Aramaic document that contains a number of Greek words.

It is significant that the terms are all musical terms. Such terms are frequently borrowed when the instruments they describe become known.

Let’s apply the modern liberal argument to another book. Look at song numbers 627 and 628 in our song book. The word “*legato*” appears at the beginning of number 627. It is Italian for “tied together,” meaning that the notes should be sung smoothly or connected. The word “*fine*” (pronounced “fen-nay”) appears right before the chorus of number 628. (It does not mean that you are doing *fine*!) It means “end” in Italian. When we see those terms in our song book, do we conclude the author of the song must have been steeped in Italian culture? Silly, right? Why isn’t it just as silly to conclude that the author of Daniel was steeped in Greek culture?

In summary, the book of Daniel was written by Daniel in Babylon during the late sixth century BC. That means that the prophecies it contains are genuine and accurate, and they are absolute proof of the Bible’s inspiration.



# LESSON 5

## CHAPTER 1

### **Daniel 1:1**

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

#### **Who are these two kings and how did we get here?**

To answer those questions, we need to start with two other rulers: King Josiah of Judah and Pharaoh Neco of Egypt.

Neco is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:29. A statue of Neco is shown on the handout for Lesson 5 (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)).

Josiah is first mentioned by name in 1 Kings 13:2 (in a remarkable prophecy against Jeroboam given three centuries before Josiah's birth!) and then in 2 Kings 21:24, when Josiah becomes king after his father, King Amon. 2 Kings 22 tells us how Josiah repaired the temple and found the book of the Law.

Soon after coming to power in Egypt, Pharaoh Neco began trying to gain control of Syria-Palestine. In 609, he captured Gaza and Ashkelon. He then led his army northward to help the Assyrians in their battles with the Chaldeans, who had already captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612.

Neco sent envoys to King Josiah, assuring him that his purpose was not to fight with Judah but rather with the Chaldeans of Babylon.

**2 Chronicles 35:21** — *But he sent envoys to him, saying, What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.*

Josiah, realizing that the independence of Judah was being threatened, tried to stop the Egyptians at the pass of Megiddo (the world's most famous battlefield!), but he was defeated and mortally wounded.

**2 Kings 23:29** — *In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him.*

Neco proceeded to gain control of Syria as far as the Euphrates.

When Neco heard that the people of Judah had crowned Jehoahaz, an anti-Egyptian son of Josiah, he summoned Jehoahaz to Syria, deposed him, and took him to Egypt as a prisoner for the rest of his life.

In his place Neco put Jehoahaz's brother and Josiah's other son, Eliakim, and changed his name to Jehoiakim to show that he was an Egyptian vassal. Neco placed Judah under heavy tribute — 100 talents of silver and one talent (about 75 pounds) of gold.

**2 Kings 23:33-34** — *And Pharaoh Neco put him [Jehoahaz] in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josi-*

*ah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.*

In 605, King Nabopolassar of Babylon sent his son Nebuchadnezzar against Neco's army at Carchemish on the Euphrates. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and drove them out of Syria. Jeremiah describes this defeat of Egypt.

**Jeremiah 46:1-2** — *The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations. About Egypt. Concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.*

Jeremiah gave Pharaoh Neco one of the greatest nicknames in history. In Jeremiah 46:17 we read, "Call the name of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, 'Noisy one who lets the hour go by'" (RSV) (or "The Man with No Power but with Plenty of Noise") (TLB).

Jehoiakim went from being a vassal of Egypt to being a vassal of Babylon.

**2 Kings 24:1a** — *In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years.*

In 601, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Egypt itself, but Neco withstood him in a bloody battle at Egypt's border. This battle may have encouraged Jehoiakim to revolt against Babylon in 601 despite Jeremiah's warnings.

**2 Kings 24:1** — *In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.*

**Jeremiah 27:8-10** — *And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their*

*neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9 Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10 For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.*

Nebuchadnezzar decided to move against rebellious Judah.

**2 Chronicles 36:6-7** — *Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.*

Here is where we catch up with Daniel 1:1. Although the siege began with Jehoiakim on the throne, Jehoiakim was soon taken captive and died. (This was the first of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

**2 Kings 24:6** — *So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.*

As that verse tells us, Jehoiachin came to the throne next during the siege of Jerusalem, and Nebuchadnezzar took the city in 597 BC.

**2 Kings 24:11-12** — *And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.*

At some point during these events, *Crown Prince* Nebuchadnezzar became *King* Nebuchadnezzar with the death of his father, Nabopolassar. Nebuchadnezzar chronicled that event in his seventh year, the month of Kislev:

The Babylonian king mustered his troops and marched to the Hattiland. He encamped against the city of Judah [Jerusalem] and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king [Jehoiachin]. He appointed there a king of his own choice, received its heavy tribute and sent it to Babylon.

This text gives the exact date for this capture of Jerusalem and for the beginning of the exile as 16 March 597 — in “the spring of the year” (2 Chronicles 36:10). (This was the second of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

Jehoiachin and his family were carried off to Babylon.

**2 Kings 24:15** — *And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king’s mother, and the king’s wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.*

2 Kings 25:27-30 tells us that Jehoiachin was later released from prison by the next king, Amel-Marduk.

**2 Kings 25:28-30** — *And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; 29 And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. 30 And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.*

The handout shows a clay tablet on which the rations provided to the king and his family were recorded by the Babylonians.

The king that replaced Jehoiachin was his uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. Zedekiah also ignored Jeremiah and rebelled against Babylon, hoping for help from Egypt.

**2 Kings 24:17** — *And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.*

**2 Kings 24:20** — *For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

In 586 BC, Jerusalem fell, the walls were torn down, and the temple was demolished. Some of the Jewish leaders were executed and others were deported. Zedekiah tried to escape, but was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon. Only the poor were left to till the soil. (This was the third of the three sieges that we mentioned in our introduction.)

**2 Kings 25:7-12** — *And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. 8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. 10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. 11 Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan*

*the captain of the guard carry away. 12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.*

The Babylonians appointed a Jew, Gedaliah, to govern Judah, but he was soon murdered. (The Middle East hasn't changed much!)

**2 Kings 25:22** — *And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.*

A stone seal used by Gedaliah during this time is shown on the handout for Lesson 5 (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)).

**2 Kings 25:25** — *But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.*

Fearing a reprisal, some of the Jews fled to Egypt.

**2 Kings 25:26** — *And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees*

Jeremiah 43:5-7 tells us that they took Jeremiah with them when they fled to Egypt.

And that is how we arrived at Daniel 1:1!

In the introduction, I mentioned that of the two kings in verse 1, one of them is one of the most detestable figures in the Bible — and it is not Nebuchadnezzar! Remember what Jehoiakim did:

**Jeremiah 36:2-3** — *Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against*

*Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even into this day. 3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.*

**Jeremiah 36:23-24** — *And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. 24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.*

Yes, King Jehoiakim actually took a knife to the word of God, cut it in pieces, and threw it in the fire.

He certainly had no regard for the word of God, but before we are too harsh on Jehoiakim, are we ever guilty of the same thing? Do we ever pick and choose parts of the Bible the way he did? What difference is there if instead of cutting out something from our Bible, we simply choose to ignore it?

There are a lot of Jehoiakim's in the religious world today. They may not literally cut out and burn parts of the word of God — but they effectively do that when they reject or ignore the parts of the word with which they disagree.

### **Why had all of this occurred? Why were the people taken captive?**

**One reason was their failure to trust in God.** Judah had made alliances with Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt and in doing so had involved themselves in their power struggles — an involvement that eventually led to their destruction. These alliances were NOT according to God's will.



**A second reason was their idolatry.** God had tried everything to get them to give up their idols, but they refused. When he sent them to Babylon, he sent them to the world capital of idolatry!

We should be careful what we attach ourselves to. God may give us our fill of it! The phrase “God gave them up” appears three times in Romans 1. In Revelation the Romans wanted blood so God gave them a river of blood 200 miles long! And remember what happened in the wilderness:

**Numbers 11:18-20** — *And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; 20 But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?*

Interestingly, idolatry was never quite the problem for Israel after their captivity in Babylon as it was before. God’s plan worked!

## **Daniel 1:2**

**2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to**

**the house of his god; and he brought the vessels  
into the treasure house of his god.**

As we mentioned in our introductory comments, the first few verses of Chapter 1 do not seem to be speaking of a single incident, but instead appear to be a summary of the events we just reviewed that led to Daniel's deportation.

Also, recall our introductory comments about "Shinar" in verse 2. It was the site of the Tower of Babel and was a very early term for Babylon. It points toward an early date for the book.

The Babylonians had many different false gods (Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar). The singular word "god" in verse 2 likely refers to Marduk.

In this verse we meet a third king — the Lord in verse 2 is the true king! Nebuchadnezzar thought he was in charge, but God was in charge. He allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Judah captive, and when the time was right he removed Nebuchadnezzar from power.

Just about all that is left today of the mighty Nebuchadnezzar is a pile of bricks. When Nebuchadnezzar built the city, he had his name and picture imprinted on every brick that was used. One in the British museum shows the clear imprint of dog's foot over the name of the mighty king!

Nebuchadnezzar thought he was building an empire for himself, but he was really building a school for the Jews. God sent them there for a 70 year lesson they would never forget. When the 70 years were over, God removed the Chaldeans through Cyrus the Persian.

"And the Lord gave" in verse 2 is the first indication of a major theme of this book: the absolute sovereignty of God. God is in charge.

Babylon was victorious only because God allowed it to be. Later we will see the other side of the coin. Babylon will be defeated when it has finished serving God's purposes. Jeremiah 50-51 record the prophetic judgments against Babylon.

Was Jehoiakim (not Jehoiachin) taken back to Babylon? We can't tell just from verse 2. The phrase "which he carried" in verse 2 may just refer to the vessels from the temple, which we know went back to Babylon.

But what about 2 Chronicles 36:6-7?

*Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.*

Again, this does not actually say that Jehoiakim returned to Babylon, only that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take him there.

Why does it matter? Jeremiah seems to suggest that Jehoiakim would die in Judah.

**Jeremiah 22:18-19** — *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! 19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.*

It seems most likely that Nebuchadnezzar planned to take Jehoiakim back but that after being captured, Jehoiakim died and his body was simply thrown down outside the city, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy.

Removing the vessels from the temple was a terrible insult to the Jews. They were taken back to Babylon and placed in the treasury of the Babylonian gods.

The mention of these vessels in verse 2 is an example of the unity of this book. They will play an important role later. Belshazzar is going to live to regret this theft in Chapter 5!

There is a very interesting back story about the temple vessels. Hezekiah had displayed the temple articles one century earlier to Babylonian emissaries.

**2 Kings 20:12-13** — *At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.*

Before we read further, does this seem like a smart thing for Hezekiah to have done? No, and Isaiah is quick to tell him so.

**2 Kings 20:14-19** — *Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away;*

*and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?*

That last verse is a classic! Who cares if I have brought calamity to the land if that calamity occurs long after I'm gone! Hezekiah should run for Congress!

# LESSON 6

We talked last week about how the exile occurred, and, more importantly, why it occurred. One reason why it happened that we did not discuss was the neglect of the Sabbath day.

**2 Chronicles 36:20-21** — *And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.*

In other words, if the people will not keep the day of rest, then God will remove the people, and the land will then enjoy the day of rest without them!

Some may not feel that regular attendance at the worship assembly is important — just as some earlier did not feel that Sabbath observance was important. But God had a different view — their neglect of the Sabbath was one of the reasons they were sent into exile.

**Hebrews 10:25** — *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

If the day approaching in Hebrews 10:25 was the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, then there is a strong parallel with the exile described in the opening verses of Daniel. But even if the day approaching is the day of judgment at the end of the

world, there is still a strong parallel — there is always a day of judgment approaching.

The Israelites had a day that was fast approaching! And by the time that Daniel opens, that day had arrived.

### **Daniel 1:3-4**

**3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.**

The captives are called “children of Israel” here in verse 3, and later they are called “children of Judah” in verse 6. The northern kingdom (Israel) had been taken captive long ago by the Assyrians. These captives were from the southern kingdom (Judah). But, by this time, many from the northern kingdom had migrated south due to the Assyrian invasions, so Judah included people from both kingdoms.

But verse 3 tells us that the captives were of the king's seed, which would mean they were from the tribe of Judah. Most likely, children of Israel denotes their nationality (both the northern and southern tribes were Israelites in that sense), and children of Judah denotes their royal tribe, which of course was vital for the fulfill-

ment of God's promise to David in Psalm 89:36 that "his offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me." No faithful Israelite could have ever believed that God had abandoned them.

The captives were of royal and noble birth. Why were they taken? This action weakened the subjugated nation. They were also hostages that would keep the Jews in line while Nebuchadnezzar went back to assume the throne.

Daniel appears to have been taken early during Nebuchadnezzar's extended campaign against Jerusalem. Although that campaign eventually ended with the destruction of the city, that was not Nebuchadnezzar's original plan. Had the people heeded the message of Jeremiah, the city could have been spared. That it later had to be rebuilt was a result of both the original rebellion (that led to the exile in Babylon) and the continued rebellion (that led to the destruction of the city).

Taking high born hostages also strengthened the conquering nation. It was considered a good policy to make leaders from the conquered people. Alexander the Great did this, and Cyrus did this (as we will see later in this book). They wanted to assimilate Daniel and his friends. Nebuchadnezzar planned to train them so that they could later administer his rule among the Jews. Josephus says that Daniel and his three friends were members of Zedekiah's family.

**How old were they?** The Hebrew word for "youth" used here most probably places their ages between 14 and 17. Since we know that Daniel was still serving as a leader 70 years later, Daniel and his companions must have been very young when they were taken hostage.

Plato tells us that the education of Persian boys began in their 14th year. The same may have been true of the Chaldeans.

**These young men were without blemish.** The ancients (much like we moderns) believed that one's outward appearance reflected an inner condition. We know that God did not allow men with certain physical deformities to be priests (Leviticus 21:17-21). This same Hebrew word is used in 2 Samuel 14:25 to describe Absalom.



(“But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.”) We will learn in verse 6 that Daniel is one of these exiled children.

That they were placed in the charge of the master of the eunuchs has led some to conclude that Daniel and his three friends were also made eunuchs by the Babylonians. Here is what Jerome said on that point:

From this passage the Hebrews think that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were eunuchs, thus fulfilling that prophecy which is spoken by the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah: “And they shall take of thy seed and make them eunuchs in the house of the king of Babylon” [Isaiah 39:7] ... But perhaps the following words are opposed to this interpretation: “... lads, or youths, who were free from all blemish.”

So we know from Isaiah that some of the royal children were made eunuchs by the Babylonians — was Daniel among that group?

Some commentators have said that Isaiah 56:4-5 was speaking prophetically of Daniel and his three friends:

*For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*

It is true that, unlike with Joseph, there is no mention of Daniel’s wife or Daniel’s children, but whereas their presence would be definitive evidence on this issue, their absence is not. (Rabbinic tradition says that Daniel’s three friends “married and begat sons and daughters.”)

We cannot know for certain, but I think that these four were most likely *not* eunuchs. Why?

First, the text seems to suggest they were taken in the earliest deportation, which would mean that Nebuchadnezzar still had hopes that he could set up a government there that would be loyal to him and be administered by those he had deported and trained.

Second, the king may have planned to use them as hostages, and their value as hostages would have been diminished had he made them eunuchs.

Third, had Isaiah's prophecy been fulfilled by Daniel and his friends, I think that fulfillment would likely have been mentioned.

Fourth, I agree with Jerome that the phrase "free from all blemish" suggests they were not eunuchs, although that phrase could have applied only when they were taken. But if the king purposely wanted boys without any physical defect, it seems odd that he would then mutilate them.

Fifth, the Hebrew word translated "eunuch" in verse 3 (*saris*) may not refer to a physical eunuch at all. The same word is used elsewhere to refer simply to a court official. For example, the word is used to describe Potiphar in Genesis 37:36, and he was married. The same word is found in Isaiah 39:7, which we quoted earlier.

**They learned the "letters and language of the Chaldeans."** We have already discussed the two meanings of the term "Chaldeans." The Chaldeans (led by Nabopolassar) overthrew the Assyrians and conquered Babylon in 612. The term "Chaldean" can be used in an ethnic sense to describe anyone from the Chaldean tribe. As with "Jew" however, the term "Chaldean" had both a nationalistic and a religious meaning (as in Jewish state and Jewish religion). In the latter sense, "Chaldean" could refer to a group of wise men that arose from within that tribe. The use here appears to be the former ethnic sense. These captives were going to get a crash course in Babylonian and Chaldean culture.

This study included a study of the old languages of Babylonia including two dialects of Sumerian.

Their study also included mathematics and science, areas in which Babylon was very advanced. The Babylonians used a Base-60 number system, the remnants of which we can still see today — 60 minutes in an hour, 360 degrees in a circle. How did they arrive at such a base? Most bases can be traced back to the human hand — our own Base-10 being the best example. But a single hand gives us Base-5, and the 3 joints on the 4 fingers of that hand give us Base-12. Most believe that Base-60 came from an early merger of two groups of people — one using Base-5 and one using Base-12.

Their study also included Babylonian mythology, including their creation and flood legends. (Clay tablets at the British museum show the types of math problems and legends that they studied.)

Possibly the most famous flood account (aside from the biblical record of Noah and the Flood) comes from the ancient Babylonian empire. The Gilgamesh Epic, written on twelve clay tablets that date back to the seventh century BC, tells of a hero named Gilgamesh. In his search for eternal life, Gilgamesh sought out Utnapishtim, a person who was granted eternal life because he saved a boatload of animals and humans during a great flood. On the eleventh tablet of this epic, a flood account is recorded that parallels the Genesis account in many areas. According to the story, the gods instructed Utnapishtim to build a boat because a terrible flood was coming. Utnapishtim built the boat, covered it with pitch, and put animals of all kinds on it, as well as certain provisions. After Utnapishtim entered the boat with his family, it rained for six days and nights. When the flood ended, the boat rested on Mount Niser. After seven days, Utnapishtim sent out a dove to see if the waters had receded. The dove came back, so he sent a swallow, which also returned. Finally, he sent out a raven—which never returned. Utnapishtim and his family finally exited the boat and sacrificed to their gods.

What is the significance of the various flood legends? The answer seems obvious: we have well over 200 flood legends that tell of a great flood (and possibly more than 500) — almost all civilizations have some sort of flood legend. Stories of a great deluge are found on every inhabited continent and among a great many different language and culture groups. Legends have been reported from nations such as China, Babylon, Mexico, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Persia, India, Norway, Wales, Ireland, Indonesia, and Romania — the entire list would go on for many pages. Although the vast number of such legends is surprising, the similarity between much of their content is equally amazing.

In 95 percent of the more than two hundred flood legends, the flood was world-wide; in 88 percent, a certain family was favored; in 70 percent, survival was by means of a boat; in 67 percent, animals were also saved; in 66 percent, the flood was due to the wickedness of man; in 66 percent, the survivors had been forewarned; in 57 percent, they ended up on a mountain; in 35 percent, birds were sent out from the boat; and in 9 percent, exactly eight people were spared.

The conclusion to be drawn from such facts is that in the distant past, there was a colossal flood that forever affected the history of all civilizations. The worldwide flood is a FACT of history!

The captives enrolled in the University of Babylon — and were subjected to the same brainwashing that some of our universities employ (or at least are accused of employing). Brainwashing has little effect on a discerning mind!

The exiles were all about to be immersed in this pagan culture. They would need great strength to withstand it.

More evidence for an early date: Would a late-date author writing in Palestine have enrolled his Jewish heroes in the University of Babylon for a pagan polytheistic education? The Maccabees wanted to retain their Jewish heritage in the face of Greek influences. Is this the type of hero they would have created? Daniel was

steeped in foreign culture and seemed to take to it readily with God's help and approval. The Maccabeans would never have created such a hero!

Daniel knew that if he were to have any effect at all on the Babylonians, he would need to understand their culture. Think of Paul teaching the Greeks. Would he have had the effect he had on them if he had not been so intimately knowledgeable about Greek culture. Effective missionaries take the time to learn all about the people they are trying to reach, just as Paul did.

### **Daniel 1:5**

**5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.**

The term for "the king's meat" used here is a technical Persian term that is used only twice in the Old Testament (both times in Daniel). It denotes gifts from the royal table.

The king's food would have helped reverse the effects of the siege and the deportation. However, there seems to have been a more devious reason behind the king's generosity. Remember, the king's goal was to BRAINWASH these children. He wanted them to forget their own land and culture and become Chaldeans. His theme song may have been "How are you going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris?"

Did it work? Out of all the captives, only four that we know of remained true to God. Only three were cast in that fiery furnace. (We will discuss later why Daniel was not among that group.)

Our Message: The devil constantly works to change our appetites. He wants us to crave the things of this world. We need to resist the way that Daniel did.

**Romans 12:2** — *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

**1 John 2:15-16** — *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

**2 Corinthians 6:17** — *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

Our greatest danger is that we will be absorbed by the world — by an alien, hostile, pagan culture.

Typically these feasts would have begun with a sacrifice to the false Babylonian gods and would have consisted of many unclean foods. (When we study 1 Corinthians 8 we will see that this problem continued into the New Testament times.) Thus, Daniel and his friends had a dilemma. Would they compromise or not?

But shouldn't they have eaten the food? After all, as verse 5 says, they were going to have "to stand before the king"! Yes, but Daniel answered to another king. There was another king that Daniel would stand before someday.

"To stand before the king" is a Persian term for "royal service." It meant more than literally standing before the king.

**PROBLEM:** They were educated for three years and then went before the king. Yet later in Chapter 2 we discover that Nebuchadnezzar's first dream occurred during the second year of his reign. Is this a contradiction? No.

It is possible that their education did not take a full three years. Mark 8:31 says that Jesus would rise "after three days" when in fact he rose on the third day. In Genesis 42:17-18, we find that Joseph put his brothers in jail for three days, but we later see that he brought them out during the third day.

A second explanation involves the Babylonian system for dating the years of a king's reign that we discussed earlier. The actual first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was called the year of his accession, the actual second year of his reign was called the first year of his reign, etc. The first year of their training would have corresponded to Nebuchadnezzar's year of accession.

Another possibility is that they were still in school. This would explain why they were not present when the king first spoke to the wise men.

### **Daniel 1:6-7**

**6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.**

At last we are introduced to the hero of our story, Daniel, and his three friends. Would anyone in the world have considered young teenage Daniel to be an impor-

tant figure at this time? No, but to God he was of the utmost importance. We must try to see the world as God sees it.

Their Hebrew names were all changed to Chaldean names so that they would forget their land and culture. At this time, your name was an integral part of your identity — much more so than today. Very often, as we see here, your name contained the name of your god.

This is not the only time a name change such as this occurred in the Bible. Joseph became Zaphenath-paneah in Genesis 41:45, and Hadassah became Esther in Esther 2:7. Here, Daniel (God is my judge) becomes Belteshazzar (Nebo protect my life or protect the king). The meaning of Daniel's name is hinted at in Daniel 4:8 when Nebuchadnezzar says that Daniel was named after his God, which was presumably Nebo. Another commentary said that Belteshazzar may refer to Belet, the wife of Marduk.

There are several theories regarding the meanings of the other names. The ones given here seem to be the most popular.

- **Hananiah** (Yahweh has shown grace) became **Shadrach** (the command of Aku), which honors the Sumerian moon god, Aku.
- **Mishael** (who is what God is?) became **Meshach** (who is what Aku is?)
- **Azariah** (Yahweh has helped) became **Abednego** (the servant of Nego, probably in reference to Nebo).

**HERE'S A GOOD QUESTION:** Why do we remember Daniel by his *Hebrew* name and the others by their *Babylonian* names?

Daniel wrote the book, and he seems to favor his original name. Also, it is easier to pronounce than Belteshazzar. (I wonder if he had used his new name whether Belteshazzar would now be a popular name like Daniel is.)



Also, when the book was written during the Persian rule, the earlier king Belshazzar was a disgraced figure — which is very close to Daniel's new name, Belteshazzar.

As for Daniel's three friends, he sometimes uses their old names and sometimes uses their new names. Their new names seem to have stuck, though, because those are the ones that are used during the fiery furnace account. (Again, the pronunciation theory may apply here as well.)

Note also that after the exile, some Jews still used Babylonian names. Zerubbabel means the seed of Babylon, and Shenazzar refers to a Babylonian moon-god. (We use days of the week that refer to false gods.)

Whatever the reason, the Babylonians changed the name of the Jewish kings, and they changed the names of Daniel's friends — but they did not change Daniel's name!

### **Daniel 1:8**

**8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.**

Nebuchadnezzar's brainwashing plan had three components:

- Teach them Chaldean culture and language.
- Give them Chaldean names.
- Feed them Chaldean food.

The first two could be done without compromising the word of God.

Daniel could learn their culture without having to adopt it and believe in their false gods. We should never run from knowledge! Would Daniel have had such an impact on Babylon if he had buried his head in the sand and refused to learn about them. We need to teach our children to be discerning, not to run in fear from knowledge.

Also, the Babylonians could call them anything they wanted.

But the heathen food was another matter. This is where our teenage hero and his friends had to draw the line. (These teenage boys drew the line at food!) Why?

Jewish food had to be prepared properly (blood drained, etc.). Also, many animals were considered unclean and could not be eaten. The Babylonians ate pork and horse, which violated the dietary laws in the Torah (Leviticus 11, Leviticus 17, and Deuteronomy 14).

God did not want his people to practice idolatry or to associate with people who did. The Babylonian food would have been offered to pagan gods and would have been served at pagan feasts. To eat under those conditions would have been to wholeheartedly accept the false Babylonian gods. (See 1 Corinthians, for example.)

In his book *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, A. Leo Oppenheim tells us about the care and feeding of the gods of Babylon. We learn in his book that sumptuous food would be offered to the gods, and after the meal, whatever was left would be brought to the king's table as the royal food. God will still be warning about this when we get to the last book of the Bible.

**Revelation 2:14** — *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

But what if they just ate it and didn't believe. Would that have been all right? No. God does not need secret agents. Remember Aesop's fable about the bat. The beasts and the birds had a war, and the bat joined both sides. With the birds he acted like a bird, and with the beasts he acted like a beast. When he was discovered he had to hide and only come out at night. I fear that some of us may be spiritual bats. Daniel was not.

Daniel made a resolution and he stuck to it. Was this difficult or easy?

Put yourself in his place. He had been dragged away from his home, and eventually his home had been destroyed. It seemed like God had forsaken him. He had been without much food for a long time during the siege. Maybe God wanted him to eat this food. Who would know, and what would it hurt?

Wouldn't this little quibble about food hurt his chances to get a good position in the government? Wouldn't it hurt his career? Wasn't money involved! Wouldn't that overrule all other considerations?

Daniel knew what was right, and he did what was right no matter what or who stood against him. We need more Daniels!

These four teenage boys were not the first to be tempted with forbidden fruit, but unlike Adam and Eve, they passed the test!

# LESSON 7

Verse 8 begins with a startling statement: “But Daniel purposed in his heart...”

Why was it startling? Because Daniel was a teenager. Because Daniel was far from home. Because Daniel had been dragged away from his family. Because many of his friends likely were telling him that God had forsaken them. Because of the tremendous pressure he was under from his new overseers. And we could go on and on.

With all of that working against him, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. Yes, it was a startling statement, but likely not that startling to people who knew Daniel!

But wasn't Daniel being a legalist? Wasn't he carrying this obedience thing just a bit too far?

First, we have to define what we mean by “legalist.” If we mean someone who focuses on part of the law while ignoring the remainder, then no, Daniel was not that. If we mean someone who obeys the law thinking that God will then owe him something, then no, Daniel was not that. If we mean someone who creates new laws not in God's word and then binds men to follow them, then no, Daniel was not that. But if we mean someone who loves and delights in the law of God and who tries faithfully to follow it all to please God and show his love for God, then yes, Daniel was a legalist — and we should be, too.

But wasn't Daniel in the minority? Weren't all of the public opinion polls against him on this food issue?

First, God's people have been in the majority only twice in human history: just after creation and just after the flood. At all other times they have been outnumbered by the ungodly. Our eternal destiny does not depend on the popular vote!

Second, although it may come as a surprise to some (particularly in the denominational world), the church is *not* a democracy. We don't determine the truth; we don't vote on the truth. The truth is the truth regardless of what we think about it.

**Romans 3:4** — *Let God be true though every man a liar!*

But isn't democracy God's favorite political system (as we often hear from Bible thumping politicians)? We can perhaps *infer* an answer to that question from Daniel. In fact, what we *don't* find in Daniel may help us answer that question! Everyone knows that Athens was the birthplace of democracy. That birth occurred around 500 BC, and it lasted for about 100 years. 100 years after that, Alexander was dead and his empire fragmented. Fast forward another 100 years, and Greece was at war with Rome, and we all know how that ended. In fact, Daniel told us in 600 BC how it ended, 100 years before democracy was born in Athens! It is interesting that although Daniel tells us in great detail what would happen with the kingdoms of the world in the 600 years between his day and the first century, he skips right over the birth of democracy in Athens just 100 years later.

I think a good argument can be made that if God has a favorite political system, it is a monarchy rather than a democracy. Israel was a monarchy under God until they rejected him as king and sought an earthly ruler instead to reign over them. The church (God's eternal kingdom) is a monarchy as well. We will learn much about that kingdom when we get to Chapter 2. Verse 44 will tell us about a *kingdom* set up by God. Jesus is our king, not our president. We don't get to vote when it comes to God's kingdom.

Daniel and his friends did not get together to vote on what to do; they knew what to do. And there is a word for that — integrity! We don't see Daniel agonizing over what to do. There was no need to agonize over this decision — Daniel knew what he

had to do — and he knew that before he was ever faced with the decision. If we like Daniel purpose in our heart to follow God’s word, then we won’t find ourselves with very many difficult decisions. Most of the decisions will have already been made!

Daniel used the word “defile” in verse 8. Even that word choice was courageous! He used a strong word but an appropriate word. The Bible names names and uses strong, direct, unmistakable language when needed. God is not the author of confusion, and the best way to avoid confusion is to speak plainly. Daniel did just that in verse 8.

The Babylonians could change many things about Daniel’s life: his homeland, his culture, his name. But they could not change his heart. He remained loyal and true to God, and he wanted to make sure the entire world knew that he was loyal and true to God. It reminds me of one of my favorite songs: “To Christ be loyal and be true; he needs brave volunteers to stand against the powers of sin, moved not by frowns or fears!”

Can you imagine the kind of courage required for this exiled teenager to stand up against all of the might and power of Babylon! Can you imagine the courage it took for him to stand up against the peer pressure from his own fellow exiles?

By choosing this course of action, Daniel and his three friends were setting themselves apart from all of the others. The others likely thought no one would ever know what they were doing in Babylon — but Daniel knew that God would know. The others may have even blamed God for their predicament — but Daniel knew that their nation’s own disobedience was to blame.

Daniel faced the same sort of pressures that we face today — he was pressured to change his whole way of thinking. We can only imagine the pressure and influence these pagan Babylonian teachers tried to exert on the exiles. They no doubt looked down on them as uneducated hicks who needed to be taught the true way of viewing the world.

The Babylonians wanted the exiles to adopt their worldview, their view of man, their view of God, their view of morality — all of which ran directly counter to what these teenagers had been taught by their parents.

Young people today don't face such pressures from ancient Babylon, but don't they face the same pressures from modern Babylons? Don't they face these same pressures at universities? Don't we all face these same pressures daily from our society's constant attempts to change our thinking?

One pressure that was applied to Daniel and his friends was the pressure to participate in the occult practices of the Babylonians (such practices are called the New Age today, although they are hardly new!).

The Chaldeans were so associated with magic and divination, that the term *Chaldean* came to mean (and was already at this time sometimes being used to mean) one who was a magician or a diviner or an astrologer.

When the magicians tried to influence Daniel, he likely thought of Isaiah 8:19-20, which says:

*And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Do we see anything like this today? Yes, I saw it this past week in an article on the Internet:

Mars, Earth, and the Sun all aligned last night, a rare “opposition of the planets” that only happens once every 778 days. But what made this event so remarkable is that it occurred precisely a week before everyone on earth will see the first of FOUR dark red “blood moons,” an extraordinary event some Christians believe represents the End

of Days and the second coming of Christ. The King James Bible predicts: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD comes, [Joel 2:31]. And, according to NASA, a highly unusual “Tetrad” — four successive total “blood-red” lunar eclipses each followed by six full moons — will, indeed, start next Tuesday and finish on September 28 2015. Pastor and author John Hagee, from San Antonio, Texas, has written a book on the phenomenon. He believes tonight marks the dawn of a “hugely significant event” for the world.

We know the precise day when Joel 2:31 was (past tense) fulfilled! Peter quoted Joel 2:31 in Acts 2:20, and he said in Acts 2:16 that “this is that” — that is, what was then happening in Acts 2 was a fulfillment of Joel 2:31.

Jeremiah 10:2 has a message for “Pastor” Hagee: “Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.” Babylon was full of such people!

How were these teenagers able to be so strong in their stand against Babylon? Why were they able to be strong after being dragged 900 miles away from their home in Jerusalem?

There was the influence of God’s word. We recently talked about Josiah, and we briefly mentioned something that happened very early in his life — he restored the temple and discovered the word of God. If Daniel was 16 now, then he was born at about the same time that God’s word was found by King Josiah. Daniel must have heard the rediscovered law read many times while he was growing up.

There was the influence of his parents. We don’t know too much about Daniel’s parents, but we do know one thing — they named him “God is my judge”! They were in effect saying to him, “You will not always have us around to demand an account from you. But you will always be accountable to God, and he will always be there to demand it from you. God is your judge — so watch how you live and what you be-



lieve.” We also know that Daniel’s parents taught him the law of God. How else would he have known about the dietary laws? He had been taught what was right, and he had the courage to stand up and do what was right no matter what the consequences. But absent that initial teaching, all of the courage in the world will not do you any good!

There was the influence of God. God had not forsaken the exiles. He was at work among them, and we see that from the opening verses of Daniel. The Lord gave in verse 2. God had brought in verse 9. God gave in verse 17. Today, the days of miracles are over, but God is still at work in this world through his providence. He also exercises his influence through his word and through his church.

Finally, notice how Daniel handled this issue — he requested (not demanded) that he be allowed to eat other food.

When the chief of the eunuchs did not grant his request, he asked someone else. We don’t know what Daniel’s next step would have been had all of his requests been denied, but I think we know he would not have eaten that food. But Daniel began with a request, and he showed respect to those who had authority over him.

He did not create a public spectacle. He did not stage a food strike. His diet was private, not public. The king likely never knew anything about it. But Daniel knew. And God knew. We can learn much from how Daniel handled this situation.

### **Daniel 1:9-10**

**9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces**

**worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.**

Why did Daniel receive such favor and tender love in verse 9? Was it because of something he did? No — at least not entirely.

God gave Daniel favor in the Babylonian's sight, but Daniel also had a role to play. Daniel's role was to be obedient to God in how Daniel dealt with the Babylonians. But it was God who deserved all of the credit for Daniel's success as verse 9 tells us. Again we are reminded of a major theme in this book — the absolute sovereignty of God. But Daniel is not just a passive observer!

Daniel feared God, but whom did the chief eunuch fear? Nebuchadnezzar. The chief eunuch feared for his life. Daniel feared for his soul. If these young boys were not well taken care of, the chief eunuch would lose his head! He had a great deal riding on the outcome of this experiment! His fears were well founded. We will soon see Nebuchadnezzar's harshness and rashness on display.

The reference to the other children in verse 10 confirms that Daniel and his three friends were not alone. The others almost certainly included other children from Judah as well as children from the other lands that had been conquered by Babylon.

### **Daniel 1:11-13**

**11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to**

**eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.**

Daniel next goes to the steward that the chief eunuch had appointed and offers him a deal — let them eat their alternative diet for ten days, and then he can judge for himself which group looks better.

The King James Version treats “Melzar” in verse 11 as a proper name, but the presence of an article in the original Hebrew makes that unlikely. A better translation is “overseer” or “guardian,” although “guard” is also a possibility (but his role seems to have been more to watch over them and care for them than to guard them).

The ten days in verse 11 is just that — ten days. Unlike Revelation, much of the book of Daniel is historical and not apocalyptic. Later, we will study sections of this book in which numbers should be interpreted figuratively, but not here. (Although we will see another ten in verse 20 (“ten times better”) that is likely just an idiom for “much.”)

The proposed diet is found in verse 12 — pulse to eat and water to drink. The word “pulse” in the King James Version (here and in verse 16) is better translated “vegetables.” “Pulse” is a poor translation because it refers only to beans, peas, and lentils. The actual Hebrew word just means “that which grows from sown seed.”

A search on Amazon.com returns over 50 books on the Daniel Diet! Yes, it may be healthy, but that is not the point here. Daniel was not opposed to eating meat because it was unhealthy *per se*; he was opposed because some of it was unclean (which, in at least some cases, also meant it was unhealthy) and because of its asso-

ciation with idols. (A meat diet is *commanded* at some points in the law; the Passover lamb and other sacrifices, for example.) In 10:2-3 we will see Daniel briefly abstaining from meat for three weeks, which suggests he was not always a vegetarian. In fact, you will also find books on the “Daniel Fast.” They are based on that three week fast in 10:2-3.

If all we get out of this wonderful book is a new diet plan, then we have seriously missed out! Such people are like “a duck paddling across the surface of a large lake, taking in only an inch of water, completely unaware of the fathomless depths that lie beneath.”

### **Daniel 1:14-16**

**14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.**

Why did the overseer agree to Daniel’s plan in verse 14? We aren’t told, but it may have been God working on him just as he was working on the prince of eunuchs in verse 9. But we might also ask this question: Who do we think got to eat all of the rich food that Daniel and his friends refused to eat? When you answer that question you may have your answer to the other question!

At the end of the ten days, they were found to be fairer and fatter than all of the other children who ate the kings’ food. Their improved appearance was likely

miraculous as it is difficult to see how a ten day diet of vegetables could have made such a visible difference. So the guard makes the change permanent — he takes away the meat and the wine, and gives them vegetables and water instead.

Was Daniel *testing* God here? How is this situation different from Matthew 4 when Satan tempted Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle? First, verse 12 did not say that God was being tested, but rather that Daniel and his friends were being proved or tested. Second, what we are seeing here is Daniel's *faith* in God — and that faith would have been unshaken had the four boys lost weight and strength on their new diet. Third, this diet was part of God's plan for Daniel, as we will soon see.

### **Daniel 1:17**

**17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.**

The key phrase in verse 17 is “God gave.” This is the third time in this first chapter that we read that God gave something to someone. In 1:2, God gave Jehoiakim and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. In 1:9, God gave the chief official sympathy toward Daniel and his friends. Now in verse 17 we read that God gave the four Judeans “knowledge and understanding.” God is in charge here. Their learning and their wisdom were gifts from God. (Not due to their diet as vegetarians claim!)

We also get some important foreshadowing in verse 17 — God gave Daniel wisdom and the ability to understand visions and dreams. (All four children received the first gift, but only Daniel received this second gift.)

This second gift would allow Daniel to become an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar, which is exactly what God had in mind for him. It would also allow Daniel to be considered a “wise man” in the king’s court, and would allow Daniel to be the channel of revelation that God wanted him to be. The Babylonians believed that their gods spoke to them in their dreams, and this skill of interpreting dreams was very highly prized.

Does God talk to us today in dreams? When God talked to people with dreams in the Old Testament, they knew it. They received a definite message, and God was very persistent about it. Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 2 will know that his dream is no ordinary dream.

If God did talk to us today with dreams then what would he say? What more do we need to hear from God? The word he has already given us is able to instruct us about salvation (2 Timothy 3:15) and equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16). God’s word is complete, and it makes us complete.

**Hebrews 1:1-2** — *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

Are you looking for a message from God? You have one! The Bible is God’s message to us. Those who claim that God speaks to them today apart from his word generally have found something in his word that they don’t like. The truth may be scarce, but the supply has always exceeded the demand!

*Orwell:* The further a society drifts from truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.

Those waiting for a sign already have the only sign they will get.

**Matthew 12:39-40**— *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but*

*the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

If they don't believe when faced with the sign of the resurrection, what sort of sign could make them believe?

Although we don't have miraculous gifts such as the ones Daniel received, we all have gifts from God. We need to identify them and then use them for God's kingdom. How do we feel when we pick out a gift for someone, and they toss it in a drawer never to see the light of day? Do we think God feels any different when his gifts to us are not used and enjoyed? How would these events have been different if Daniel had neglected his gift from God?

Ezekiel 28:3 speaks of a man named Daniel who was wise and could interpret secrets. After reading this far in Daniel 1, who do you think Ezekiel had in mind? The liberal critics argue that Ezekiel was speaking of a mythic pagan character named Dan'el who was famous for his drunkenness. Does that make any sense at all?

### **Daniel 1:18-20**

**18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of**

**them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.**

These four young men made quite an impression on the king. Although they had only been in the country for a few years, they already knew much more than the wise men who advised the king.

We have already asked the question of why Daniel and his friends wouldn't eat the king's food, and we have mentioned two reasons: (1) the food was unclean (not kosher), and (2) the food had been offered to idols. The word "defile" in verse 8 could include both of those reasons.

But there is also a third likely reason for why Daniel refused the king's food, and it fits the context very well. If their strength and their wisdom had come from their Babylonian food and their Babylonian education, who would have gotten the glory when they stood before the king ten times better than all of the others? Babylon would have. But we are told that their wisdom was given them by God (and we would know that anyway after learning they were ten times smarter than their teachers!), and their physical strength must also have been from God (which we know because they refused to eat the Babylonian food). In a book in which earthly kings believe they are in total control and deserve all of the glory, it is important to show right from the first chapter that God is in total control and God deserves all the glory.

Most likely all three of these reasons were at play here — the food was unclean, the food had been offered to idols, and it was important to show that Daniel's strength and wisdom came from God.

One reason I think the third reason is an important factor here is that the diet resulted in an apparently miraculous increase in physical strength. If the concern



had been only to avoid defilement, then Daniel would have avoided the unclean food without regard to how he looked ten days later.

Notice how Daniel is being presented here — he is the incarnation of a wise man. He knows how to navigate through life; how to live in a pagan culture while staying true to God and displaying the wisdom that is from above. He knows what is right, and he does what is right. He knows the right thing to say, and says it. He, like Joseph, is faithful in exile, and he, like Joseph, is greatly blessed by God and allowed to succeed against seemingly impossible odds.

But with all that we see here about Daniel, we should note that this book is *not* a book about Daniel — it is a book about God. God is the central figure in this book. It is God who moves through history (often behind the scenes) fulfilling his will and showing love and compassion for his people. It is God who shows us his detailed plan for bringing forth his beautiful eternal kingdom. It is God who shows us the Son of Man — our perfect Messiah and King. Daniel is a book about God, and Daniel would have been the first to tell us that!

## **Daniel 1:21**

### **21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.**

Verse 21 tells us that Daniel was around from 605 until *at least* 539 BC.

Verse 21 does not say that Daniel died during the first year of King Cyrus. We know that was not the case because in Daniel 10:1 he receives a vision in the third year of Cyrus. It simply tells us that Daniel survived into the next empire. Daniel lasted longer than the Babylonians did! He had predicted their fall and he was there to see it.

Who was Cyrus? He was the first Persian emperor that took over after the Chaldeans were defeated. He released the Jews from captivity and allowed them to return to their land. (Read Ezra.) Cyrus is mentioned by name in Isaiah 44 and 45 long before he was born. (We also saw this with Josiah. God had been planning for these events for many years!)

What modern day lessons have we learned from Chapter 1? For starters, Daniel shows us that the first battle is not how to make our hostile culture Christian, but is rather how we can continue to live as a Christian in a hostile culture. Yes, we must proclaim the gospel to all the world, but first we must be sure that we remain in God's grace ourselves. If we become absorbed in this pagan culture, then not only will we fail in the great commission, but we will fail to obtain our own reward. Daniel knew that first he must remain undefiled before he could ever lead others to believe in God.

Second, Daniel shows us how to interact with a culture that is hostile to everything that we hold dear — and that is a lesson we need to hear because that is the kind of culture in which we live. Our values and our beliefs are openly mocked and ridiculed. Almost any time a preacher is shown on television or in movies, he is soon revealed to be a sexually immoral hypocrite. We live in a nation that seeks to redefine that which God has defined — marriage — and labels as hate mongers any who stand opposed. In short, we live in a culture that calls good evil and calls evil good. What should we do? We can learn much from Daniel. He shows us how to live as Jesus told us how to live:

**John 17:14** — *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

**1 Corinthians 5:9-10** — *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortion-*

*ers, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*

**Matthew 10:16** — *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

**Matthew 10:22** — *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

Daniel — wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove! Daniel — one who endured to the end!

In Romans 15:4, Paul tells us that what was written before was written for our learning. He tells us in Galatians 3:24 that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. And so throughout our study our question should be what is the great schoolmaster teaching us with these events recorded for our learning in Daniel.

Daniel found himself at a crossroads in Chapter 1. The government, the authorities, the public, and most of his friends wanted him to compromise and defile himself. What to do? We know the path that Daniel took. Which path do we take when we have those “Daniel moments”? And we have them every day — most are not public, but we are tempted to compromise every day.

# LESSON 8

## CHAPTER 2

The second chapter of Daniel is one of the most remarkable and important chapters in the Bible. Before this chapter ends, the most powerful pagan in the world will lie prostrate before an exiled Jew. And before that happens, he will hear one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible — one that begins with his own kingdom and ends with God’s eternal and indestructible kingdom.

When it comes to understanding God’s plan for the church, Daniel 2 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. Few chapters in the Bible (Old or New!) tell us more about the church than Daniel 2. Daniel 2 is one of the “Church Chapter Two’s” — Psalm 2, Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, Joel 2, Acts 2, and Ephesians 2.

Daniel 2 covers world history from Babylon to Rome, and it provides the foundation for understanding the apocalyptic sections of Daniel that will follow. Daniel 7 will expand upon Daniel 2, especially with regard to the second and third kingdoms. Daniel 11 and 12 will expand upon Daniel 2, especially with regard to the second, third, and fourth kingdoms. These later chapters of Daniel will supply many details that are not mentioned here in Daniel 2.

**What is the message of Daniel 2?** One of the primary messages of Daniel (and especially of Daniel 2) is that God’s promises to Israel had not been forgotten. The

Gentiles (those outside of the covenant) were in charge, but one day (under the Messiah) the kingdom would be restored to the faithful remnant.

That was a message that Daniel and his fellow exiles needed to hear. If our understanding of this book would have had no meaning to its original readers, then our understanding is wrong!

### **Daniel 2:1-2**

**1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.**

The world's most powerful ruler has just assumed the throne — and almost immediately he is troubled by his dreams and can't sleep. God was trying to tell him something, and like most people, he found that troubling.

He calls all of his wise men to come and interpret the dream. Note that the term "Chaldean" is used here to denote a special class of wise men. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a Chaldean in the ethnic sense, but he was not a Chaldean in this more restrictive sense.

The Babylonians believed that indications of future events could be found in the skies, in bizarre births, in the shape of animal livers, and—as here—in dreams. The Jews agreed with only the last of those. God had spoken through dreams in the

past. He did so with Jacob, Abimelech, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, the baker and the butler, and Solomon. Numbers 12:6 and Jeremiah 23:28 suggest he spoke to all the prophets in dreams (but not to Moses that way).

Was Daniel already a wise man in the king's court or was he still in training? In 2:48, Daniel is made the chief wise man by the king, which may indicate that he had finished his training and was already classified as part of this group. But if this was the second year of the king's reign and if the training lasted three years, then doesn't that mean Daniel was still in training? Not necessarily. First, the first year of the king's reign was called the Year of Accession, with the first year of his reign actually being the second year. Also, according to Hebrew usage, a part of a year was reckoned as a whole. This would mean that the "three year" program could have lasted less than two years if it consisted of a full year and parts of two others.

However long the training lasted, Daniel was still very young when all of this occurred. He would have been only seventeen or eighteen, and possibly younger. He was not the old prophet with the long white beard that many people imagine when reading this chapter.

Sorcery and witchcraft were widespread in the ancient world and are severely condemned in the Old Testament.

**Exodus 22:18** — *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*

But they were still listening to them.

**Jeremiah 27:9-10** — *Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: For they prophesy a lie unto you.*

It remained a problem through the days of Malachi.

**Malachi 3:5** — *And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the **sorcerers**, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Witchcraft is also condemned in the New Testament.

**Galatians 5:20** — *Idolatry, **witchcraft**, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.*

**Revelation 21:8** — *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and **sorcerers**, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

That witchcraft is mentioned in the closing books of both Testaments tells us that it is a problem that never went away. In fact, witchcraft remains a problem to this day, not only with astrology and horoscopes, but with some environmental groups that have veered into the worship of nature. When I was teaching engineering at SMU, the theology school invited a witch to be a guest speaker at one of their seminars! I regret not having attended her lecture so I could ask for her thoughts on Exodus 22:18!

Ancient Babylonian “dream manuals” have been found that list historical dreams and the events that followed them. These wise men would have been very familiar with these very long volumes. But without the content of the dream, the experts had no way to interpret the dream. Their plan would have been to listen to the dream and then look its meaning up in their book — but Nebuchadnezzar has other ideas!

One of the dreams listed in the Babylonian “dream book” is the appearance of a god’s statue.

### **Daniel 2:3-6**

**3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.**

Some translations leave the impression that the astrologers spoke to the king in the Aramaic language, but the phrase “in Aramaic” is best taken as a parenthetical notation placed in the text to mark the change in the written language, because beginning in verse 4 and continuing through 7:28, the book of Daniel is written in the Aramaic language rather than the Hebrew language.



Although the diplomatic language of the empire was Aramaic, it seems reasonable to suppose that the wise men who lived in Babylon, regardless of their original nationality, would have addressed the king in the normal language of the city that presumably was Akkadian.

The Dead Sea Scroll copies of Daniel make this switch to Aramaic, which strongly suggests that the original was also written in two languages. Daniel is not unique in this regard. Other Aramaic sections in the Old Testament are Ezra 4:8–6:18, Ezra 7:12–26, and Jeremiah 10:11.

The Hebrew and Aramaic languages both belong to the Semitic language family and use the same alphabet. They look much the same when written down.

Nebuchadnezzar asked his advisors to interpret the dream that he had, and the advisors at first seem eager to do so. They ask him to tell them the dream that he had, and I am sure that they would have come up with any number of interpretations. They expressed no doubt regarding their abilities in verse 4.

Nebuchadnezzar, however, is no fool. He asks them to tell him both his dream and its interpretation. Suddenly their confidence vanishes!

The King James Version translates verse 5 to indicate that the king had forgotten the dream. (“The thing is gone from me.”) Most modern translations have understood this expression to be an adjective derived from a Persian loan word signifying “firm” or “certain,” whereas the KJV translators thought it was a verb derived from the root meaning “to go away.” Most scholars agree with the more modern translation, meaning “sure, firm, or certain.” The Revised Standard Version reads:

*The king answered the Chaldeans, “**The word from me is sure:** if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins.”*

Had the king forgotten the dream? He remembers enough later in the story to be able to confirm Daniel’s interpretation. But, of course, the King could have been re-

minged by Daniel, which then caused him to remember the dream. According to an ancient Babylonian omen, if a man could not remember the dream he saw then it meant that his personal god was angry with him.

Although some commentators believe that the king had forgotten the dream, this apparently was not the understanding of the wise men, who continued to plead with him to reveal it. Moreover, Daniel 2:1 states that the king “was troubled” by the dream, and that may suggest that he remembered the contents of what he had seen.

Verses 5 and 6 describe the consequences of their failure and of their success in relating and interpreting the king’s dream. Their failure would mean a horrible death.

The threat in verse 5 is that they would be “made into limbs.” The NIV translation that they would be cut into pieces is not correct — no verb for cutting is used here and no cutting instrument is mentioned. What the king had in mind was that their arms and legs would be tied to four trees that had been temporarily roped together. When the ropes were cut, the victim would be torn into four pieces. (He was going to turn each wise man into four wise pieces!)

This was no idle threat by Nebuchadnezzar, whose harsh treatment of King Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7), two Jewish rebels named Ahab and Zedekiah (not King Zedekiah; Jeremiah 29:22 says they were roasted in the fire), and Daniel’s three friends (Chapter 3) proved that he would have no qualms about carrying out this cruel threat against his counselors.

### **Daniel 2:7-9**

**7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8 The king answered and said, I**

**know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.**

The wise men do not think that the king is serious, so they ask him for the dream one more time. (Do they seem a little nervous to you?)

Compare the first request in verse 4 with the second request in verse 7.

**Verse 4** — *Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.*

**Verse 7** — *They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.*

Notice any difference? In the second request, the wise men don't start off by hoping that the king will live forever!

In verse 8-9, the king makes it very clear that he is serious, and he lets them in on his strategy. He accuses them of stalling and planning to lie to him. (Of course, they are stalling! They are repeating themselves in verse 7.)

He says that they were planning to wait until "the times change." That is, until the crisis has passed and the king has forgotten all about it.

Why would Nebuchadnezzar be so willing to dispose of his wise men?

First, their inability to acquire the necessary information proved that their power was limited and that they were not in touch with the gods as they claimed.

Second, ancient kings did not always trust their “experts.” On at least one occasion Sennacherib separated diviners into groups to reduce collusion and ensure a reliable interpretation of an omen.

Third, the king probably felt that the dream foretold some terrible disaster that was going to befall him. After all, Nebuchadnezzar had seen a manlike statue destroyed, which he likely associated with himself or his empire. He may well have felt insecure about his newly acquired kingdom, and he may have considered the destruction of the statue a divine omen to him that he and his empire were doomed.

Perhaps this led him to believe that someone was planning to assassinate him and take away his kingdom. With intrigue in the courts of that day common, such was a real possibility (two out of the next three Babylonian kings were assassinated).

Traitors may have been in his midst planning to overthrow his government at that very moment. Since a coup usually was perpetrated by the military or the court, the king may have wondered if some of these very wise men were plotting against him. Thus, he was not reluctant to rid himself of them.

### **Daniel 2:10-11**

**10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And it is a**

**rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.**

The wise men complain that no one could do what the king wanted. In fact, they say that no king has ever asked such a thing. (Indeed, not even Joseph before Pharaoh in Egypt was required to do this.)

In verse 10, they admit to the king (whether they know they are admitting it or not) that their profession is a fraud. This is definitely a lesson we need to hear today. Anytime we look for answers to our problems or answers about our future from someone other than God, we need to seriously consider our spiritual health.

The king, they say, isn't being fair. He is asking too much. Imagine, asking a fortune teller to tell someone's fortune! Nebuchadnezzar probably thought, and rightly so, that since these astrologers claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit world, they should be able to discover the dream and its interpretation from the gods.

These magicians make a very profound statement in verse 11: "there is none other that can shew it before the king, **except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.**" What they were saying was that only the gods could reveal someone's thoughts — and the gods were not here to do that. They did not dwell with men. What will the logical conclusion be when Daniel reveals the dream? (I imagine they later regretted these words!)

The Babylonians were famous for their astrology, but it could not help these "astrologers" in their time of need. Over a hundred years earlier, God had challenged the wise men of Babylon to deliver their nation from his power by their sorceries, spells, and counsel from the stars.

**Isaiah 47:12-13** — *Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.*

Not much had changed since Isaiah's day!

### **Daniel 2:12-13**

**12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.**

The king becomes upset when he realizes that his “wise men” are suffering from an acute lack of wisdom. In fact, he becomes furious and commands that they all be killed. (You would think that some of these fortune tellers would have seen this coming and have left town!)

Daniel and his friends, unfortunately, are numbered among this group, and their lives are now in danger from the king's edict.

It seems most likely that the wise men were being assembled for a formal execution and that the slaying of these officials was not yet in progress.

As we have said, it is possible that Daniel is still in school. If this were true, then Nebuchadnezzar must have ordered that all of those who were preparing to be wise men be killed as well.

There are partial parallels to this angry outburst and threat by Nebuchadnezzar:

- Saul massacred the priests at Nob (1 Samuel 22:13-19) because they had helped David.
- In secular history, a parallel exists in Darius's massacre of the Magi because one of them had usurped the throne.
- A closer parallel is Xerxes' beheading of the failed engineers who built a bridge that was destroyed in a storm.

### **Daniel 2:14-16**

**14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.**

Arioch arrives to take Daniel to death row, but Daniel talks him into taking him to the king instead. Daniel sees this death sentence as an opportunity! It sounded like

very bad news, but Daniel saw it as a gift from God and jumped at it. Christians should be eternal optimists!

We usually see the light at the end of the tunnel and think it must be an oncoming train. But if God is on our side, who can be against us? Daniel is a great example of optimism. And what is optimism if not faith? And, if so, what then is pessimism?

Daniel seems awfully confident in his abilities. Where did this teenager get such confidence? He knew the source of all wisdom. His confidence was not in himself but in his God!

The stage is now set to introduce King Nebuchadnezzar to the only true and living God. Also, we are about to see a theme that will last throughout the book: God is still in charge, he is still as powerful as ever, and he still loves and cares for his faithful followers.

This was true even after their temple had been burned, their city destroyed, and they had been dragged away in slavery. (This scene was occurring around 602 BC. The city would be destroyed in 587 BC.)

A clear message throughout Scripture is that things are not always as they seem! We must see things the way that God sees them.

The title used in verse 14 of Arioch is used in 2 Kings 25:8 and Jeremiah 39:9; 52:12 of Nebuzaradan, who carried out the destruction of Jerusalem. It is the title of an important Babylonian official. Its literal meaning is something like “chief butcher.” Hence the “king’s guard” consisted of the “executioners” of the king, and Arioch apparently was the chief executioner.

Did Daniel say the king’s decree was “hasty” in verse 15? The idea that this word meant “hasty” seems to derive from its use in 3:22 (Therefore because the king’s commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot). The root, however, denotes harshness or stiffness, so “harsh” here and “strict” in 3:22 are better translations than “hasty.”



Why did Daniel and his friends not know about the general order to execute all the wise men of Babylon? The text does not say. Their apparent isolation from the other experts may suggest that this story is set within the period of their three-year training. Jerome has suggested two additional possibilities:

When the king was promising rewards and gifts and great honor, they [Daniel and his friends] did not care to go before him, lest they should appear to be shamelessly grasping after the wealth and honor of the Chaldeans. Or else it was undoubtedly true that the Chaldeans themselves, being envious of the Jews' reputation and learning, entered alone before the king, as if to obtain the rewards by themselves.

Daniel responds calmly and with total confidence in verse 16 despite facing a death sentence! The whole scene reminds me of a favorite song: "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul."

### **Daniel 2:17-19**

**17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.**

Note that his three companions are referred to here by their less familiar Hebrew names.

The term “God of Heaven” is used almost exclusively in the captivity books. (Daniel uses it nine times, Ezra six times, and Nehemiah four times.) Why? When Judah turned from the Lord, Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw the glory of God depart from the holy of holies in the temple and leave the earth (Ezekiel 10-11).

What did Daniel and his friends do? They did not turn to astrology or crystal balls. Instead, they prayed. Daniel knows that they have only one recourse, prayer. Daniel was in total agreement with the magicians on this point — only God could reveal the thoughts of the king.

While no human being could ever tell the king the contents and interpretation of his dream, God can, and, in contrast to the beliefs of the Babylonians (2:11), there is a God (one God!) who dwells with men: Daniel’s God.

Notice that Daniel doesn’t do it all by himself, either. He asks them all to pray with him. Prayer is a team effort!

Prayer is where the action is. Any church without a well organized and systematic prayer program is simply operating a religious treadmill.

The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.

Here is a beautiful picture of four young men, still in their teens, united in prayer. This was a life-and-death crisis, and they pleaded with God to have mercy on them and to preserve their lives.

Some commentators think that Daniel and his friends prayed and then went to sleep (so as to have a dream revealing the king’s dream), but most likely they continued in prayer until God revealed the dream. A vision may be received when

awake (9:20-23) or asleep (7:1), and it is difficult to imagine that the young men had gone to sleep with an imminent death penalty hanging over their heads.

Notice that Daniel has already promised to answer the king — before he started praying for the answer. Again, Daniel knows that God will give him the answer that he needs. What confidence! What utter dependence on God!

The “mystery” or “secret” is revealed to Daniel during the night. The word “secret” occurs nine times in this chapter.

Ezekiel 28:3 using irony against the prince of Tyre told him “Behold thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that is hidden thee.” Who was Ezekiel referring to? Remember that if Ezekiel referred to Daniel then the late date theory falls in ruin.

# LESSON 9

Today's handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) is a little unusual — it contains a number of theories about Daniel 2, all of which are incorrect in at least some aspect. My purpose is to show you the sort of thing that comes up if you attempt to study Daniel using the Internet. We will discuss some of these errors in more detail as we proceed, but we can make a few points now.

If we ignore the time frame of the prophecies in Daniel, we will have no hope of determining their meaning. Many of the theories on the handout include events and kingdoms that are contemporaneous with our own time. Such has been the case with each generation — many have tried to map the prophecies onto events of their own time, and all have been mistaken. No one can say that he or she is living near the end because no one but the Father knows when that day will be. So when you see this giant statue mapped onto the European Union or onto the United States and Great Britain, that is an immediate clue that the interpretation has gone badly astray.

Likewise we should not read more into the vision than is warranted. Many of these incorrect theories base part of their interpretation on the ten toes of the statue. Yes, the toes are mentioned, and yes, there were likely ten of them — but the Bible does not use the number ten here. Likewise, some of the theories depend on their being two legs, and again there were likely two legs — but where is the number two mentioned in Daniel 2? If the ten toes had stood for the ten members of the European Union, and if the two legs had stood for Eastern and Western Rome (or for the Greek church and the Papal church), then wouldn't we expect to see the number ten and the number two mentioned in Daniel 2? We will see the number two

(Daniel 8:3) and the number ten (Daniel 7:7) mentioned in later visions, but we don't see them here.

Also, you will notice that some of the incorrect theories on the handout are premillennial. We will have much more to say later about premillennialism, but let's deal with one issue right now — does it matter? Does it matter what people believe about the end of the world? Does it matter if someone believes Jesus will reign on earth for 1000 years?

Carroll Osborn, the Carmichael Distinguished Professor of New Testament at ACU, wrote a book entitled *The Peaceable Kingdom* in which he grouped premillennialism among items that are just matters of opinion on which we should just agree to disagree. (On the same list he placed the issue of whether baptism is for the remission of sins or because of the remission of sins.) He is very badly mistaken. And you don't have to just take my word for it. Listen to someone who at one time was the leading premillennialist in the world, John Walvoord:

If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.

It does make a difference what we believe about this subject. The premillennialist doctrine has consequences that run counter to the very heart of the gospel.

Premillennialists teach that the Levitical priesthood is going to be restored during the millennium despite what we read in Hebrews 10:12, 18.

Premillennialists teach that bloody sacrifices for sin will be restored during the millennium despite what we read in Hebrews 10:17–18 and Galatians 2:21.

Premillennialists teach that the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 is not yet in force and that it will not come into force until the millennium despite what we read in Luke 22:20, Hebrews 9:15, and 2 Corinthians 3:5–6.

Premillennialists deny the complete Lordship of Jesus. They insist he is not presently ruling over Israel despite what we read in Ephesians 1:21, Revelation 2:26–27, and Psalm 110, which is quoted many times in the New Testament as having been already fulfilled.

It matters very much what we believe on these topics, and the premillennialists will be the first to agree that it matters. The only ones who don't believe it matters appear to be professors in our Christian colleges, and I suppose their undiscerning students.

We owe a great debt to Foy E. Wallace for keeping premillennialism out of the Lord's church. Foy Wallace (then the editor of the *Gospel Advocate*) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) in 1933 about the 1000 year reign. He was largely responsible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church. Some in the church today have an "anti-debate" attitude seemingly for fear we might offend someone by our knowledge and conviction, but I am certainly glad that was not the attitude back when Foy Wallace was preaching (and when the church was growing!). Christians of his generation were much more interested in pulling perishing people into the boat than they were about not rocking that boat — and many of us are here worshipping in spirit and truth today because of the faithful gospel preaching that occurred in that day.

**Daniel 2:20-23**

**20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.**

Before rushing off to the court, Daniel prays again—this time not a petition for help, but a prayer of thanksgiving. Daniel did not forget to thank God for answered prayer, which is another lesson for us. We should always remember to be grateful for God's blessings (Luke 17:17-18). Here Daniel expresses his gratitude to God for answering his prayer and saving him from certain death.

This is one of the most beautiful prayers of the Bible.

This little psalm is a model of thanksgiving. No word is merely repetitive. ... The symmetry and beauty of the poetry make their own contribution to the praise of God.

In his prayer, Daniel highlights two aspects of God's character that play a pivotal role in this chapter, and indeed throughout the book.

**God is powerful.** Nebuchadnezzar himself is a king because God is the One who "sets up kings and deposes them" (2:21).

**Isaiah 46:9-10** — *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

God controls history. God controls nature. God created the universe and keeps it operating. God is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign of the universe. Yet at the same time God knows our every thought and our every dream, and God counts the hairs on our head. We worship a God who maintains galaxies yet knows when a sparrow falls.

**God is wise.** We like to think we are wise, but any wisdom we have comes from what God has told us or given us. Although we have certainly progressed in our knowledge of the world, any honest scientist will tell you that we still know virtually nothing about how it all works. Remember what Paul wrote:

**1 Corinthians 1:25, 30** — *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ... But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*



In verse 21, Daniel touches upon a major theme in the book: It is God who changes times and seasons, who removes and sets up kings, and who gives wisdom and knowledge. Despite how things might look, God is in control. His people are in exile only because he wanted them to be in exile and because he allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take them into exile. When God no longer wants them to be in exile, then they will return — and in fact that will happen soon under King Cyrus.

Men today look at the world, see a mess, and say that God is dead. But throughout the Bible, we see that God is always working — especially when things look the worst. Was the world in bad shape before the flood? Yes. Was God in charge? You bet he was! (Psalm 29:10 tells us that God sat enthroned over the flood. God was reigning while it was raining!)

From a human perspective, could things have looked any worse than they did at the cross? Yet God was at that very moment working out the culmination of a plan that he had formed before the foundation of the world!

We must always try to see things the way that God sees them! Daniel did, and you can see what the result was. We need spiritual vision, and that comes from a spiritual diet of and a spiritual focus on God's word.

Note that Daniel was not a fatalist. He knew that men could make real decisions and affect history. Daniel never lost his free will. Daniel did not see himself and the Babylonians as puppets.

Verse 21 says that God sets up and removes kings.

**Psalm 2:1-4** — *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*

Does God just set up the good kings, or does he set them all up? Although we may have trouble understanding it, the Bible says that God sets them all up and we must honor and show respect to them all as Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar. But, of course, at the same time we must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29), which Daniel also did. Daniel was polite and respectful to the one who had deported him because he knew that whatever power Nebuchadnezzar had was given to him by God.

Listen to what Paul and Peter have to say about this:

**Romans 13:1-5** — *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

**1 Peter 2:13-17** — *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of malicious-*

*ness, but as the servants of God. 17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*

Were Peter and Paul just speaking of good Roman emperors? How could they be! There were no good Roman emperors! These men were imprisoned and killed by Nero, who was the emperor when Romans and 1 Peter were written!

On the other side of the coin, it is certainly permissible to pray that evil rulers be removed. The Christians did this in Revelation, and God answered their prayers by judging the same Roman emperors that Christians were commanded to honor.

Are we then supposed to honor a ruler who we think is wicked? Well, read 1 Peter 2:17 again. The answer is clearly yes. Any attack against authority is ultimately an attack against the ultimate authority — God.

In verse 23, Daniel called God the God of his fathers. Daniel trusted God because he knew what God had done. As Isaiah 28:16 says, God is a tried stone. He has never forsaken his people, and he never will.

Notice that Daniel is absolutely sure that he knows the king's dream even before he tells the king about it. God told him what the dream was, and Daniel knew that what God told him was true. There was no doubt in his mind at all. Daniel was thanking God in advance for his deliverance—the king had not yet spared his life!

In verse 23, Daniel said that God had made it known “to me” what “we” asked of him. Again, we are reminded of the power of combined prayer. Daniel asked his friends to pray with him, and he did not forget their contribution when he thanked God.

The “deep” things and “hidden things” both denote matters inaccessible to or beyond human knowledge.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** — *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong*

*unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

One has written that:

The great existential questions of life and death continue to be insoluble to the worldly wise. Without divine revelation, there is only conjecture and subjective opinion. Only in the God of Scripture is ultimate truth to be found.

Note that the prayer concludes on a more personal note, as Daniel uses the personal pronouns “I,” “my,” “me,” “we,” “us,” and changes from the third person “he” in verse 21 to the second person “thou” in verse 23.

We see a similar shift in Psalm 23: “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul” ... “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Our God is a personal God. In earthly kingdoms, everyone knows the king, but the king does not know everyone. In God’s kingdom, everyone knows the king — and the king knows everyone!

### **Daniel 2:24-25**

**24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I**

**have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.**

Incredible, isn't it? All by himself, Arioch (the Chief Butcher) has managed to solve the king's problem. Notice how he takes all of the credit in verse 25. (This may have something to do with the reward mentioned back in verse 6!)

Arioch's complete confidence in Daniel is interesting. He shows no doubt that Daniel will be able to interpret the king's dream. Daniel must have already made quite an impression on Arioch.

Think for a moment the situation that Arioch would be in if Daniel failed to interpret the dream! The executioner would likely have faced execution himself.

We are surrounded by Ariochs — people who are focused only on pleasing their worldly masters. Are we making the same sort of impression on the Ariochs in our lives that Daniel must have made on this Arioch?

Daniel's concern for others is shown in verse 24. His first words to Arioch were, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon."

Calvin devotes some time to justifying Daniel's concern for the magicians. After all, these wise men were teaching falsehood and advocating idolatry; in Calvin's opinion, they deserved to die, even if not for the reason that motivated Nebuchadnezzar to condemn them to death.

Calvin finally appeals to Daniel's sense of honesty to justify his letting the idolaters off the hook. Daniel would have preferred their death, but not for unjust reasons.

But I think what we are really seeing here is Daniel's love for his enemies, which is not just something we find in the New Testament.

**Exodus 23:4-5** — *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. 5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*

### **Daniel 2:26-30**

**26** The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? **27** Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; **28** But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; **29** As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. **30** But as for me, this secret is not re-

**vealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.**

Notice that Daniel reminds the reader of his Babylonian name but then resumes using his Hebrew name.

And what does Daniel do? Does he come before the king and say, “I have solved your problem. I know all of the answers. Look what I can do.” No. Daniel’s response, unlike Arioch in verse 25, is not self-seeking. Daniel does not even mention himself! Instead, Daniel gives God all the glory.

Rather than say look what I can do, Daniel says look what God can do. The power was not within Daniel, and Daniel knew it. God had told him what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed — and absent that message from God, Daniel would have been just as clueless as the magicians were.

Again, we are faced with the stark truth about astrology, magic, and fortune telling. In verse 27, Daniel says that it does not work: “The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king.”

Notice how Daniel speaks to Nebuchadnezzar with great boldness. Keep in mind that Daniel was under sentence of death, yet he takes this opportunity to effectively tell the king that all of his gods are worse than useless. Instead, he tells the king that there is a God who reveals mysteries — and it is not one of Nebuchadnezzar’s false gods. If it were, then presumably one of the king’s magicians could have told him the dream.

Daniel's answer to the king in verse 28 is that "there is a God in heaven." That's a very good answer, isn't it! We should use that answer more often ourselves.

Why don't you believe in evolution? Because there is a God in heaven! Why are you against gay "marriage"? Because there is a God in heaven! Why do you live the way you do? Because there is a God in heaven!

"That there is a God in heaven, as against man-made gods and deified men, is the supreme theme of the book, even as it is the cardinal principle of the Bible."

Note also the contrast that Daniel draws between the false Babylonian gods and the one true God. The king's gods were helpless, but there is a God in heaven who is all powerful.

We need to stop for a moment and consider the phrase "latter days" in verse 28. To what does it refer?

It could simply mean the future. That is, God was going to tell Nebuchadnezzar what would happen later. This seems to fit well with the parallel passage in verse 29 ("To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter").

It could refer to the latter days of Jewish history, which ended as far as God was concerned, first at the cross, and then with finality in AD 70, and we know from Matthew 24 that some of Daniel's prophecies reached that far into the future.

Premillennialists teach that it refers to a time yet future; to a short time of tribulation preceding the "second coming" of Christ. But does this make sense? Is this what Nebuchadnezzar would have thought? "Well, I guess Daniel is about to tell me about what will happen in about 2600 years when the Chinese suddenly decide to invade the Holy Land and toss out the Arabs and fight against the troops sent by the Antichrist who will be living in Rome at the time..." Remember — if our understanding of this book lacks any message for the exiles who first heard it, then our understanding is wrong.



A survey of how the phrase “the latter days” is used in the Old Testament reveals that the expression denotes the future, but the exact time in the future must be determined by the context. Sometimes the phrase is used to speak of events in the near future.

**Deuteronomy 31:29** — *For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you **in the latter days**; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.*

**Jeremiah 23:20** — *The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: **in the latter days** ye shall consider it perfectly.*

Here we will be given a clear historical context — the vision will begin with the present king and the present kingdom, and it will end with the third kingdom that follows (Rome). If we ignore or twist that time frame, then there is no hope that we will properly understand this vision. As Jesus reminded his listeners in Matthew 24:15 in speaking of the book of Daniel — “Whoso readeth, let him understand!”

### **Daniel 2:31-35**

**31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of**

**iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.**

At last the contents of the dream are revealed. What follows is one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible.

Can you imagine the king's astonished reaction when Daniel started describing his dream? Can you imagine the astonishment (and relief!) of his wise men? (Daniel had just saved their lives. You will see later how they repay him.) Not only could Daniel reveal the *meaning* of the dream, he could reveal the *content* of the dream — something the wise men had just said had never been done, had never been asked of anyone, and never could be done! And here was Daniel (an exiled teenager!) doing it!

What did the king see in his dream? He saw a single great image of a man consisting of four parts:

- A head of gold
- Breasts and arms of silver

- Belly and thighs of brass
- Legs of iron with feet of iron and clay

But the king also saw something else — he saw a great stone. The stone smashes into the feet of the statue, which is obviously the weak link. This stone was cut without hands — that is, this stone was not of human origin. This stone smote the feet of the image and turned the whole thing into dust that was carried away by the wind.

Many commentators make a big deal out of the toes of this image. In particular, many make a big deal out of the ten toes on this image. But the toes are not mentioned at all when Daniel first describes what the king saw, although they are mentioned later in verses 41-42. Nowhere does Daniel mention “ten toes.” Certainly, we might reasonably infer that there were ten toes, but if there were some special significance to the number ten, you would think that Daniel would have mentioned the number ten.

After destroying the image, the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The nations that fight against God are also sometimes called mountains. In Jeremiah 51:25, Babylon is called a destroying mountain. The Babylonians pictured the earth as a huge mountain. In fact, they called the earth “E-kur,” which means “Mountain House.” So it is very fitting that the eternal kingdom would be pictured as a huge mountain. In Revelation 8:8, Rome is pictured as a mountain that is cast into the sea. Recall what Jesus said:

**Mark 11:23** — *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

This very thing happened in Revelation! I think that Jesus had Rome in mind when he said this.

**Daniel 2:36-38**

**36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.**

We are not left to figure this vision out for ourselves. Daniel tells us exactly what the figures mean (and God told Daniel what they mean).

Daniel makes it very clear to King Nebuchadnezzar right from the start who is in charge here — and it is not the king! Nebuchadnezzar had been given his rule and his kingdom by God. Any power, might, or glory that he had was a gift from God.

This was a very bold thing to say to King Nebuchadnezzar! Had Daniel said that to the king under other circumstances, he would likely have been killed on the spot. But after hearing his dream, Nebuchadnezzar was now in the mood to listen to whatever Daniel had to say!

# LESSON 10

When we ended last week, we had just read verses 36-38 of Daniel 2, and we noted how bold Daniel was in telling Nebuchadnezzar that whatever he had had been given to him by God.

As we study the interpretation of the king's dream, we will see that the four parts of the image represent four kingdoms. Why were four *distinct* kingdoms represented by a *single* figure? What relationship does Babylon have with Rome, for example?

The answer to that question is easy if we look at the history of these four kingdoms. They together represent a sustained revolt of organized human society and government against the will of God. Babylon set the tone for the kingdoms that followed. Indeed, Babylon was another name for Rome in the New Testament.

**1 Peter 5:13** — *She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark.*

**Revelation 18:2** — *And he called out with a mighty voice, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!*

Did that revolt end with ancient Rome? Hardly! It continues to this day, but that does not mean that the kingdoms of today are being discussed in Daniel's vision. We must keep the time frame of Daniel in mind. Daniel was not just talking about kingdoms that were hostile to God (there have been many and there are many today), but rather Daniel was talking about four such kingdoms that existed in a specific order during a specific period of history, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and ending, as we will see, with the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. If Daniel was speaking about kingdoms of today, then the eternal kingdom was not estab-

lished in the first century and may not have been established yet at all — both of which we know to be false.

King Nebuchadnezzar was himself the head of the gold. We will see in a moment that the head of gold also denoted his kingdom, Babylon. The king and the kingdom were inseparable — and that was especially true of Nebuchadnezzar. He was a true despot. The king may have initially taken this as a compliment, until he remembered what had just happened to the head of gold! It was turned to dust along with the rest of the image.

In fact, in 539 BC, Babylon fell to the Persians (as Daniel will soon witness firsthand). This downfall takes us to the second kingdom that King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.

### **Daniel 2:39-40**

**39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.**

Remember what the wise men said to the king in verse 4? “O, King, Live Forever.” Notice what Daniel says to the king in verse 39 — “And after thee.” Nebuchadnezzar was just a man — he was mortal, and one day he would face the appointment of Hebrews 9:27 that awaits us all. And Daniel has the courage to remind the king of

that fact. Daniel was not afraid to speak truth to power — and he was just a teenager! Where did Daniel get that courage? We all know the answer to that question.

That the head represented both the king and the kingdom is shown in verse 39 — “After **thee** shall arise **another kingdom.**” In fact, the remaining three parts of the image are all kingdoms — the “another” kingdom in verse 39, the “third kingdom” in verse 39, and the “fourth kingdom” in verse 40. Note that there is not a fifth earthly kingdom mentioned here — which makes it surprising that so many theories about this vision include a fifth earthly kingdom.

Also, note that these kingdoms will be world empires (they will rule over the whole earth, which is just an idiom for a very large kingdom, close to one that rules over the known world). This vision showed the Jews (and should show us as well) the folly of trusting in nations whose doom is already sealed. Even the great Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, would soon be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13:19). There is but one eternal kingdom — and that is very good thing for us to remember as well if we are ever tempted to place our trust in the earthly kingdoms of this world.

The second kingdom was Medo-Persia, which overthrew the Chaldeans about 70 years after this vision. (It is during this second kingdom that Daniel as an octogenarian will be thrown to the lions.)

Why is this second kingdom said to be “inferior” to the first? After all it defeated the first kingdom. Wouldn’t that mean that it was superior? The Hebrew word for “inferior” means “beneath you.” Thus, it may simply mean that the second kingdom was beneath the first in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw.

A second possibility is that the second kingdom was inferior to Nebuchadnezzar in the sense that its leaders did not share the same absolute and unfettered power that Nebuchadnezzar did. Later in 6:12 we will see that a Persian ruler lacked the power to annul a law once he had made it. From this “despotic standpoint” each of these empires was inferior to the ones above it.

The identification of these kingdoms with inferior metals—silver, bronze, iron—implies gradual decline from the kingdom represented by gold.

While human beings operate on the idea that we get better and stronger with time, God’s vision undercuts our understanding, informing us that the opposite is true. Gold gives way to silver, which then becomes bronze, iron, and a weak mixture of clay and iron. A statue that starts out in grandeur and beauty ends in weakness. Indeed, the expression “feet of clay” has become an idiom in our language for a point of weakness in an otherwise strong person or institution.

Also, while the great statue appears man-made, the great stone is not made with human hands. What obliterates these human kingdoms is *not* another human kingdom!

As we mentioned earlier, Daniel does not consider the Medes and Persians to be separate kingdoms, but instead explicitly considers them to be a single unified kingdom — which agrees with what historians tell us. This empire began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC and died ten years later. His older son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt and died in 523 or 522. He was succeeded by an upstart who claimed to also be a son of Cyrus. This upstart was quickly assassinated, and Darius (not the Mede) came to power and established a new dynasty. This empire ruled for about two centuries, but was never able to completely subdue the Greeks on its western border. Darius’ son invaded the Greeks but was defeated, and his successor tried to set the Greek city-states against each other.

The third kingdom that would rule over all of the earth was Greece, which conquered the Persians under Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great invaded Persia in 334 BC and completely defeated it in 331 BC. At one point, Alexander ruled an area from Yugoslavia to India, the largest empire of ancient times. After Alexander died young in Babylon in 323 BC, his kingdom was split into four pieces ruled over by his former generals. We will see some remarkable prophecies about the Greeks and Alexander the Great when we get to Chapters 8 and 11.



**Daniel 8:8** — *Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.*

**Daniel 11:3-4** — *And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.*

Now you see why the liberals hate this book so much! If they take the early-date view, then they must admit that the Bible is from God — and this they cannot do!

Eventually most of the Greek empire was annexed by Rome, the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. By 146 BC, Greece was permanently subdued. Egypt became a Roman province in 31 BC.

The fourth kingdom is described in greater detail than either the second or third. The fourth kingdom has greater strength than the previous kingdoms, so it will crush and break all the others (v. 40). But since clay and iron do not bond together (v. 43), this kingdom is (or, more precisely, will become) intrinsically weak. Clay and iron don't mix well together, and this fourth kingdom will likewise try to unite elements that will not coalesce. The fourth kingdom (strong as iron) was Rome, which overthrew Greece.

The mighty Roman empire started out as a dusty village on Italy's Tiber River in the 8th century BC. Rome was always fortunate in that it confronted its enemies one at a time rather than all at once. That way it was able to grow and strengthen with each victory. By 270 BC Rome had control of the Italian peninsula, and begin to look elsewhere for new worlds to conquer. After the Punic Wars and the defeat of

Carthage, Rome turned its sights toward the East — attacking Philip V's Macedonia and Antiochus III's Seleucid empire (both successor states of Alexander the Great).

Without giving any of the intervening details, let's jump ahead to consider a question that has intrigued historians for centuries: Why did Rome fall in AD 476? There are many theories.

I have a book entitled *The Fall of Rome: A Reference Guide* that lists 260 different theories about the fall of Rome including:

- the decline of agriculture (22)
- failed tax policies (25)
- soil exhaustion (48)
- a general decay in intelligence (76)
- lead in the diet of upper class women and long hot bathing by men (86)
- a large infusion of alien races (97)
- slavery (108)
- deforestation (112)
- climate change (114)
- malaria (121)
- rats and fleas (154)
- unions and legislation on prices and wages (179)
- crudity (230)

Gamaliel Milner, in his 1931 book *The Problem of Decadence*, wrote:

The general impression that we receive from the story of Rome's fall is that vast cosmic forces were at work which frustrated the counsels of the wisest statesmen, and rendered nugatory the skill and valour

of the greatest generals; ... if ever in human history we can discern the working of destiny or inevitable fate, it is here.

Whatever method we use to date the fall of Rome (and we will consider several), two things are certain: (1) Rome fell, and (2) Rome fell because God determined that it would fall — and God did so centuries before that fall occurred. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar why Rome fell! Listen to what he says starting in verse 41.

### **Daniel 2:41-43**

**41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.**

This fourth kingdom would in some sense be a divided kingdom — clay mixed with iron. In verse 42, the “toes” of the image are finally mentioned, but the toes alone do not cause the weakness in the fourth kingdom. The weakness is caused by the clay that is mixed with the iron. The number ten is not mentioned at all.

Was all of this true of the mighty Roman empire? Did Rome have feet of clay? Yes! Revelation 13 and 17 also tell us that Rome fell partly because of inner strife and disintegration. And this fits very well with what history also tells us about Rome.

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* gives four primary reasons why Rome fell: external invasion, inner decadence, inner strife, and the injury of time and nature.

The inner strife was due in part to the client kingdoms that Rome set up to rule the borders of its empire. Here is how Michael Grant in his book *The History of Rome* describes the client kings.

The client kings were tied to the service of Rome in order to defend its frontiers and serve as listening posts to the outside world. In return, they were supported by the Romans against internal subversive movements and allowed a free hand inside their own countries.

Grant describes what eventually occurred with these client kingdoms.

In 382, Theodosius I took the revolutionary step of allowing whole German tribes to reside in Imperial territory as separate, autonomous, allied or federate units committed to serving in the Roman army, though under the command of their own chieftains. Thereafter the practice continued and increased, until such federates became a regular and widespread feature of the life of the Empire.

Did these groups contribute to the fall of Rome? The Visigoths were the first group to receive federate status, and they sacked the city of Rome in AD 410 marking the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.

Why did Rome fall? Because God wanted it to fall. Because the first century Christians prayed that it would fall. The fall of Rome was a divine judgment. The church triumphed. Its bitter enemy Rome did not.

By the way, don't fall into the trap of thinking that Rome became a Christian nation under Constantine. Rome did much more damage to the church by embracing it than it had by persecuting it. Yet still the one true church survived, and the Roman Empire did not.

Why are the legs of iron, but the feet of iron and clay? As we move down the statue from the head to the feet, we are moving forward in time. The head is Nebuchadnezzar, the legs and feet are Rome, with two other kingdoms in between. That the legs are iron and the feet are iron and clay just means what we already know — that Rome began its history with great strength but that strength declined over time until Rome finally disintegrated. We do not need to look for a fifth earthly kingdom to find the feet of clay as many commentators do. All we need to do is study the history of the fourth kingdom — Rome.

One issue we will need to address as we move through the later prophecies in this book is not whether the fall of Rome is in view — but *which* fall of Rome is in view.

The imperial period of ancient Roman history began in 27 BC when Octavian, later called Augustus, became the first emperor of Rome and ended in AD 476 when the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was overthrown. The Roman empire continued in the East for another 1000 years until the invasion by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century.

In addition, there were two falls in the first century — not of the Roman empire but of the ruling dynasties of Rome (and we have already seen how Daniel sometimes uses “kingdom” to refer to the “king” and vice versa). The Julio-Claudian Dynasty included the first five emperors of Rome (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero) — and that dynasty fell with the death of Nero in AD 68. Nero was a terrible persecutor of God's people. The Flavian Dynasty included the three emperors (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian) who followed the three Civil War emperors (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius). Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, and Domitian was another terrible persecutor of God's people — in fact, he was

called Nero Redivivus (Nero Reborn). Both of those persecuting dynasties fell in the first century.

So how do we know that the four kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome — and not one of the many other theories that has been proposed?

Daniel 2:38-42 tells us that four earthly kingdoms are portrayed by the giant statue. The iron feet and toes mixed with clay in verse 41 is not a fifth kingdom. Verses 41-42 tells us that the mixture of iron and clay is intended to tell us something about the fourth kingdom — that it will be divided, partly strong and partly broken. “The kingdom” in verse 41 is the “fourth kingdom” in verse 40. It is not a fifth earthly kingdom.

So, we have four earthly kingdoms that need to be identified — and this is not a difficult task. The Bible is its own best commentary, so let’s let the Bible answer this question.

Scripture identifies the first and the fourth kingdoms with absolute certainty. The Bible effectively drives two tent pegs into the ground that cannot be moved.

The first tent peg is right here in Daniel 2. Verse 38 identifies the head of gold as Nebuchadnezzar himself. That is, the first kingdom is Babylon under Chaldean rule.

The second tent peg is found in the New Testament. In Matthew 24:15 Jesus told his listeners that they were to look for the fulfillment of a prophecy by Daniel, and Matthew 24:34 confirms that that fulfillment would occur during their lifetimes. History confirms that the events Jesus spoke about occurred in AD 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build a church that not even the gates of Hell would prevail against, and we see that church established in Acts 2. Hebrews 12:28 confirms that the church is the immovable kingdom of God. When was that kingdom established? During the days of the Roman empire. If we believe Jesus, then the fourth kingdom must be the Roman empire of the first century.

So, if the first kingdom is Babylon and the fourth kingdom is Rome, what are the second and third kingdoms? Which kingdom displaced the Chaldeans from Babylon? Medo-Persia, and so that must be the second kingdom. Which kingdom displaced Medo-Persia and was later displaced by Rome? The Greeks, and so they must be the third kingdom.

Why was Babylon defeated by Persia? How did Alexander the Great become so great so quickly? How did the Greeks defeat the Persians? How did Rome become so powerful? How did Rome defeat the Greeks? Historians argue over those questions — but not Bible believers. Those events occurred because God made them occur. They were all part of his plan to bring about and establish his eternal kingdom in the first century. Secular historians recognize the peculiar nature of these events, but absent faith in God they are unable to explain them.

Is there anyone on earth who is so narrow-minded or uninquisitive that he could fail to want to know how and thanks to what kind of political system almost the entire known world was conquered and brought under a single empire, the empire of the Romans, in less than fifty-three years— an unprecedented event? (Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis, quoted by Robin Waterfield in *Taken at the Flood: The Roman Conquest of Greece*.)

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of castle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq? (*Rome and Her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War*)

How indeed!

## **Other Theories About the Four Kingdoms in Daniel 2**

### **Theory 1: Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece**

We have already dealt with this theory. It is the view put forth by those who think that Daniel was written around 168 BC. This view must be rejected for several reasons. Daniel did not believe or teach that an independent Median empire defeated the Chaldeans. This view mistakenly suggests that Daniel thought that the Messianic kingdom would be established before the end of the Grecian kingdom (before 31 BC). Jesus quoted Daniel in Matthew 24 (during the days of the *Roman* empire) and applied a prophecy from Daniel to the near future.

### **Theory 2: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece (under Alexander), the Successor States.**

This view must also be rejected. Daniel never treated the Greek kingdom as two independent kingdoms during and after Alexander. In fact, Daniel distinctly treated the two periods as two phases of the same kingdom. (In Daniel 8, we have one goat with four horns.)

### **Theory 3: Rome is the fourth kingdom, but it is split into an ancient part and a future part that has not yet arisen.**

This view must also be rejected. It requires one to believe that the eternal kingdom (the church) was not established in the first century. What does the Bible say?

**Mark 1:15** — *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.*

**Mark 9:1** — *And he said to them, Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.*



**Matthew 16:28** — *Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Jesus said the time was fulfilled in the first century. The premillennialists say that it was not. This view relies heavily on the “ten toes” in the image, but the number ten is never mentioned in Chapter 2! We will have much more to say about this view as we proceed through the book.

# LESSON 11

## **Daniel 2:44-45**

**44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.**

Verse 44 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, and certainly one of the most important linking passages between the Old and the New Testaments. In many ways the Old Testament slowly pulled back the curtain on the mystery of the gospel that was revealed in the New Testament. We see glimpses of the gospel and of the eternal kingdom all throughout the Old Testament — and perhaps nowhere in the Old Testament do we learn more about the church than we do here in verse

44. We will first complete our discussion of Chapter 2, and then we will circle back for an in depth look at the kingdom of verse 44.

Here in Daniel 2 we see a stone that destroys the image (while it is still a stone) and then becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Yes, the meaning of the image was revealed to Daniel by God — but Daniel was already familiar with some of this imagery from his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Compare the king's dream with the exalted mountain we read about in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 2:2-3** — *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

So when was this mountain exalted? When was this eternal kingdom established? Let's look at what God tells us. Here in verse 44, we are told that the kingdom would be established in the days of "these kings."

The fifth kingdom (an eternal kingdom — not a fifth earthly kingdom) would be set up in the days of "these kings." Which kings? Either all of the kings of the vision (meaning that the kingdom would be set up before all of those kingdoms passed away) or, more likely, the kings of the fourth empire.

Any interpretation that does not have the fifth kingdom set up during this time frame is not a correct interpretation.

Many elaborate interpretations exist that try to have the fifth kingdom set up some time in the future. Generally, they have some sort of revived Roman empire that pops up some 2000 years after the first Roman empire. This is not what Daniel said! Can we be more specific than just the days of those kings? Yes, Isaiah 2, which we just read and which uses the same imagery that we see in Daniel 2, is quoted by Jesus in Luke 24.

**Luke 24:46-49** — *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

They were personally witnessing the fulfillment of Isaiah 2! And when would they be endued with the power from on high? Read Acts 2 — which describes the very day that eternal kingdom was established — the eternal kingdom of Isaiah 2 and the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2.

And what can we learn from the fact that it started out as a stone and then became a mountain that filled the earth (verse 35)? First, it was no less powerful when it was just a stone — that stone destroyed Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and mighty Rome! Second, we can learn the same thing Jesus would later say in Matthew 13.

**Matthew 13:31-32** — *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Third, we have from this another indication of the timing of these events — they occurred when the church was in its infancy.

Is the rock Christ or is the rock a kingdom? Many commentators say that the rock is Christ, and there is a sense in which that is true. It is the same sense in which the head could represent both Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Christ the king and the kingdom of Christ cannot be separated.

We see Jesus as a rock in Psalm 118.

**Psalm 118:22** — *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*

That verse is quoted in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, and 1 Peter 2:7. We also see Jesus as a rock in Isaiah.

**Isaiah 8:14** — *And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.*

**Isaiah 28:16** — *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

Those verses are quoted in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6, 8. We may even see a reference back to Daniel 2 in the description from Luke 20.

**Luke 20:18** — *Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

But verse 44 is very clear on this point — the focus in this vision of the rock is on the kingdom. Verse 44 says that God shall set up a kingdom. The reason why many commentators say that the rock is Christ is because they don't want to admit that God established an eternal kingdom in the first century. (How can you have a king without a kingdom?) Verse 44 leaves no doubt — this rock is a fifth kingdom.

The first phrase in verse 44 is vital to understanding this vision because it provides a time frame. Without a time frame we get the “Nostradamus effect.” That is, any statement can be made to appear prophetic if we can choose the fulfillment from all of history. For example, Nostradamus says that a political leader and his brother will be killed. So we move that statement along the time line until it matches something and we conclude that Nostradamus was speaking about the Kennedy’s. But are the Kennedy’s the only match to that vague prediction. Of course not! A prophecy without a time frame is not worth much unless it is extremely detailed.

Matthew 24, for example, is often considered a difficult chapter, but when you consider the time frame in verse 34 the interpretation is simple.

The book of Revelation includes a time frame. It contains things that were to shortly come to pass after the time it was written. (This time frame is mentioned four times in the book!)

Verse 44 is our time frame regarding the fifth kingdom.

### **What is this fifth kingdom?**

It was not of human origin. It began during the Roman empire. It outlasted and overthrew the Roman empire. It is an eternal kingdom from God. What else could it be? The fifth kingdom is the church.

What do we learn about the church from this vision?

**The church is not a mistake or a fallback plan.** It has been a part of God’s plan right from the start. Premillennialists teach that Christ came to earth the first time to set up an earthly kingdom but was unable to do so because the Jews rejected him. As a “Plan B” he decided to set up the church until he could return a second time to set up an earthly kingdom.

The premillennialists have a severe logical problem with their interpretation of Daniel. First, they say that Jesus wanted to create an earthly kingdom in the first century, but failed to do so. But they also say that Daniel talks about the delayed

kingdom. Now, how could it be true that the need for a delayed kingdom was unexpected, yet Daniel predicted it? Thus, they teach that the church is the result of a failed plan. JESUS CHRIST DID NOT FAIL IN ANYTHING HE DID. EVERYTHING WENT EXACTLY ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN. Is the church a mistake? Listen to Paul:

**Ephesians 5:25-27** — *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

**Acts 20:28** — *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.*

This fifth kingdom is the church of Jesus Christ, and it will demolish and outlast any human organization just as Daniel says it will. This includes every man-made organization that calls itself a church. And this brings us to another important point that we learn from Daniel about the church.

**The church is not a divided kingdom.** There is one and only one stone in this image. The kingdoms shatter into pieces, but the stone does not. There is one church and only one church. This is not a popular theme these days, but it is the truth. This message may not make us very popular, but we must continue to proclaim it. The church is unique and distinctive.

**Ephesians 4:4-5** — *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism.*

**1 Corinthians 10:17** — *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

**Colossians 3:15** — *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*

**John 10:16** — *And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.*

If God had wanted two churches, he would have made one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. Listen to how Ezekiel describes this fifth kingdom:

**Ezekiel 37:22-27** — *and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.*

The church cannot be split! God has set up an eternal kingdom that cannot be divided. If someone tells you that the church has been split, don't believe them. There is one church and it cannot be divided.

**The church is not of human origin.** In verse 34, we see that this stone was cut out by no human hand. This stone is not from man. The church is not a product of the Restoration movement. Many of us are Christians because of the preachers who came out of the Restoration movement, but the church predates the Restoration movement by 1800 years. The church is not a denomination. Read what Paul had to say when denominations first started to form:

**1 Corinthians 3:11** — *For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

**The church is powerful and eternal.** It completely demolishes and replaces its opposition.



**Is this how we see the church?** Here is how God sees the church:

- It is eternal.
- It is powerful.
- It is beautiful.
- It is not man-made.
- It is more important than any earthly kingdom.
- It is the focus of all human history.
- It is aggressive and active. It is not changed by history; it changes history.

Is that how we see the church?

Or do we see ourselves as just a footnote? As powerless to affect the world as it rushes by? As just another man-made religious group? As something that is swept away by the kingdoms of this world rather than the reverse?

One of the buildings I saw in Rome was St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican Square. It is the largest church building in the world, 614 feet long, 145 feet high in the aisle, and soaring to 435 feet inside Michelangelo's dome (which is itself 139 feet across). The basilica has enough interior space to accommodate 60,000 visitors. It is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

That is how men view the basilica with *physical* eyes — but how does God see it? How should we see it with our *spiritual* eyes? Shouldn't we view it as God does?

More importantly, how does God see us? How do we look when viewed by spiritual eyes?

The Bible answers that question for us. God sees his church for what it is — the indescribably beautiful eternal kingdom of Christ that will sweep away all of the

man-made kingdoms of this earth. As beautiful as St. Peter's cathedral is to those who visit it, the church of Christ is infinitely more beautiful.

If we want to be the people God wants us to be, our first step must be to see ourselves as God sees us. How can we be powerful if we ourselves as powerless? How can we be the beautiful city of God if we ourselves quite differently?

Yes, it may sometimes look as if human institutions and man-made kingdoms are in control — but they are not. God is in control, and God's kingdom will outlast and destroy every man-made organization that has ever been or ever will be — be it a man-made government or a man-made church.

One of the other things I saw in Rome was the ruined palace of Claudius, one of the first century Roman emperors we will meet later in the book of Daniel. Claudius likely thought his kingdom would be eternal, but it was not. Those first century dynasties are long gone, but the eternal kingdom of God remains.

I fear that we sometimes suffer from an inferiority complex — but how is that possible in light of verse 44?

**Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

THAT'S US! DO WE BELIEVE IT?

### **Daniel 2:46-49**

**46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet**

**odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.**

The end of Chapter 2 is a truly remarkable scene! One commentator has written:

The despot who but an hour before had ordered the execution of all his wise men was prostrating himself before this foreign captive from a third-rate subject nation! Even though he opposed the wisdom of the Chaldeans, this absurd monotheist [Daniel, as the Babylonians no doubt saw him] had somehow found the right answer.

The King is likely very relieved. He is the head of gold, and although trouble is coming from this stone and from the second kingdom, it is apparently a long way off. His reaction may be like that of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:19) when he heard that, despite hardships to come to his descendants, his own reign would be characterized by peace and security.

Did Daniel approve of the king's worship of himself? No. How do I know? The Bible doesn't say one way or the other, but I know Daniel. After all he has said, do you really think that he could have approved of someone falling down to worship him? He had already said that God had interpreted the dream and not himself.

We must understand verse 46 in the light of verse 47, where Nebuchadnezzar praises the power behind Daniel. God is "God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets." Daniel is honored because of what his God has done, not because of what he has done — and I think that must be how Daniel saw it. Otherwise Daniel would have reacted as Paul did at Lystra.

Was the king "converted" in verse 47. No, and we will soon see evidence of that. Nebuchadnezzar was saying the right things, but only because he had just seen a clear and undeniable demonstration of God's power. True worship is in spirit and in truth. The king spoke the truth, but the spirit was not there.

Did the king make Daniel great? No. God made Daniel great. Nebuchadnezzar just noticed it.

The king fulfilled the promise he made in 2:6 and loaded Daniel down with gifts and royal honors, in addition to making him governor of the capital city, and ruler over the wise men. (Don't you imagine they loved that!)

Did Daniel forget his friends? Not at all. How easy it would have been to forget about his prayer partners, but Daniel did not, as we see in verse 49. Their new positions will lead to the jealousy of native officials, which results in the conflicts in Chapter 3.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There is a lot of confusion about the kingdom of God. *What* is it? *Where* is it? *When* is it? Some equate the kingdom with Heaven, and they tell us that we are not yet in the Kingdom. Others equate the kingdom with a Premillennial Kingdom on earth that will not appear until Christ returns.

Some tell us that God intended to establish his kingdom in the first century, but things didn't go quite as planned, and so God postponed the kingdom, and in its place we have the church.

Some even tell us that the Sermon on the Mount describes how we will eventually live in this yet future kingdom, and that the Sermon on the Mount really does not apply to us today, but it might be a good idea to start living that way now anyway. You see this view in books such as *Kingdom Living Here and Now*.

Some commentators say that the kingdom and the church are the same thing. Other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are different but overlap. Still other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are completely separate things.

Some say that Jesus is reigning today. Others say that Jesus has the right to reign now, but he is not exercising that right today.

There is a lot of confusion about the kingdom.

There is also a lot of confusion about the church.

When the New Testament was written, there was (as today) only one church, but the difference is that the one church in New Testament times was not (as today) surrounded by countless man-made religious organizations also calling themselves churches.

Men today approach churches as they would food in a cafeteria line — take what looks good, and if you don't like it, just take something else the next time you go through the line.

Ravi Zacharias (author of *The Real Face of Atheism*) tells the story of a man who was stranded all by himself on an island for 30 years. When he was finally discovered after all that time alone, his rescuers noticed that the man had built three huts on the small island. When asked what they were for, he said, "One hut is where I live. The second hut is where I go the church." But what about the third hut, they asked? What is the third hut for? "That hut," he said, "is where I used to go to church."

Whatever else we can learn from the Bible about the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2:44, one thing we know right from the start — there is only one eternal kingdom discussed in that verse. While we can move from kingdom to kingdom on this earth, we cannot move from one eternal kingdom to another eternal kingdom. Either we are in that one eternal kingdom or we are not. Either we have been delivered from the power of darkness and been translated into the kingdom of Christ — or we remain in the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). (And for those that believe the kingdom has yet to be established, notice the verb tense that Paul used in Colossians 1:13!)

As members of the Lord's church, our job is to cut through this confusion.

We know that God is not the author of confusion. Neither should God's people be the source of any confusion.

If we leave people confused and wondering what we are saying, then we have not done what we need to do in proclaiming God's word. Our job is to bring clarity rather than confusion.

How do we bring clarity? By our focus on the Bible. That is the only way to bring clarity to religious confusion.

Our goal is to look at some clear facts about the kingdom of God lifted right out of God's word. Each fact is based on a key verse about the kingdom.

These are things all who believe God's word should be able to agree about. We can think of them as firmly planted tent pegs that we can use to assist us and guide us as we explore other issues about the kingdom. And they are good starting points if we want to teach someone else about God's kingdom.

Of course, we must be careful lifting verses out of the Bible. Bibliomancy describes the practice of opening the Bible and selecting a verse at random to use as a guide for your life. We need to be careful we don't study the Bible that way. Each verse has a context, and we need to make sure we understand that context as we interpret that verse.

The term "kingdom" is used in many different ways in the Bible.

- In Matthew 8:12, Jesus refers to faithless Jews as the children of the kingdom.
- In Matthew 12:26, Jesus tells us that Satan has a kingdom (Another eternal kingdom of sorts! But not one you want to be a part of!)
- In Matthew 12:28, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God had already appeared.
- In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that the kingdom would appear in the first century.
- In Luke 21:31, we are told that the kingdom would come with the destruction of Jerusalem.
- In Revelation 11:15, we find that the kingdom would come with the judgment of Rome.

Are these statements contradictory? Of course not. They all are just speaking of either different kingdoms (such as Satan's kingdom) or different aspects and manifestations of the kingdom of God.

In one sense, the kingdom appeared when the king appeared. This is the sense that the word is used, for example, in Luke 17:21 — “for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” Jesus said that prior to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.

In another sense, the kingdom appeared when the king came in judgment against Jerusalem and against Rome. Those judgments were specific manifestations of the king coming in judgment.

In yet another sense, the kingdom will appear when the king comes again to claim his own at the final judgment.

In Matthew 6:10, in what we often call the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said that we should pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” I have heard people say that we should not pray that way today since the kingdom already came in Acts 2. But I think that is taking a much too narrow view of the kingdom. Yes, the kingdom came when the kingdom was established in Acts 2. But the Bible also tells us that the kingdom came when Jesus came in judgment in AD 70 — and the great final judgment of the world has not yet come. And Matthew 12:28 tells us that the kingdom came when the king appeared — and Hebrews 9:28 tells us that our great King will appear a second time. So, yes, we can continue to pray, “Thy Kingdom come!”

## **The Kingdom of God**

Why should we study about the Kingdom of God?

A central theme of Jesus' teaching (and some say *the* central theme) was the kingdom of God. He spent much time talking about it, and many of his parables were directed toward it.



**Matthew 6:33** — *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

The word “kingdom” appears 342 times in the KJV. Of those appearances, over a third (127) are in the gospel accounts. By comparison, the word “church” appears three times in the gospel accounts, and the word “grace” appears five times in the gospel accounts. Clearly, the kingdom was very important to Jesus. Shouldn’t it then be of the utmost importance to us?

### **Fact #1: The Kingdom of God is Universal (Psalm 103:19)**

God is King over all because God is the creator of all.

The first reference to a kingdom in the Bible is an indirect reference and occurs in Genesis 1. I say indirect because it does not mention the kingdom directly but instead shows God giving man dominion over a part of his kingdom.

**Genesis 1:26** — *Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*

God must have dominion to give us dominion.

The first key point to understand about the kingdom is that God is king, and the entire universe is included within his kingdom. If we ever find ourselves saying that God is king over some things or some people and not king over others, then we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. God is king over all creation, and all creation is subject to him.

David tells us that God is king over the whole earth.

**Psalm 47:2** — *a great King over all the earth.*

**Psalm 103:19** — *The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.*

**Psalm 145:13** — *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

**Psalm 29:10** — *The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever.*

That last verse is important because it tells us that God is still King even when the world is in a mess. Some people today argue that Jesus cannot be reigning as King because the world is in such a mess. But wasn't the world in a mess at the time of the flood? God reigned (and rained!) as king then. Isaiah 37:16 connects God's kingship with his having made heaven and earth.

These verses from the Psalms were written during the monarchy of Israel. That is, King David tells us that God is king. Why is that important? Because it tells us that God did not abdicate his kingship when he set up earthly kings over Israel. God reigned then and he reigns today as King over all the earth.

How God reigns may change, however. At one time, God reigned through King David. Indeed, the throne of David and the throne of Solomon are also called the throne of God. Today God reigns through the Messiah.

Even during the monarchy of Israel, God reigned over all the kingdoms of the earth. Did you ever wonder why Jonah went and preached to Nineveh? Nineveh was full of Assyrians, not Jews. God reigned over Assyria just as he reigned over Israel.

From this we have a very important truth about the kingdom of God — God is king over all without regard to whether they accept him as king. God rules the righteous, God rules the ungodly, and God rules the indifferent. God has a special relationship with the righteous, but he rules over all.

Transgressing the royal law of God does not mean that God is no longer your king. It just means that you are no longer his faithful subject.

In the same way today, Christ is king over His church — but he is not king just over the church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has all authority in Heaven and on earth. Jesus reigns over the entire universe and everything and everyone in it.

**Colossians 1:16** — *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

How could Jesus not be everyone's Lord and King? Jesus is both Lord of all and King of all. That is what it means when he said to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

**1 Timothy 6:15** — *Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.*

# LESSON 12

## **Fact #2: Israel Became a Special Kingdom Within the Universal Kingdom of God (Exodus 19:5-6)**

Israel became a special kingdom within a kingdom.

Moses recognized that God was king (and therefore had a kingdom) at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. In Exodus 15:18, Moses looked at the dead bodies of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and he declared that God was the eternal king.

**Exodus 15:18** — *The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

Yet Israel was not yet a kingdom in Exodus 15. This changed in Exodus 19:5 when God began to view Israel as a separate kingdom that was special to him (long before King Saul was placed on the throne).

**Exodus 19:5-6** — *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*

Here in chapter 19, we see God promising to enter into a special kingdom relationship with Israel.

God was not giving up any sovereignty. He was not reducing the size of his kingdom. Indeed, he affirms in verse 5 that “all the earth is mine.” He was simply entering into a special relationship with Israel.

Although God reigned over the entire universe as king, God chose a special people, and he called that special people a kingdom. They became a kingdom within a kingdom. We are going to see this happen again later in our lesson.

**Fact #3: God Promised to Establish an Eternal Kingdom and He Told Us When He Would Do So (Daniel 2:44)**

Although Israel was a special kingdom of God, God promised that there would one day be another special kingdom. (We will learn in a moment how these two special kingdoms are connected.)

As the earthly kings of Judah and Israel descended into wickedness and rebellion, the prophets began to speak of the kingdom of God in future terms.

Although God is always king and always exercises his kingship, the prophets said there would be a time in the future when the kingdom of God would be manifested among his people in a special way.

**Isaiah 24:23** — *Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.*

**Zechariah 14:9** — *And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be — The LORD is one, And His name one.*

We see this most clearly in Daniel 2:44.

**Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Something else we learn from Daniel 2 is that this eternal kingdom would not be made with human hands. Daniel 2:45 describes that eternal kingdom as “the stone [that] was cut out of the mountain without hands.” Jesus told us the same thing.

**John 18:36** — *My kingdom is not of this world.*

As did the writer of Hebrews.

**Hebrews 12:28** — *Let us be grateful for **receiving** a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*

The world is full of man-made religious organizations — none of them could possibly be the eternal kingdom promised in Daniel 2 because that kingdom was not made by human hands.

#### **Fact #4: God Made a Covenant with King David Regarding the Kingdom (Psalm 89:3-4)**

God made a covenant with King David that is still in force today.

Psalm 89 is a crucial chapter in our study of the kingdom.

**Psalm 89:3-4** — *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.*

This covenant is called the Davidic covenant. It is separate from God’s covenant with Abraham, and it is separate from the Mosaic covenant.

The prophets spoke of a day when a son of David would sit on the throne of David and the Mosaic covenant would NOT be in force!

In Zechariah 6:9-13, the prophet placed a crown on the High Priest and then referred to him by the Messianic title “the Branch” (Isaiah 11:1). Thus, he pictured a son of David (from the tribe of Judah) as the High Priest.

Yet, under the Mosaic covenant the High Priest could be only from the tribe of Levi. (See also Hebrews 7.) Thus, the picture in Zechariah 6 could not become a reality while the Mosaic covenant remained in place.

Similarly, in Psalm 110:1-7, we see that Messiah would be “priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Likewise, this passage could not be fulfilled while the Mosaic covenant was in force — and yet Acts 2:29-36 tells us that it was fulfilled in the first century.

Premillennialists argue that the Mosaic covenant will return during the so-called 1000 year reign of Christ. And yet, Hebrews tells us that Christ is our High Priest. Jesus cannot be our High Priest under the Mosaic covenant.

We also see from Psalm 89 that the Davidic covenant had a punitive element.

**Psalm 89:30-34** — *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

History tells us that for a long time the house of David did not rule over the kingdom of Israel. Instead, the kingdom was first divided, and then the two halves were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. But the prophets looked to a restoration of that former kingdom of David.

**Amos 9:11** — *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*

Why did the prophets look for a restored kingdom of David? Because the covenant with David remained in force even while sons of David were no longer ruling. That is what Psalm 89:34 tells us. The Davidic covenant remains in force today.

### **Fact #5: Jesus Reigns as King Today Under the Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:31-33)**

Jesus reigns today under the Davidic covenant.

Isaiah and Luke tell us that Jesus would rule a kingdom while sitting on the throne of David.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** — *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*

**Luke 1:31-33** — *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

And John tells us in Revelation that Jesus was ruling with Davidic authority during the first century.

**Revelation 3:7** — *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that*



*is true, **he that hath the key of David**, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.*

But while Jesus sits on the throne of David in the restored kingdom, his reign is universal in scope. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus rules the Universe from the throne of David. Every person on earth today (including every Arab in the Middle East) is ruled by a son of David!

A second thing we learn from Luke 1 is that the eternal kingdom is a restored kingdom. Luke 1:32 tells us that Jesus did not get a new throne. He received the throne of his father David. His kingdom is a restored kingdom (“and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David”).

**Amos 9:11** — *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*

Those are phrases of restoration!

**Acts 2:30** — *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*

**Acts 15:15-16** — *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.*

The kingdom of the gospels is a restored kingdom! It is not a new kingdom, but is instead the Davidic kingdom of Psalm 89. There is certainly much about this kingdom that is new (as Jesus said repeatedly), but the kingdom itself is a restored kingdom.

We hear a lot today about the restoration movement, but that was not the first restoration involving the church. The first century church itself began as a restoration movement! (Luke 1:32, Amos 9:11, Acts 2:30, Acts 15:15-16)

### **Fact #6: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel was Established in the First Century (Mark 9:1)**

Daniel told us very clearly *when* the eternal kingdom would be established. As we saw earlier, Daniel writing 600 years before the fact, told us that in the days of the Roman empire God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

Jesus also told us very clearly *when* the eternal kingdom would be established. The New Testament did not waste any time in telling us when the eternal kingdom would be established. Jesus began his ministry by announcing that the time for the kingdom was at hand.

**Mark 1:14-15** — *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Later, Jesus told his listeners that some of them would be around to witness the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

**Mark 9:1** — *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*

In fact, the Bible tells us the very day when the eternal kingdom was established. Acts 1:6-8 is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the kingdom.

**Acts 1:6-8** — *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore*

*again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*

Although this passage is one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the Kingdom, we often discount it. Why? Because for some reason we have concluded that the apostles were confused and were still looking for an earthly kingdom in Acts 1.

There is no reason to believe that the apostles in Acts 1 misunderstood the nature of the kingdom — and there is every reason to conclude that they knew by that time exactly what type of kingdom was about to be established.

**Luke 24:45** — *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

The next four verses in Luke 24 quote Isaiah and point directly to the events in Acts 2. Do we really think the apostles were confused about that in Acts 1 after having had their minds opened by Jesus in Luke 24?

**Acts 1:3** — *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

They had just had a 40 day class on the kingdom taught by the master teacher himself! Further, Jesus' answer gives absolutely no indication that the apostles were mistaken in their view about the kingdom.

So, if we assume that the apostles actually knew what they were talking about in Acts 1, what then can we learn about the kingdom from that passage?

Verse 6 confirms that the kingdom is a restored kingdom, and it tells us that the kingdom had not yet been restored. The apostles spoke of it as a future event.

Verse 8 tells us how we could know when it was restored. Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Remember that Mark 9:1 told us the kingdom would come with power, and remember that the Holy Spirit fell with power upon the apostles in Acts 2.

**Luke 24:49** — *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

Acts 1 is a bridge between the gospel accounts and the establishment of the kingdom. The eternal kingdom spoken of by Daniel 600 years earlier was established in Acts 2 on the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection.

### **Fact #7: The Eternal Kingdom Spoken of by Daniel is the Church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-19)**

So far we know that God established an eternal kingdom in the first century. But we also know that Jesus built a church in the first century. How are the church and the eternal kingdom related?

Jesus clearly identifies his church as the eternal kingdom in Matthew 16.

**Matthew 16:16-19** — *Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

One commentator wrote “Jesus preached the kingdom, and the church came” as if the two were unrelated. Yet here Jesus identifies his church with his kingdom.

There is no indication of a change in subject between verses 18 and 19. The church in verse 18 is the kingdom in verse 19.

We know this as well from Acts 2. It was there that the church was established, and it was there that Peter unlocked the door to the eternal kingdom by preaching the first gospel sermon. The eternal kingdom is the church of Christ.

If you are using this list of facts to teach someone about the church, you may get some push back when you get to this one. How can you say the kingdom is the church of Christ only? What about the Methodists, the Baptists, the Catholics, etc. etc.?

That question is a teaching opportunity! You could refer to my car as the car of Eric. You could refer to my house as the house of Eric. You could refer to my iPhone as the iPhone of Eric. Look again at Matthew 16:18 — Jesus said, “I will build my church.” Jesus owns a church. We can refer to it as the church of Christ. That is all we mean by the phrase “church of Christ.” We mean nothing more by it. It is the church that belongs to Christ.

What is it about the phrase “church of Christ” that causes such controversy? When we see “house of Chloe” in 1 Corinthians 1:11 do we agonize over whether to capitalize “house”? How about the blood of Zacharias in Matthew 23:35, the mouth of David in Acts 1:16, the shadow of Peter in Acts 5:15, and the household of Narcissus in Romans 16:11? Don’t those phrases just mean Zacharias’ blood, David’s mouth, Peter’s shadow, and Narcissus’ household? Why can’t we just take “church of Christ” to mean Christ’s church? We know from Matthew 16:18 that he has one. Isn’t that exactly how the phrase is used in the Bible — churches of Christ in Romans 16:16 and church of God in 1 Corinthians 1:2? Those are phrases of ownership!

How many churches does Christ own? The Bible tells us of only one. Matthew 16:18 mentions only one. And that church is sometimes called the body of Christ in the

Bible — how many bodies does Jesus have? Only one. Daniel 2 mentioned only one eternal kingdom.

Hebrews confirms that the church is the eternal kingdom. At the end of Hebrews 12, the author describes a kingdom that had already been received, and he describes it in the same way that Daniel described it in Daniel 2.

**Hebrews 12:28** — *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*

Here is how Foy Wallace described it:

Daniel's kingdom is indestructible. Paul's kingdom is immovable. If they are not one and the same thing, how can Paul's kingdom be moved to let Daniel's kingdom begin?

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the church cannot be moved or shaken, and that it is received by man — not created by man. These are the same two things that Daniel told us about the eternal kingdom 600 years earlier.

Daniel also confirms that the eternal kingdom is the church.

**Daniel 7:13-14** — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

Notice that the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is pictured as going to the Ancient of Days, not coming from the Ancient of Days. Daniel 7 is describing the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts 1 — not the return of Christ at the end of the world.

And the kingdom in verse 14? That kingdom is the church that was established in Acts 2. It is the same eternal and indestructible kingdom that Daniel told us about in Daniel 2 — the one that Daniel told us would be set up during the Roman empire. It is the same immovable kingdom that we see in Hebrews 12. It will not pass away; it will never be destroyed.

That eternal kingdom is the church of Christ; the Lord's church; the one body. God said that he would establish it, and he said when he would establish it. And God did what he said he would do! How could any Bible-believer reach any other conclusion than that the promised eternal kingdom is the church that Jesus built and that was established in the days of the Roman kings?

Like Israel, the church (the eternal kingdom) is a kingdom within a kingdom. Jesus has all authority and reigns over the Universe from the throne of David as the King of kings. Yet, the church (the eternal kingdom) consists only of those who are in God's favor. Those in rebellion against God are in his universal kingdom, but they are not in the eternal kingdom; they are not in the church. They are in God's universal kingdom because God created them, but they do not enjoy a special relationship with God.

### **Fact #8: There are Conditions for Entry into this Eternal Kingdom (John 3:3)**

God has established conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom.

**John 3:3** — *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

We enter the universal kingdom of God with our first birth. We enter the special kingdom within a kingdom with our second birth.

In Acts 2, those who heard the first gospel sermon wanted to know what they had to do to be saved. They were asking Peter what they had to do to enter this eternal

kingdom of Jesus Christ — his church. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. There are conditions for entry into the eternal kingdom — but entry is open to all who will obey their Lord and King.

Notice that Peter did *not* tell his listeners in Acts 2 that they needed to make Jesus Lord of their life or crown him King. In Acts 2:36, Peter told them that Jesus was already their Lord! And in Acts 2:30, Peter told them that Jesus was already their King! They needed to obey his gospel (Acts 2:38), not to make him Lord and King, but because he is already both Lord and King!

**Fact #9: Christians are Today in the Eternal Kingdom (Colossians 1:13)**

God adds people to the church when they obey the gospel, and the church is the eternal kingdom.

**Acts 2:47** — *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

**Colossians 1:13** — *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

**1 Peter 2:9** — *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

The church of Christ in Matthew 16 is the kingdom of Christ in Colossians 1:13. If you have been added to the church of Christ, then you have been added to the eternal kingdom of Christ. They are one and the same.

Is it possible to be saved outside of the church of Christ? If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the body of Christ. If so, it is possible to be saved while outside of the promised eternal kingdom. When people are saved they are added by God to his church. How then could any saved person possibly be outside of the



church? Are those in the church of Christ the only people who are saved? Yes, of course they are! The only reason anyone has trouble with that statement is that they are thinking of the church of Christ as just another denomination.

But what if there is a group of Christians somewhere who read the Bible, do what it says, but call themselves the church of God? They are just as much the church of Christ as we are. And we are just as much the church of God as they are. The church of Christ is not our name; it is our description. And that description applies to any group of faithful Christians who follows God's word.

The church of Christ is the church that belongs to Christ. It is the body of Christ. It is the church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16 and that was established in Acts 2. It is the church to which God adds people when they are saved.

There is no lost person inside the church, and there is no saved person outside of the church.

### **Fact #10: One Day the Eternal Kingdom will be Delivered up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)**

Despite what countless premillennial preachers have taught, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is not returning to set up a kingdom. Here is a crucial passage in our understanding of the kingdom:

**1 Corinthians 15:24-28** — *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ... 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

We are told here that the kingdom of Christ that began soon after his resurrection will experience a transition at the final resurrection. At that time, the eternal kingdom will be delivered to God.

Notice that verse 25 tells us that Jesus is reigning now — not that he will start to reign at some point in the future. When the eternal kingdom is delivered to God, Jesus will cease to reign as the Messiah, and he will start to reign instead as part of the Godhead (“that God may be all in all” in verse 28).

When Jesus comes again it will not be to set up a kingdom (as many teach), but instead will be to deliver up or hand over to God an already existing kingdom. Jesus already has an eternal kingdom — one purchased with his own blood — he does not need another one.

It is critical to recognize the continuity of the story of the kingdom from Genesis to Revelation. In Genesis, we discovered that God rules over the Universe as its King and Creator. In Exodus, God made Israel to be a special kingdom within a kingdom. As we read in Psalms, God made a covenant with David that is still in force today. Jesus began his earthly ministry by announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. That kingdom was established in Acts 2. (We read about it in Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, and Joel 2.) Today, God is reigning over the Universe through Jesus, the Messiah, who reigns under the Davidic covenant.

Those who are in God’s favor are part of a restored kingdom, which is the promised eternal kingdom of Daniel 2. Although established with power in Acts 2, it was established as a restored kingdom, with Jesus reigning on the throne of David. This eternal kingdom is the church of Christ in Matthew 16.

At the end of time that special eternal kingdom, the church, will be delivered to God, and those outside the eternal kingdom will be eternally lost.

## Conclusion

Perhaps if we called the church the kingdom more often, it would help us see the church as God sees the church.

It is often said that Revelation was written to help us understand what heaven looks like even though we have never seen it. But is that really the case? I think that, instead of describing heaven, Revelation 21 and 22 are describing the church here and now. If so, then God is not describing something we can't see, but rather God is describing something we can see (the church) — and he is telling us that we are not seeing it right!

We are not seeing it as the beautiful, golden city of God that it is. The final chapters of the Bible are giving us God's view of his church!

Do we see the church as the eternal kingdom not built with hands that will sweep away all of the kingdoms of the earth? Do we see it as the immovable unshakable indestructible kingdom of Christ? Or do we see it as a footnote, as insignificant, as powerless in the great tide of history?

God ends the Bible by telling his people to open their eyes! He wants us to see the church as it really is! The church of Christ is the beautiful golden city of God shining forth the light of Christ in a world filled with darkness and despair. That is what the church was in Acts 2, that is what the church was during the Roman persecutions, and that is what the church is today. Perhaps our own limited view of the church is holding us back from being what God wants his church to be!

We have looked at ten facts about the kingdom. Let me end with an eleventh fact: Whether you are in the eternal kingdom or out of the eternal kingdom is the only thing that ultimately matters in this life.

We all live in the universal kingdom of God, but not everyone is in the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2 and Acts 2. That eternal kingdom is the most valuable thing that a

man could ever find or hope to find. Isn't that what Jesus told us in the kingdom parables of Matthew 13?

**Matthew 13:44-46** — *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

Is the kingdom worth all that you have and all that you are? Yes, and in fact, it demands it! It must be our one goal and our one focus.

**Matthew 6:33** — *Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*

Our proper understanding of the kingdom is one more reason why we are distinctive and unique in a world that is awash with man-made churches. The church of Christ is not a man-made church; it is the eternal kingdom made without hands. And nothing is more important today than being in that kingdom.

# LESSON 13

One of the points I made in the last lesson was that the eternal kingdom established in Acts 2 was a restored kingdom. As I said, there was certainly much about that eternal kingdom that was new, but there was also an aspect of that eternal kingdom that was not new — Jesus did not get a new throne. Instead, Jesus reigns from the throne of David under the unconditional Davidic covenant of Psalm 89 — and the Bible speaks of that reign as a restoration of the Davidic throne.

**Acts 15:15-17** — *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.*

Those verses are speaking about the church, and particularly about the unity of Gentile and Jewish Christians in the church. Notice the language of verse 16 — I will build again that which is fallen down; I will build again the ruins; I will set it up. That is language of restoration; not language of creation. God is building something up that had fallen down. What was that thing? The Bible tells us — it was the throne of David. That is the aspect of the eternal kingdom that was restored. Luke 1:32 tells us the same thing — “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”

When I say that the eternal kingdom of Acts 2 is a restored kingdom, this is all I mean by that statement. It is just another way to look at the kingdom, and possibly

one that we have not considered before. (Jesus showed us the kingdom from many different angles: mustard seed, pearl of great price, etc.)

Another way to approach the issue is to start with the question in Acts 1:6 — “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Notice that verse 6 actually uses the word “restore.” In Acts 1:6, we are faced with a threshold question — was that a good question or a bad question? I think the evidence suggests it was a good question:

- The apostles had had their minds opened by Jesus to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45).
- Jesus had just spoken to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God for 40 days (Acts 1:3).
- Jesus’ answer in Acts 1:7-8 gives no indication that the apostles were wrong — but only that it was not for them to know the time when it would occur.
- As we have already seen, there is a sense in which the kingdom was a restored kingdom, and in fact Peter will mention the throne of David in the next chapter (Acts 2:29-30).

So if Acts 1:6 was a good question, what can we learn from it?

First, we can infer from verse 6 what Jesus told them about the kingdom during those 40 days. If they are asking when the kingdom will be restored, then it seems very likely that Jesus had told them that the kingdom was going to be restored.

Second, if verse 6 is a good question, then we know that in some sense the kingdom is a restored kingdom. In fact, verse 6 says it would be restored to Israel. What had Israel lost? What needed to be restored? Israel no longer had a son of David on the throne, and that had to be restored to fulfill the unconditional promise in Psalm 89.

That restoration (the restoration of the throne of David spoken about by the prophets and confirmed in the New Testament) happened in Acts 2. That is what Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8 and in Luke 24:49.

## CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, we discover what it means to take a stand for the Lord and to refuse to compromise with the gods of this world. We also meet three young men who are truly profiles in courage.

Two of the central themes of this book are the absolute sovereignty of God and his love for his people. God is our loving king. The apocalyptic sections of Daniel will portray these attributes of God with signs and symbols. In this chapter (as well as in Chapters 5 and 6) we have historical demonstrations of these attributes.

As with Revelation, the book of Daniel is a book of assurance. God is telling his people that despite what they might think, they have not been forgotten. We must see the book in this context if we are to understand it properly.

In Chapter 2, God made known his great **wisdom**. Here, he will reveal his great **power**. Chapter 3 in this way will again support the overarching theme of the book of Daniel: In spite of present appearances, God is in control! That is a good lesson for all of us.

### **Daniel 3:1**

**1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold,  
whose height was threescore cubits, and the**

**breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.**

The king makes a giant golden image and sets it up before the people. Daniel does not inform us whether the image was of a god or of the king himself, and commentators differ on that question.

The gold of this statue links this event with the dream in Chapter 2 in which the king was the head of gold. Perhaps this link is a clue that the statue was indeed of the king, though historians tell us that Mesopotamian kings rarely presented themselves as gods, and we have no other evidence that Nebuchadnezzar ever did so. Also, if the king considered himself divine, then why build a statue of himself for people to worship when he was there in person to be worshiped? More likely perhaps is that the statue's likeness was of one of Babylon's gods, probably the principal god, Marduk.

Notice that it did not take long for Nebuchadnezzar to forget those newly found religious insights that we saw at the end of Chapter 2.

Of course, like all polytheists, he probably felt that the Jews should be capable of having multiple loyalties and worshiping multiple gods. The Babylonian's polytheism is very strange to us. But our monotheistic view would have been just as strange to them. The idea of "one true God" was not something they understood.

When men create a religion, they create many gods. We see it over and over again in history. That the Jews worshiped one God is an indication that their religion was not created by man, but was instead received by man from that one true and living God. If Israel had dreamed up their religion, then they (like all of their ancient neighbors) would have had many different gods, as in fact we see them doing when they departed from God to serve false gods and idols.



**Deuteronomy 6:4** — *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.*

That verse was revolutionary! Unheard of in the ancient world! And fast forward to Ephesians to see the importance of that revolutionary verse to us:

**Ephesians 4:5-6** — *One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

There is one God. We need to stop and reflect on that more often. The only reason we know there is only one God is because that one God revealed himself to mankind long ago.

The similarity between this image and the one in Nebuchadnezzar's dream seems to be more than a coincidence. Recall that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in his dream. If the image was of the king himself then it seems he was not satisfied with being just the head—he wanted to be the whole image! Out of all that Daniel told him, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have only remembered the statement “You are the head of gold.” (We also have our favorite verses...)

Perhaps the king was saying to Daniel's God, “OK. Here is the image. Now where is your big stone?” (Daniel's prediction that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be replaced had probably not set too well with him.)

Nebuchadnezzar's plan was a very common one: He intended to boost his own political power through the use of religion. We see this happen today when politicians espouse religious views when running for office that are quickly forgotten once that office is obtained. A characteristic of idolatry is that the idol serves the worshiper to achieve the worshiper's aims.

How large was the image? It was 60 cubits tall and 6 cubits wide. At 18 inches per cubit, that means the image was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. The height is about the same as the date-palms that still grow in the plains of Iraq (90 feet), and it was almost as slender, which means it looked more like an obelisk than a traditional

statue. Rising to a height of roughly a nine-story building, and expanding to a width of nine feet, the statue was enormous, but it may have looked more like a totem pole.

Why 60 by 6? We have already mentioned that the Babylonian number system was base 60 (unlike our own base ten). Also, when you study Revelation, you find that six has a symbolic meaning. The number seven denotes perfection and completion, and the number six denotes something that is hopelessly short of perfection. In Revelation, the beast of Rome (a new Babylon) was given the number 666. Rome, like Babylon, thought it was great and powerful, but it was hopelessly short of perfection. The numbers here are actual measurements, but the symbolism may apply nevertheless, and, if so, then in Revelation we may have a symbolic link with the literal measurements found here.

Liberal critics see the size of the image as a problem, claiming that the disproportionate proportions would have made the image look preposterous. Too tall? The colossus at Rhodes was taller (70 cubits compared to 60 cubits). Perhaps the image was on top of a large pedestal. Evidence for such a base may have been discovered by the French archaeologist Oppert, who located the remains of a brick structure (45 feet square and 20 feet high) twelve miles southeast of Hillah (about four miles south of ancient Babylon), which he believed formed the pedestal of this colossal image.

They also complain that there would not have been enough gold in all of Babylon to make such a large image, but where does it say that the image was solid gold? Like smaller statues that have survived, this one was no doubt gold plated. Compare the following description from Isaiah:

**Isaiah 40:19** — *The idol! a workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains.*

The construction of this large image is yet another facet of this book that points to an early date.

Archaeological discoveries have shown that Nebuchadnezzar's building projects extended to some of the ancient Sumerian cities such as Ur of the Chaldees. Most feel that Dura (meaning "walled place") was a suburb of Babylon.

In these areas, Nebuchadnezzar was a religious reformer. Excavations have shown that when Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt religious temples, he removed the special rooms where the priests conducted their secret ceremonies and replaced them with areas where all could come and view the procedures. Nebuchadnezzar's reforms thus centered around permitting the public to participate in the religious ceremonies that had formerly been secret. This seems to be what occurred in here in Daniel 3. Sir Leonard Wooley wrote the following:

What was there new in the king's act? Not the setting up of a statue, because each king in turn had done the same; the novelty was the command for general worship by the public: for a ritual performed by priests the king is substituting a form of congregational worship which all his subjects are obliged to attend.

How did the author of Daniel know about this new phase of worship that began under Nebuchadnezzar if Daniel had been written 400 years later?

### **Daniel 3:2-3**

**2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges,**

**the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

From Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, it was inconceivable that any reasonable person could refuse this simple demonstration of loyalty to the king. We experience the same sort of incredulity today. How could you possibly be opposed to gay "marriage"? Surely you don't really believe everything you read in the Bible! What, you don't drink? What do you mean you don't believe in evolution? And I think that they, as with Nebuchadnezzar, are genuinely shocked. As our society descends into the abyss, we will find ourselves increasingly different — as it should be.

Let's look at the list of titles in verse 2. The KJV has "the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces." The RSV has "the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces."

The titles used in this section point to a well-organized bureaucracy.

- **Satrap or Prince:** Persian term for "realm protector."
- **Prefect or Governor:** Lieutenant governors.
- **Governor or Captain:** Lord of an administrative district. Malachi 1:8 says that the province of Judea was administered by a "governor."
- **Counselor or Judge:** Persian term for "counsel-giver." This term is unique to Daniel in all known Aramaic literature.

- **Treasurer:** Persian term for “treasure bearer.”
- **Justice or Counsellor:** Persian term for “law bearer.”
- **Magistrate or Sheriff:** Persian term for “over chief.” The terms for “judges” and “magistrates” occur so far only in Daniel and in Aramaic documents of the sixth and fifth century.
- **Provincial Officials or Rulers:** General term for government officials.

Note that five of these terms are Persian. This use of Persian words is seen by some as a problem since this episode from early in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign predates the Persian conquest by nearly 70 years.

However, we have already been told that Daniel lived to see the Persian conquest. Thus, it seems most likely that Daniel wrote the book during the Persian rule and substituted the then current Persian titles for the older Aramaic terms.

Another possibility is that (as with some Greek musical terms) some Persian titles had already made their way into use among the Chaldeans.

The use of these words points to an early date for the book of Daniel. By the second century BC some of these Persian loan terms had become obsolete and could no longer be correctly translated by the Alexandrian Jews.

### **Daniel 3:4-7**

**4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath**

**set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.**

The satirical effect of this section is clear. As one commentator wrote:

Here are all the great ones of the empire falling flat on their faces before a lifeless obelisk at the sound of a musical medley, controlled by the baton of King Nebuchadnezzar.

This command applied to all people of every nation and language. It was apparently Nebuchadnezzar's intention to unite his kingdom under one religion. We will see this later with Rome (the first century Babylon) first with Caesar worship, and much later with the Roman version of Christianity under Constantine.

**Lesson for us:** As Christians, we must remain involved in our society, and we have a responsibility to vote and participate in our government to do our best to maintain avenues for spreading the gospel. But we need to tread very carefully when the government wants to get involved with us and tries to use us for its own ends — and we will see more and more of that. What governmental persecution cannot accomplish, a governmental embrace often can.

When the music started, every person was to fall down and worship the image.

Let's look at the musical terms in verse 5. The KJV has "cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer" while the RSV has "horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe."

- "Cornet" or "Horn" is the only musical term found here that is also found elsewhere in the Old Testament.
- "Flute" or "Pipe" may come from the Hebrew word meaning to hiss or whistle.
- "Harp" or "Lyre" is a loan word from the Greek *kithara*.
- The term "Sackbut" or "Trigon" comes from the Greek word used in the Septuagint meaning a triangular harp.
- "Psaltery" or "Harp" is the Greek *psalterion* and also refers to a stringed instrument.
- The term translated "Dulcimer" or "Bagpipe" may not be an instrument at all, but may simply mean "in unison." Others think it refers to a percussion instrument.

As we discussed in our introductory lessons, Daniel 3:5 (which is in the Aramaic section) contains three words of Greek origin, all of which are musical terms — harp, sackbut, and psaltery. It is claimed that such words could only have been used after Greek influence had spread throughout Asia after the conquest by Alexander the Great — which some argue indicates a late date for the book. But how much cultural spread does it require to learn three new words? If the book had been written 400 years later, then wouldn't we expect to find many Greek words instead of only three?

There are twenty Persian words and three Greek words in Daniel. Does this make sense if Daniel had been written during the Greek empire and long after the Persian empire? (By 170 BC, a Greek speaking government had controlled Palestine for 160 years.) One author has said:

It is the fewness of the Greek words, coupled with the fact that they are only the names of musical instruments, that must prove fatal to the critics' theory that the book was written in 165 BC.

Experts now agree that Greek culture had penetrated the Near East long before the Neo-Babylonian period. The terms may have been introduced by Greek traders before the rise of the Persian empire. The Elephantine papyri is a fifth century Aramaic document that contains a number of Greek words. It is significant that the terms are all musical terms. Such terms are frequently borrowed when the instruments they describe become known.

In verse 6 we finally reach the punitive elements of the king's decree — those who do not fall down and worship the image will be cast immediately into the fiery furnace.

The furnaces in Babylon were used to fire the bricks that were used to build the city. As we mentioned before, each brick bore the name and image of Nebuchadnezzar, and many can be seen today in the British museum. These may have been fired in the very furnace spoken of here. The fuel was charcoal, and it burned at a very high temperature. Many large brick kilns have been excavated outside Babylon. The furnace would have been enclosed, since the technology of raising heat by forcing a draught requires it. Here is how one commentator has described the furnace:

It resembles a railway tunnel blocked at one end but with an entrance at the other. Uprights at frequent intervals support the dome and serve as ventilation shafts also. Charcoal provides the heat, and it is estimated that the temperature would have been 900 to 1000 °C.

Death by burning at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar is not unique to this event. Jeremiah also speaks of it.

**Jeremiah 29:22** — *Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: The Lord make you*



*like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.*

This has always been the world's message to God's people: Comply or face the consequences! The world still has its fiery furnaces, and it still loves to frighten God's people with them. If you step out of line in our politically correct but godless society, you too can expect to be cast immediately into a fiery furnace!

### **Daniel Moments**

In an earlier lesson I talked about the Daniel Moments that we all face. Those are moments where we have an opportunity to stand up and be counted as someone who is on God's side. They are opportunities for us to show our loyalty to God and our refusal to compromise with God's enemies.

As this nation continues its decline into a moral abyss, we can expect those Daniel Moments to increase. Here are some recent examples that I recently received in an email:

- A Christian (where the term is being used broadly) photographer in New Mexico was fined \$6700 for declining to photograph a lesbian commitment ceremony.
- A Christian baker in Oregon is facing both civil and criminal penalties, including jail time, for declining to bake a cake for a gay "wedding" ceremony. Her business has closed.
- A Christian florist in Washington is being sued by the state attorney general for declining to prepare an arrangement for a gay "wedding" ceremony.
- Craig James was fired by Fox Sports Southwest after only one day on the job for expressing his support for traditional marriage while he was a candidate for the United States Senate.

- A student was dismissed from the counseling program at Augusta State University for her religious reservations about the homosexual lifestyle.
- The Wildflower Inn in Vermont was fined \$30,000 and forced to shut down its wedding reception business after declining to host a lesbian ceremony.
- A student was kicked out of a doctoral program in education at Roosevelt University for expressing in class her belief that homosexuals are not born that way.

As we see in Daniel 3, these Daniel Moments likewise include an opportunity to recant after being informed upon by modern day Chaldeans.

Very soon, homosexual so-called “marriage” will be legal in every state, including Texas. [In fact, sadly, it was so soon that it happened between when this class was presented and when these notes were prepared.] Yet neither Texas nor the United States defined “marriage” — and neither can redefine it. Marriage was defined by God long ago, and that definition will never change.

We can expect increased hostility and pressure from the world to conform, but we must not.

**Romans 12:2** — *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

That verse should be the starting point whenever we are faced with a Daniel Moment!

**Daniel 3:8-12**

**8** Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. **9** They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. **10** Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: **11** And whoso falleth not down and worshipping, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. **12** There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

The “Chaldeans” in verse 8 clearly resented the “certain Jews” who had been given power over them in Chapter 2. Now was the time for revenge!

They quote the king’s edict word for word and then inform him that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have paid no heed to the king or to his decree. Notice the language that is used: “These men, O king, have not regarded **thee**: they serve not **thy**

gods, nor worship the golden image which **thou** hast set up.” They are appealing to the king’s sense of vanity. The disobedience of the three Jews is a personal affront — made even worse in view of all that the king had done for them.

A record from ancient Babylon has been found that may include the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego included among more than fifty officials listed on a Babylonian text from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Namely, Hananiah (Shadrach) may be associated with Hanunu, designated “chief of the royal merchants”; Abednego (Azariah) with Ardi-Nabu, “secretary of the crown prince”; and Mishael (Meshach) with Mushallim-Marduk, one of the “overseers of the slave girls.”

Except for the work of these informers, Nebuchadnezzar would likely never have known about the defiance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The world is full of people who love to create trouble and then sit back and watch the fun. God has a simple message for such troublemakers:

**Proverbs 6:16-19** — *There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.*

The phrase “maliciously accused” in verse 8 is a translation of the idiom “eat the pieces of flesh torn off from someone’s body.”

What was the motive of these troublemakers?

First, as we have suggested, they probably enjoyed watching the trouble they had created. Like an arsonist, they set fires and then watched them burn from a distance.

Second, they were jealous. These foreigners had been set up over them by King Nebuchadnezzar, and they had no doubt been looking for a way to get rid of them. Re-

call that Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees. This distant affinity may have contributed to the racial animosity.

Why did these three refuse to worship the giant image? We need look no further than the first two of the Ten Commandments to answer that question:

**Exodus 20:3-5** — *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.  
4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any  
likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the  
earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5  
Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.*

Today we live in an image obsessed culture — one in which the written word is diminishing. In short, we live in a culture that has seen the movie, but has not read the book! God communicates to man with words, not with images. His church needs to always guard against any attempt to exalt images over words.

### **Daniel 3:13-15**

**13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and**

**worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**

Nebuchadnezzar's response was exactly what these troublemakers wanted. He was in a furious rage. These Chaldeans had pulled his strings, and he had dutifully danced to their tune. The great Nebuchadnezzar thought he was the one who could make people dance or fall down at his whim — but who is dancing on the strings here? Who is playing whom? We need to be on our guard when some troublemaker tries to pull our strings.

Justice would not, however, allow these men to be condemned on just the word of their accusers, so the king gave them an opportunity to recant.

Remember that all of this was occurring in front of the international array of delegates that Nebuchadnezzar had assembled to see his statue. This may also explain the king's "furious rage."

# LESSON 14

The king was incredulous in verse 14 (“Is it true?”). How could these men do this to him after all he had done for them? In fact, the king had done a lot for them. As Goethe said, “Most men can oppose their enemies but it takes a special person to oppose his friends.” And that is yet another good reason not to get too friendly with the world.

Notice the arrogance in verse 15: “Who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?” The king seems to have forgotten what he said earlier about the God of Daniel.

**Daniel 2:47** — *The king said to Daniel, Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.*

We have a parallel with Pharaoh’s statement to Moses in Exodus 5:2 (“Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?”). I love what McGuiggan said: “You recall that Moses signed him up for a ten-lesson correspondence course!”

The king’s question in verse 15 is the central theme of this chapter: “**Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**” Chapter 2 had the same central theme in verse 11: “And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and **there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.**”

Here in verse 15 the king asserts his own power above all gods, and we can imagine the God of Psalm 2 raising his eyebrows and emitting a slight chuckle.

Isaiah gave us a wonderfully ironic view of false idols in Isaiah 44.

**Isaiah 44:15-19** — *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshipping it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipping it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

And what about modern man? Idolatry is a problem only of the past, right? Wrong!

I fear that we may be tempted to read Daniel 3, see what we likely consider the stereotypical example of idolatry (ancient people falling down before a golden image), and leave thinking that idolatry was merely an ancient problem for ancient men — not something that is still around today. But, of course, that view is completely wrong.

Not only is idolatry a modern problem, but we might say that idolatry is *the* modern problem of our age. Doesn't idolatry lie at the heart of all sin? Yes, the love of money is the root of all evil, but what is the love of money if not idolatry?

**Colossians 3:4** — *and covetousness, which is idolatry.*



The first of the ten commandments is that we not worship any other god. Is it possible to break the other nine commandments without first breaking that first one?

The second commandment is that we not make any other gods — and that may be the hardest commandment of all. Our hearts have been called “god factories.” It seems that we can turn anything into a false god — money, food, people, hobbies, entertainment, pleasure. But how can we tell when we have turned something or someone into a false idol?

The Bible answers that question. A person’s “ultimate concern” is that person’s god.

**Exodus 20:3** — *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

That first commandment is that our ultimate concern must always be God and must never be anything or anyone else, and that first commandment has always been God’s command to his people, whether under the old covenant or under the new.

A man’s god is the thing or person that he is most concerned about, thinks the most about, or affects one’s life the most. That might be a family member, it might be a hobby, it might be work, it might be money. If there is anything or anyone in our life that, when push comes to shove, we will place above God, then that thing or that person is the false god we bow down to.

These other things may be important, perhaps vitally important, but they must not be our ultimate concern. No one could argue that food is not important, but Matthew 4:4 warns us against making our daily bread into our ultimate concern. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Our families are vitally important, but Jesus warned us against making them our ultimate concern.

**Luke 14:26** — *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

Our own lives are important, but Luke 14:26 just warned us against making even that our ultimate concern.

God must always be our ultimate concern, and we must be prepared to flee from anything or anyone that threatens to take his place — anything or anyone that threatens to come between us and Christ. The command in 1 Corinthians 10:14 is simple and impossible to misunderstand — “flee from idolatry.” As is the command in 1 John 5.

**1 John 5:21** — *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

Idolatry is not just an ancient problem. Idolatry is our problem, and we must always be on guard against it.

### **Daniel 3:16-18**

**16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**

Well, it looks like these three had a really big decision to make. Not at all! The decision had been made long ago. They knew that God had said “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” and they had decided long ago to do what God com-

manded no matter what. After you decide to obey God no matter what, there aren't too many other things left to decide! In verse 16 they tell the king that they have no need to answer him — God will provide an answer to the question he asked in verse 15.

We have an incredible statement of faith in verse 17:

*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand.*

And we have an incredible statement of courage in verse 18:

*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

They begin by acknowledging God's ability to save them, but they also understand the possibility that God may choose not to do so — and that would make no difference in their obedience to God's word! They believed that God **could**, but not necessarily that God **would**, spare their lives.

Some people are willing to serve God so long as God always does what they want him to do. (Which make you wonder who is serving whom?) These three were going to serve God no matter what happened.

**Job 13:15** — *Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.*

These three were miraculously saved, but many others have died as martyrs. We have spoken about the similarities between Daniel and Revelation and between ancient Babylon and Rome, which was also called Babylon. One difference is that most of the Christians persecuted by Rome were not miraculously saved from the fire or from the wild beasts, but they were martyred for the sake of Christ. In fact, Revelation 17:6 describes Rome as a “woman drunken with the blood of the saints,

and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” The central theme of Revelation is found in Chapter 6:

**Revelation 6:9-10** — *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

In Daniel 3, it served God’s purpose to spare these three and show his power to Nebuchadnezzar. In Revelation, God did not physically spare those who were being persecuted. But whether spared or not, God’s people remain faithful in the face of persecution because God’s people understand that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is permanent (2 Corinthians 4:18). Recall what Hebrews 11 tells us about Moses:

**Hebrews 11:26-27** — *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*

We can think of Acts 5:29, when Peter proclaimed before the high priest, “We must obey God rather than men!” We also think of Jesus’ warning:

**Matthew 10:28** — *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Where does the Christian, starting with Peter and the apostles until today, find the strength to make such a courageous stand? From Jesus.

Jesus himself was put to death for his religious claim that he was the Messiah. He is our perfect example in all things, and especially in remaining faithful unto death.

Paul also knew this when he said:

**Acts 20:24** — *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

What did these three stand to lose by their refusal to bow down before the image?

- They would lose their royal favor with the king.
- They would lose their high government positions.
- They would lose their new found fortunes.
- They would lose their lives.

From a worldly perspective, they were the worst sort of fools. Look at what they could gain just by bowing down! But they were wisely looking at what they would lose. They were not operating on a worldly level. They were not focused on the seen, but on the unseen.

How would we have responded? How do we respond in similar situations? Wouldn't it be easy to rationalize this all away?

- No one will see us in this big crowd.
- Everyone else is bowing down.
- Bowing down will advance our careers.
- They will kill us if we don't bow down!
- There are only three of us, and we are a long way from home. What does God really expect us to do all by ourselves?

- When in Rome, shouldn't we do as the Romans do?
- We know that the idol really isn't a god. Can't we just cross our fingers when we bow down?
- We can do so much more for God if we remain alive.
- Doesn't God want us to be happy?

However we try to rationalize it, disobedience is disobedience.

**John 14:15** — *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

If we are disobedient — whatever the excuse — then we are unloving. If we love Jesus, then we will keep his commandments. Period. There is no way to misunderstand John 14:15, and there is no way to rationalize disobedience into anything other than an unloving action directed at Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

Why was everyone so upset with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Because they refused to compromise and bow down, and the world hates those who refuse to join the crowd.

**John 15:18-19** — *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

**1 Peter 4:4** — *Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.*

People who wallow in sin aren't satisfied unless they can drag others down into the mire with them. The world wants us to go along with its fashions and its customs and its desires. It wants to make us just like everyone else. (And if we are just like everyone else, then I guess the world must have been successful.)

Romans 12:2 in the Phillips paraphrase reads “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” (Be not conformed to this world.) That is a daily struggle for the Christian.

The world gets very angry with people who don’t go along with its plans. In fact, the world has its own furnaces: furnaces of scorn and laughter, furnaces of criticism, furnaces of isolation, and furnaces of intimidation.

But if we are on God’s side then doesn’t that mean we won’t be persecuted and have to face such trials?

**2 Timothy 3:12** — *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

**John 15:20** — *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

**Isaiah 48:10** — *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*

**James 1:2-4** — *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

The real question was not what men thought about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but what did God think about them? Of the thousands who were present at the dedication of this idol, how many do we know by name? Other than the king, just these three. In fact, their names are mentioned thirteen times in this chapter! God seems to have been very proud of them!

Were they seeking the praise of God or the praise of men? If they sought the praise of men, then they would have bowed down. Instead they sought the praise of God, and so they refused to bow down. Remember what Paul said:

**Galatians 1:10** — *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we also have a choice. Who are we going to follow? Man or God? Are we a servant of Christ or are we not? “If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.”

Notice again the respect that these men continued to show to the king. This is the same sort of respect that Peter and Paul told us we must show to earthly rulers, who have all been given their power by God. They verbally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings.

### **Big Question #1: Why did God spare their lives?**

We are not told, but most likely it is because Babylon had defeated Judah in battle. Whenever that happened, the pagans commonly held that the victory over another nation was proof that their god was greater than the deity of the conquered foe. God wanted to dispel any such notion. In short, God was answering the question found in verse 15.

### **Big Question #2: Where was Daniel during this event?**

These events were not happening in the city of Babylon, but in the plains of Dura, a province of Babylon. Daniel 2 tells us:

**Daniel 2:49** — *Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.*



Most likely, a purpose of verse 49 is to tell us why Daniel is not involved in the events of Chapter 3. With the king and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in the city. Thus Daniel was unable to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this event. This is a simple theory that seems to fit well with the available evidence.

Daniel may have been absent from Babylon as well at the time, perhaps on government business in some other part of the kingdom.

Daniel may have been ill and unable to attend the public ceremony. Compare a later event in Daniel 8.

**Daniel 8:27** — *And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.*

As chief of the “wise men,” Daniel may not have been required to bow down. His loyalty to the king may have been beyond question. Presumably, Nebuchadnezzar himself did not bow down. He may have extended this privilege to others as well.

Daniel's reputation may have been such that even the Chaldeans did not dare to attack him in front of the king. That is, the Chaldeans may just not have informed the king about Daniel's refusal to bow down. Daniel 2:48 says that Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler (civil governor) over the whole province of Babylon. Thus, Daniel was very powerful and the informers may have been unwilling to risk informing on him. (The lion den episode occurred much later in his life and with a different king and a different governing power.) Thus, perhaps Daniel was there and refused to bow down but the king was not told about it. Our lesson if this was the case: We shouldn't invite trouble on ourselves.

Wherever Daniel was, we know one thing for sure: Daniel did not and would never have bowed down to that false idol. How do we know that? Because we know Daniel, and we already know what kind of person he was. If Daniel had been with

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they stood before the king, then there would have been four people tossed into the furnace instead of only three.

Daniel's omission is additional proof of the book's authenticity.

Had the story been the invention that many have suggested; had it originated in the days of the Maccabees to nerve the faithful against Gentile oppression, it is unlikely that the chief hero would have been omitted. Reality transcends fiction, and the very "incompleteness" of this account testifies to its fidelity.

There is no psychological reason for an idealizing romancer to leave Daniel out of this exciting episode. The only way to account for this omission is that in point of fact he was not personally in attendance at this important function.

We could ask another big question — what about all of the other Jewish exiles? Did they bow down to the giant statue? It would seem that many must have, although some like Daniel may have been elsewhere, and others (unlike these three) may just not have been informed upon by the jealous Chaldeans.

### **Daniel 3:19-23**

**19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.**  
**20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and**

**Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

Verse 19 literally says that “the image of his face changed.” “The one who in his pride has created an image with the purpose of assuring uniform loyalty finds his own image provoked beyond his control.” The king was furious!

Even though God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he still allowed them to endure the ordeal of being thrown into the fire. Why? Because it brought more glory to God to have Nebuchadnezzar and his men see those they tried to kill walking around unharmed in the flames.

We should thank God for every opportunity he gives us for his glory to be seen at work in us. We should pray that we be given opportunities to stand up and announce that we are on his side. The events here remind us of another of God's promises:

**Isaiah 43:2** — *When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm*

*you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.*

The phrase “heated seven times more” is a common idiom and should not be understood literally. It simply means to make it as hot as possible, which is what they did.

The list of clothing in verse 21 has long been a source of trouble to translators. The Septuagint tried to make sense of the terms but reduced three words to two in the process. The liberals would have us believe that the writer of Daniel lived within 50 years of the Septuagint, yet, if so, then in just that short time somehow these words for court clothing had been completely forgotten by the translators.

Nebuchadnezzar’s absurd commands in verses 19-21 were intended to leave no room for escape. The already deadly furnace was made even hotter. (It even killed those who threw the young men in!) The young men were fully dressed, even with their hats on, so the flames would completely and quickly envelop them. They were tied up and thrown like logs into the fire so that there could be opportunity for escape.

Things look pretty bad for these three, right? Wrong! And I can say that even before reading any further in the text. Even if God had not spared their lives, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been obedient to God — and that meant things were not looking bad for them at all! The most horrible outcome that we could imagine is not that they were cast into the fire and burned alive. The most horrible outcome would have been if they had succumbed to the pressure and bowed down to that false god. They could have saved their lives apart from God — but they would have lost their lives eternally in the process.

**Luke 17:33** — *Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are *already* doing just fine at the end of verse 23, but let’s keep reading.

**Daniel 3:24-25**

**24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**

King Nebuchadnezzar was dumbfounded! Instead of seeing three bound and burning bodies, he saw four people walking around in the flames! “I see four men loose,” he says in verse 25! What men had bound, God loosened — and isn’t it ever so!

Even today it is only through fire that we find freedom from our bonds.

**John 12:24-25** — *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

As one author has written:

How we long for holiness without pain; sanctification without a cross, and growth without tears.

## Who was the fourth person?

The King James Version has:

*He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

In other translations, the king described him as looking like “a son of the gods.” In verse 28, the king will refer to the fourth person as an “angel.”

For starters, what the King said about the fourth person was not inspired — he is just describing what he saw. We know from inspiration that the king actually made these statements, but inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of this pagan king. Yes, whoever he saw looked like some sort of angelic or divine being, but the king was in no position to know anything more about that fourth person than what he was then witnessing. So, in short, the fact that the king calls him an angel in verse 28 does not mean that he was an angel.

The King James Version suggests the fourth person was Jesus with the translation “the Son of God,” but a better translation is “a son of the gods,” which also fits better with the king’s polytheism. The king immediately jumped to the conclusion that this fourth being was divine, which is understandable given the circumstances! We might very well end up with the same conclusion.

So who was the fourth person? I think we have two possibilities: Either he was a delivering angel (and we will see such angels later in this book), or he was a Christophany (a preincarnate appearance of Christ) as the King James translation suggests.

## The Angel of the Lord

A very interesting Bible study is to look at the appearances of the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament.

We know that Jesus is not an angel because, unlike Jesus, angels are created beings (Psalm 148). But the word “angel” just means “divine messenger,” so in that sense Jesus could be called an angel.

Are any of the angelic appearances in the Old Testament really preincarnate appearances of Jesus? (Again, let me stress that I am not saying that Jesus is an angel — only that the word “angel” may have been used to describe Christ as a “divine messenger.”)

Who spoke to Moses from the burning bush?

**Exodus 3:2** — *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.*

But also note verse 4:

**Exodus 3:4** — *And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush**, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.*

What did the angel of the Lord say to Hagar in Genesis 16?

**Genesis 16:10** — *And the angel of the Lord said unto her, **I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.***

And what did Hagar say in verse 13?

**Genesis 16:13** — *Have I really **seen God** and remained alive after seeing him?*

Also, recall:

**Judges 13:21-22** — *But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, **We shall surely die, because we have seen God.***

Who stayed Abraham's hand in Genesis 22?

**Genesis 22:11-12** — *And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son **from me.***

The "me" at the end of verse 12 is the angel of the Lord in verse 11!

As I said, it is an interesting study! This fourth person could have been a preincarnate appearance of Christ. We know that Jesus was with them in any event, but perhaps he made a personal appearance. If not, then it must have been a delivering angel. The Bible does not tell us, so we can't know for sure.

### **Daniel 3:26-27**

**26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their**



**coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.**

Still giving commands, the king commands that the three come out of the furnace. (Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar was not too anxious for the fourth person to come out!)

We have to picture the scene. The furious king who had just had the three young man bound and tossed to a certain fiery death is now talking to them while they are walking around in the flames — and he is calling them by name and asking them to come out! Most of us, when we get too close to a flame, don't need any encouragement to move away from it — but this king is having to plead with them to come out of the furnace! Perhaps that is another clue as to whom they were talking to in there!

All of the king's illustrious visitors gather with the king and look at the men. Not only are they unharmed but there is no smell of smoke or fire about them. Only their bonds were gone. It is as if they had never been in the fire at all.

It should go without saying, but this was, of course, a miracle. Liberals go to great lengths to remove the miraculous from the Bible, but of course they cannot. Without the miraculous, Jesus would not have been raised and as Paul said, our faith would then be in vain. (This bleak result is the logical consequence of naturalism.)

The Bible begins with a miracle — “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” — and miracles recur again and again in Scripture.

True, the age of miracles has ended, but not forever — one day the world will end with a final miraculous intervention by God into the affairs of men. And once again, the faithful will be saved from the flames.

**Daniel 3:28-30**

**28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.**

What else could the king do now but acknowledge his defeat? His challenge in verse 15 (“What god will be able to rescue you?”) has been resoundingly answered by the only true and living God. As in Chapter 2, the king once again acknowledges the power of God. But as we will see in Chapter 4, this second change of heart won't last much longer than the first.

The king makes another decree in verse 29. He has the same disease that our modern legislators have — when you run out of things to say, just make a new decree!

Remember that his first decree back in verse 4 had not turned out very well. The king now once again pronounces death, but this time it is on anyone who says anything against God, “for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

Notice that the king does not renounce his polytheism, but simply says that God is the greatest god among many. He was just adding another god to his pantheon.

The author of Hebrews likely had this event in mind:

**Hebrews 11:33-34** — *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **Quenched the violence of fire**, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

Finally, the king promotes these three, which no doubt really thrilled their accusers! I am reminded of one of my favorite verses. After Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers were afraid that he might at last seek his revenge. But remember what Joseph said to them:

**Genesis 50:19-20** — *Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

We serve a God who can turn evil into good. And that should always be our goal was well. Rather than return evil for evil, we should always strive to turn that evil into something good.

# LESSON 15

## CHAPTER 4

Daniel 4 is unique in all scripture. The entire chapter is written from the perspective of a pagan king — notice the personal pronoun “I” that starts in verse 2 and continues through the end of the chapter in verse 37. That “I” refers to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Apparently what happened is that Nebuchadnezzar instructed Daniel to write an account of what occurred, perhaps as part of a government record, which Daniel then did.

What can we say about the inspiration of Chapter 4?

Last week, in Chapter 3 we saw some statements from Nebuchadnezzar about the fourth person in the fiery furnace, and we noted that, although inspiration tells us that the king actually made those statements, inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of what the king said.

For example, Genesis 3:4 accurately records what Satan said to Eve (“Ye shall not surely die”) — but we know that statement was a lie because God had said the opposite in Genesis 2:17. So be careful if anyone ever asks you if every statement in the Bible is true — that is a trick question!

Here in Daniel 4 we have a long statement from Nebuchadnezzar. Inspiration tells us that he said it; but does inspiration also vouch for the truthfulness of what Neb-

uchadnezzar said? And, if so, how is this situation different from what we saw in Daniel 3 or in Genesis 3?

I think that inspiration does vouch for the accuracy of what we read in Daniel 4, even though it is a recorded statement from a pagan king. Why?

For starters, much of the chapter is a quote from Daniel himself interpreting yet another dream from the king. Yes, the quote is the king recounting what Daniel had said to him — but Daniel is writing it down, and (a) Daniel knew what the king had said to him about the dream, (b) Daniel knew what he had told the king about the dream, and (c) what Daniel had told the king about the dream had come from God. I don't believe that either Daniel or the Holy Spirit would have allowed any inaccuracies on these points to enter the Bible — even if Daniel is recording the king's recollections about the events.

The king's recollections were correct (which I believe) or Daniel would have corrected them, or perhaps the Holy Spirit would just not have included it in the book of Daniel. That we have this historical account tells me that it is correct, even though this is a very unusual chapter.

Also, later in the chapter we will see Nebuchadnezzar made like a beast in the fields, and he certainly was in no condition to record what was happening while in that condition. That we know what happened to him is because of this inspired account written down by Daniel. So how did the king know about it to tell Daniel? Because Daniel had already told him about it, and because by the time this was written down the king had returned to his senses.

So, yes, even though Chapter 4 records the statements of a pagan king, we can trust the accuracy of these statements. Chapter 4, as with Chapters 1-3, is intended to show God's power over the Babylonians — and that power would not have been shown had King Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel provided an inaccurate report of what happened.

In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all knowing. In Chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all powerful. In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar will learn of his own weakness and folly before God and of his own utter dependence on God and of the danger of human pride.

Nebuchadnezzar was but an instrument in God's hand. Nebuchadnezzar will come face to face with the central themes of this book: The absolute sovereignty of God and God's faithfulness to his covenant people. The first of those themes is repeated three times in this chapter:

**Daniel 4:17** — *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent **that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.***

**Daniel 4:25** — *That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, **till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.***

**Daniel 4:32** — *And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, **until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.***

Nebuchadnezzar may have finally learned this lesson. Have we?

**Daniel 4:1-3**

**1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.**

King Nebuchadnezzar is much like us — his spiritual life has its ups and downs! After Daniel interpreted his first dream, Nebuchadnezzar praised God, but in the very next chapter he made a giant graven image. After God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar again praised God. Here in Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar again praises God but only after he has undergone a very humbling experience about which we will learn more in just a moment.

Did Nebuchadnezzar finally learn his lesson? We don't know for sure because the book will tell us nothing more about him.

Even if Nebuchadnezzar's motives are dubious, he speaks the truth about God. God's kingdom (unlike Nebuchadnezzar's) is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion is from generation to generation.

This is what Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:44 about the church. But it also true in a larger sense. God's kingdom and dominion are eternal. He has al-

ways and will always rule over everyone and everything. Nebuchadnezzar thought his kingdom was eternal, but it was not. Human rule is transient. God's rule is permanent. History is full of kingdoms that thought they would last forever. (Babylon, Greece, Rome, Nazi Germany — the 1000 year Reich lasted only eleven years!) There is but one eternal kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar finally understood that — as will all earthly rulers someday. Notice the language Nebuchadnezzar uses in verse 3: “his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.” It reminds us of Psalm 145:

**Psalm 145:13** — *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

And if we skip to the end of this chapter, we see similar statements from the king:

**Verses 34-35** — *Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Those statements remind us again of Psalm 145, and also remind us of:

**Isaiah 40:17** — *All nations before him are as nothing*

**Isaiah 14:27** — *For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

Here is the question for us from these verses: Where did Nebuchadnezzar learn all of this Hebrew terminology? Where else? He had been hearing words like that from Daniel since they first met.

Which raises another question for us: What sort of terminology are our friends picking up from us? If we have been around someone for as long as Daniel had been



around Nebuchadnezzar, will that person be quoting more words and phrases from Scripture — or perhaps will that person have picked up other words and phrases from us?

**Matthew 5:13** — *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?*

What sort of influence are we having on our friends and acquaintances? On our boss, our co-workers, and our enemies? When we are around them, do we lift them up (as Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar) or do they pull us down? Or worse, do we pull *them* down?

### **Daniel 4:4-7**

**4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.**

Poor Nebuchadnezzar. Every time things seem to be going well, he has a troubling dream. Here we have a repeat of what we saw in Chapter 2.

The king was at ease and was prospering. Verse 30 later in the chapter will imply that when this occurred, Nebuchadnezzar's building activities had been completed. If so, that means these events probably took place after Egypt had been conquered and Jerusalem destroyed and about eight or nine years before the siege of Tyre in 573 BC, which is mentioned in Ezekiel:

**Ezekiel 26:7** — *For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.*

The seven year illness of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter may have been from 582 to 575, a period in which we know of no military operations by the king.

Probably about 25 years had elapsed between the end of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4. Daniel is now in his forties, and the king is in his fifties or sixties (about ten to fifteen years older than Daniel).

The king may have also mellowed a bit since Chapters 2 and 3. Notice that he does not make any threats in verse 6.

Notice also that Daniel was no flash in the pan. After 25 years, he was still master of the wise men (as we will see in verse 9). And that success had not changed Daniel; he was still faithful to God.

Thus, the king was at ease and prospering — and that may have been a big source of his problems! Recall Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. There we had a man who had everything but God — and God called him a fool.

There is a big change in the king's peace of mind between verse 4 and verse 5. He goes from being at ease to being afraid and troubled. And again, in response, the

king makes a decree. (He does that a lot, doesn't he!) This decree commands that all of the wise men be brought forward to interpret his dream.

The astrologers mentioned here were not mentioned in the list found in Chapter 2. The king seems to be grasping at straws in his increasingly desperate attempt to understand his dreams. (He may be ready to call the Psychic Hotline next!)

As before, the Chaldean wise men are unable to interpret the dream. Note that unlike last time, this time Nebuchadnezzar tells them what the dream was. Their inability to interpret it means that it must not have been listed in their dream manuals. Even if they knew or guessed the meaning, they probably would have lacked the courage to tell the king. Even Daniel will later hesitate to tell the king what the dream means.

### **Daniel 4:8-9**

**8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.**

Daniel comes in last before the king. Daniel, it seems, was not part of the "group." (God's people are seldom part of the "group.")

Why was Daniel the *last* one called and not the first one called? There are many possible reasons.

- Maybe Daniel was out of town or ill.
- Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to ask Daniel unless it was absolutely necessary. I doubt that Nebuchadnezzar liked having to go to Daniel for answers.
- Also, unlike the other wise men, Daniel was not a sycophant of the king. He came when he was called, but likely did not otherwise hang around the king.
- Another possibility is that Daniel may have deliberately delayed his coming in order to give the pagan wise men an opportunity to prove their inability to interpret the dream.
- Daniel was the master of the wise men, so the boss may have been the last one called.
- The king may have suspected what the dream meant, and he may have suspected that Daniel would tell him what it meant — and he may have wanted to delay the inevitable. He was hoping the Chaldeans would give him good news about the dream — but they were unable to turn that dream into anything good for the king!

It is clear from verse 8 that Nebuchadnezzar is still a card-carrying polytheist — at least at the beginning of Chapter 4. When he calls Daniel, he reminds us that Daniel's Babylonian name is Belteshazzar "according to the name of my god." The king also says that Daniel has the "spirit of the holy gods." Recall that Nebuchadnezzar's "god" was presumably Nebo, and Belteshazzar means "Nebo, protect my life." Let's see what Nebo does for the king...

**Daniel 4:10-12**

**10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.**

So far so good: The king had dreamed of a giant tree that gave shelter and food to all the beasts and birds of the earth.

Already the king was likely identifying himself with this tree. He like the tree had grown tall and strong with roots and limbs covering the earth. He like the tree provided health and wealth to those who lived under him.

This looks like a happy dream so far. What was troubling the king? We are about to find out.

**Daniel 4:13-14**

**13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:**

This beautiful tree was going to be cut down, and its foliage was going to be stripped away. And one effect of cutting down the tree was that the birds and beasts that had found shelter under it would be scattered.

The order came from “a watcher and an holy one” who “came down from heaven.” Who was this? The word for “watcher” (and its plural in verse 17) that is used here occurs nowhere else in the Bible (but we are still in the Aramaic section, and not too much of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic — although neither is there a similar Hebrew word used).

The word does occur in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (in a commentary on Genesis), where it is used to denote an angel. This has caused some to believe that the watchers are a special class of angels whose duty is to watch and patrol the earth and who are responsible for executing the decrees of God on the earth.

As with many things about angels, you can quickly run out of scriptural support in your study and enter the realm of speculation. We should be very careful not to

make any assertions that go beyond what we have been told — and here we are told virtually nothing about the identity of these watchers.

The Babylonians believed in heavenly beings whose task was to keep watch over the earth — and perhaps the king is just substituting his own Babylonian word for what he saw. But there may be a scriptural basis for that Babylonian belief. Zechariah 1:10 speaks of those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.

We should remember that although by this time in history there are many different nations and peoples — not that much earlier there had still be one people and one nation, all coming from the first man, Adam. It is interesting to study the beliefs of these different nations and try to determine what can be traced back to that earlier time. We have already discussed how the various flood epics scattered around the globe support the Biblical account of a universal flood — perhaps the Babylonian belief in watchers likewise supports the Biblical accounts of angels and their work here on earth. (We will see more about angels as our study continues.)

Verse 13 could be described as where the Bible meets the X-Files! A great deal of speculation, most of it nonsense, has been written about the watchers. If you ever watch any of the UFO shows on TV, you will hear some very strange views about the identity of these watchers. And much of that speculation involves one of the most obscure accounts in the Bible — Genesis 6:1-4. Again, we need to be very careful that we do not go beyond what is written in the Bible, and not much is written on this subject. One of the earliest heresies, gnosticism, was based on speculative views that went far beyond the Apostolic teachings — and we need to be careful we don't ever fall in that same trap.

But, with that said, one of the most important sources regarding the Watchers is the apocryphal Book of Enoch. That book is not inspired, so we don't know if what it tells us about the watchers is true, but before we completely dismiss it, we should note that although the Book of Enoch is not inspired — that book does contain at least one inspired statement by the prophet Enoch. How do we know that?

Because Jude 14 quotes the prophet Enoch, and something very similar to the statement in Jude 14 appears in the Book of Enoch.

Notice that I did not say that Jude quoted the book of Enoch as many assert. Jude 14 is quoting Enoch himself. Yes, the Book of Enoch contains a similar quote attributed to Enoch, but Jude tells us he is quoting the person, not the book.

Fragments of the Book of Enoch were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. It had been lost for fifteen centuries until it was rediscovered. An English translation appeared in 1821.

The Book of Enoch is very strange. It describes heavenly visions, journeys through fantastic mountain ranges to see the fiery pit where evil angels burn, the last judgment before the great throne, and the movements of the sun and stars. It is divided into five sections: the Book of the Watchers, the Similitudes, the Astronomy book, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch.

The first section, the Book of the Watchers, takes its name from the Watchers, who, the books tells us, were the angels who came to earth and corrupted it. Enoch is assigned to take to these fallen angels the message of their judgment. The fallen angels ask Enoch to intercede for them, and Enoch is then caught up into heaven in a vision of God.

In that vision, Enoch learns there is to be no mercy for the fallen angels. The remainder of that book describes Enoch's heavenly journeys.

So what I am saying about the Book of Enoch? Just that it is interesting, that it contains at least one actual statement by the prophet Enoch, and that it **purports** to tell us a lot about these Watchers (so if you are interested in the Watchers, you should look there next).

I think that what C.S. Lewis said about demons could also be said about angels:



There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

But with that said, there is nothing inherently wrong with speculating about things in the Bible. In fact, absent not having any imagination at all, it is likely impossible to study the Bible and delight in it without speculating now and then about something we are reading. But we need to make sure (a) that we never label that speculation as anything other than speculation and (b) that our speculation never runs afoul of Biblical teachings.

### **Daniel 4:15-16**

**15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.**

Although the tree would be cut down, the stump would be left, and it was to have a band of iron and bronze placed around it. The purpose of these bands seems to have been to protect and preserve the stump, and to keep it from being removed along with the rest of the tree. Others argue that the band is just the first indication that this imagery of a tree is about to transform into imagery of a beast. (Yes, God is mixing his metaphors!)

Although Daniel had not yet interpreted the king's dream, I think we can now see why the dream was so troubling to the king. Look very carefully at what the watcher said at the end of verse 15: *And let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let **his** portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.* The watcher quits referring to the stump as "it" and begins instead to refer to the stump as "he"! Even before Daniel provided the interpretation, it was likely already very clear to the king which man in particular the watcher had in mind.

What was going to happen to this stump/man? The heart of this stump was to be changed from that of a man to that of a beast. Some translations have "mind" in place of "heart," and that is the correct sense of how "heart" is used here.

How long was this change going to last? It was to last for "seven times." What does that mean? Most commentators take the phrase to mean "appointed times" or "seasons," which would mean that "seven times" refers to seven years. Another possibility is that "seven times" denotes an indefinite period of time that is long enough for the lesson to be learned. As we know, seven (when used figuratively) denotes perfection. Thus, this period of seven times might denote a period of time that would be just right for Nebuchadnezzar to learn his lesson. This view may be supported by the wording used later:

**Verse 25** — *And seven times shall pass over thee, **till thou know** that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

I think the better view is that a literal seven years is meant here. We have not yet arrived at the apocalyptic sections of the book, where we would expect numbers to be used figuratively.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have a bizarre view of the "seven times." They say that the seven times denotes seven years, each day of which also denotes a year. Thus, using 360 days for the number of days in a year (which fits with the Babylonian base 60 number system, but does not fit with the actual number of days in a year), we have

7 times 360, or 2520 years. They refer to this period of 2520 years as the “times of the Gentiles” — the period of Gentile opposition, which they say is depicted by Nebuchadnezzar’s madness. (Some would argue that it seems odd for a time of Gentile *prominence* to be symbolized by the insanity of a very prominent Gentile!) This period of 2520 years supposedly began in 607 BC when they say the temple was destroyed. (This actually happened in 587 BC. They give incorrect dates for virtually all of the events that we have been studying.) Counting 2520 years from 607 BC brings us to AD 1914, which is when they say the kingdom was established.

That is what the Jehovah’s Witnesses say. What did Jehovah say? He said in Daniel 2 that the eternal kingdom would be established in the first century — **not** in the 20th century!

### **Daniel 4:17**

**17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.**

Notice the plural “watchers” and “holy ones” here. Although only one “watcher” is mentioned in verse 13, there are apparently more than one involved in this decree. The watcher continues the decree, and gives the reason behind it.

The decree was so “that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest

of men.” That is, the purpose of this decree was to make clear one of the primary themes of this book — the absolute sovereignty of God.

The term “basest of men” in verse 17 is interesting from several perspectives. God chooses who will wear the crown, and often God has chosen those who are humble and of low social standing.

**Job 5:11** — *To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.*

**1 Samuel 2:7-8** — *The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.*

**Luke 1:51-53** — *He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

But this term also has a particular application to the history of Nebuchadnezzar (as we mentioned in the introduction). The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father, Nabopolassar, was found in which he was referred to as “the son of a nobody” (of non-royal birth), “insignificant,” “not visible,” “the weak,” and “the feeble.” This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten — but the author of Daniel knew about it. The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How would a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

**Daniel 4:18**

**18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.**

The king turns at last to Daniel for the interpretation of the dream because the other wise men could not interpret it. But the meaning seems clear, so why couldn't they interpret it?

For starters, they did not know the Old Testament as well as Daniel did! The portrayal of man in his pride as a lofty tree is common in the Old Testament.

**Isaiah 2:12-13** — *For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan.*

**Isaiah 10:34** — *And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.*

Ezekiel used a very similar picture to describe Assyria just a few years before Nebuchadnezzar had this dream. (See Ezekiel 31:3-17.)

Even though this imagery must have been very clear to any Hebrew, it may not have been familiar to the Chaldeans. (But it was clear enough to Nebuchadnezzar that he was terrified by it.)

Another reason why the king's other wise men could not interpret the dream is that God may have kept the Chaldeans from understanding it so that Daniel would be chosen to explain it to the king.

But I think the most likely explanation is that the Chaldeans understood exactly what the dream meant but they were too cowardly to explain it to the king. Rather than give the king bad news, they opted to give him no news. Daniel, as we will see, will opt instead to proclaim the whole counsel of God to Nebuchadnezzar (which is yet another good lesson for us from the book of Daniel!).

### **Daniel 4:19**

**19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.**

Even Daniel was reluctant to tell the king what his dream meant. The Aramaic here literally reads "he was stupefied for one hour" but the word used here for "hour" can simply mean a period of time.

This verse gives us an interesting picture of the relationship between these two men. Daniel was not happy in the least about the bad news he had for the king. Daniel's loyalty to the king was genuine.

But maybe Daniel just delayed because he was scared. Could that be it? I don't think so. Knowing what we know about Daniel, I think Daniel's reluctance arose from his feelings for the king rather than from his fear of the king.

Notice the concern of the king for Daniel as well. "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee."

Calvin argues that Nebuchadnezzar secretly despised Daniel in his heart, which Calvin says is why the king waited so long to ask Daniel for the interpretation, but I think the evidence suggests otherwise. The king may not have wanted to ask Daniel for help, but I don't think the text suggests it was because the king despised Daniel. Their relationship seems to have involved mutual respect and perhaps mutual affection. Their concern for each other seems very genuine.

Daniel had risen very far from his arrival as an exiled Jewish boy. Daniel could have been vindictive against the king who had exiled him and who had destroyed Jerusalem, but he was not. There could have been an additional factor behind Daniel's distress at the bad news for the king. Nebuchadnezzar evidently had treated the Jews well throughout most of his reign. If he were deposed, there would be no guarantee of a like-minded replacement. A ruler could easily arise who knew not Daniel, a parallel of Exodus 1:8.

When Daniel at last begins to speak, he begins by wishing that the dream would apply instead to Nebuchadnezzar's enemies — but Daniel, the king, and the reader all know that such will not be the case. What Daniel is about to say will apply to the king.

# LESSON 16

## **Daniel 4:20-22**

**20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.**

Daniel has good news and bad news — and he starts with the good news. (Will the lessons for us in this book never end?)

As we (and the king and the wise men) suspected, the mighty tree represents Nebuchadnezzar in all his military success and genius. His kingdom stretched from what is today Egypt to western Iran and from modern Syria into Saudi Arabia, encompassing many different cultures and language groups.

But, did Nebuchadnezzar's dominion extend to the end of the earth as verse 22 suggests? No, and neither did it reach unto heaven as that verse also suggests. These



phrases are hyperboles intended to describe the incredible extent of his kingdom. We see this elsewhere in the Bible.

**Luke 2:1** — *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*

And, in Romans 1:8 Paul said “your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”

When I read people objecting to Daniel with arguments such as this (that verse 22 is in error because Nebuchadnezzar did not literally rule the entire globe), I have to wonder what they think when they get to Matthew 23.

**Matthew 23:24** — *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

Those who study the Bible should not check their common sense at the door. We use hyperboles every day in our own speech — and we find them in the Bible as well. (And if I have said that once, I have said it a million times!)

### **Daniel 4:23-27**

**23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24 This is the interpre-**

**tation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.**

Now for the bad news. In these verses, Daniel interprets the ominous part of the dream.

The decree of the watcher, Daniel says in verse 24, is a decree of the Most High. This judgment, whatever it will be, is a judgment from God.

The bad news is that the king is going to lose his kingdom and his sanity until he understands the lesson that God wants to teach him — that God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will.

The banded tree stump represents Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom during his illness. The stump was protected so that the king would know that his kingdom would not be taken away permanently. Why was this important? If Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom while he was out of the picture then that would prove his point. That is, it would show that Nebuchadnezzar was the real power and that it was his genius that kept the kingdom together. God, however, wanted to show him that the opposite was true. Nebuchadnezzar ruled and had his kingdom because it pleased God for him to rule and to have his kingdom. If God could keep his kingdom together while the king was out in the field living the life of an ox then God clearly did not need a brilliant leader to hold a kingdom together. God could put him in power, God could remove him, and God could put him back in power.

In the ordinary course of events, any ruler suffering from such an illness would have been deposed and replaced. History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's sons were worthless, and indeed were unable to retain power very long after his death. But it was God's will that the kingdom would be returned to Nebuchadnezzar after he recovered — so that is what happened.

There was still a possibility that Nebuchadnezzar could avoid this misfortune if he would amend his ways and acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God. What did the king need to do? Verse 27 tells us that he needed to adopt two new policies:

- He needed to renounce his sins and do what was right.
- He needed to protect the poor in his kingdom and not allow them to be exploited and oppressed.

Did he do this? Perhaps he tried, because verse 29 tells us that the judgment was delayed for a year, but he must not have succeeded.

**Daniel 4:28-30**

**28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?**

Daniel may have hoped in verse 27 that the king might change his ways and avert this judgment, but verse 28 gives us the sad news. Everything in the vision came true. From that outcome we know that Nebuchadnezzar ultimately refused to change his ways.

What did Nebuchadnezzar see as he strolled about on the roof of his palace? Babylon contained two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the hanging gardens and the city walls. The location of the hanging gardens is in doubt but the walls have been found. The outer wall stretched for more than five miles and, according to Herodotus, had enough space on top to enable a four-horse chariot to turn around.

During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Babylon was undoubtedly the most magnificent (and probably the largest) city on earth. Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, visited Babylon about one hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar's time and was overwhelmed by its grandeur.

As for the hanging gardens, according to the Babylonian historian Berosus, Nebuchadnezzar constructed them for his wife (Amytis) who had left the mountains of her native Media for the plains of Babylonia. Her husband, in effect, built a mountain in the city to remind his wife of her homeland. One text stated:

These were elevated gardens, high enough to be seen beyond the city walls. They boasted many different kinds of plants and palm trees. Ingenious hoists had been contrived by which to raise water to the high terraces from the Euphrates River.

Most of the bricks taken out of Babylon in the archaeological excavations bear the name and inscription of Nebuchadnezzar stamped on them. One of the records of Nebuchadnezzar sounds almost like the boast we see in verse 40. The brick reads, “The fortifications of Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever.”

How do you suppose the author of Daniel knew about Nebuchadnezzar’s great pride in his building activities if he wrote the book 400 years after the fact?

What was the straw that broke the camel’s back? The king looked out over his kingdom and said “Look what I have done!” Herod suffered a similar fate.

**Acts 12:21-23** — *And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*

Nebuchadnezzar, like Herod, was filled with pride at his own achievements. He had not given glory to God despite all that he now knew about God.

This is an important lesson for the church. Sometimes we may be tempted to boast about all that we have done and all that we have built in God’s kingdom. But the

church is not “our church” — it is the Lord’s church, and any building that goes on is done by him. God (not us) adds people to the Lord’s church.

**1 Corinthians 3:6** — *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*

God deserves all of the glory for whatever is accomplished in his eternal kingdom.

### **Daniel 4:31-33**

**31 While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.**

Notice that the account changes here from the first person to the third person. This makes sense since the king could not have been a sane witness of his own insanity!

God interrupts the mighty king while the words were still in his mouth. As McGuiggan points out, the king was “bragging one moment and munching the next!”

The humor of this incident is hard to miss. Imagine for a moment how the court must have handled the visit of foreign dignitaries. (“The king can’t talk to you right now... He’s grazing.”) (In Chapter 5 we will learn that he was living with wild donkeys.)

Poor Nebuchadnezzar. After all that he did, this is what he is most remembered for. Even Shakespeare mentions this episode. In *All’s Well That Ends Well*, the clown, after being rebuked for his ignorance of herbs, responds by saying, “I am no great Nebuchadnezzar, sir; I have not much skill in grass.”

In verse 31, God says that the kingdom “is departed” from him. So sure was the coming judgment that God speaks of it has already having happened. (We see this in Revelation 14:8 as well with regard to Rome — “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” — which was written when Rome was still very much in power.)

**Bible Study Tip:** When God starts using the past tense, it’s time to watch out! The sky is about to fall on someone, and there’s not a thing that can stop it.

Verse 33 tells us the condition of Nebuchadnezzar during his insanity. He grazed in the field like a beast. His hair, matted and coarse, looked like eagle feathers. His fingernails and toenails became like claws. This description suggests a long period of time, which is further evidence that “seven times” likely means “seven years.” (The thought was likely that “the full cycle of seasons, with all the changes in types of weather involved, would pass over the king seven times.”)

As we mentioned in our introductory comments, some have said that this description of Nebuchadnezzar is too absurd to be true. But is it really that absurd? Not at all. In fact, it is very similar to a known medical condition. It has been given vari-

ous names: insania zoanthropica, lycanthropy (originally just applied to thinking you are a wolf, but now expanded to other animals), and boanthropy (thinking you are a bovine). R. K. Harrison speaks of an encounter he had with such a person in a British mental hospital. He ate only vegetation and drank only water. His health was excellent. The patient wandered about the grounds of the institution eating grass as if he were a cow, and the only physical abnormality noticed was the length and coarseness of his hair and the thickened condition of his nails. Another example that was mentioned in a commentary was that of a man who believed himself to be a cat for a period of over thirteen years and yet was gainfully employed the entire time. (But the commentary failed to tell us what job he had!)

No Babylonian record has been found that mentions any activity by Nebuchadnezzar during the seven year period from 582 to 575 BC. What do you think he was up to? (Perhaps he was “out standing in his field”!)

Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Amel-Marduk, likely reigned while his father was out in the pasture munching grass.

For those who argue the event did not happen because it is not described in any of the Babylonian Chronicles, I have two responses.

First, those Chronicles do not purport to be nor are they an exhaustive description of everything the king did.

Second, and more importantly, this is not the type of thing that Nebuchadnezzar would have wanted preserved for perpetuity in his royal inscriptions. (Think of Roosevelt and his wheel chair.)

### **Daniel 4:34-35**

**34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine under-**



**standing returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?**

For the third time in as many chapters, King Nebuchadnezzar seems to get the message. His reason returns to him, and he realizes just how inappropriate his pride was.

God deserves all of the glory and praise because he has an everlasting dominion and an eternal kingdom — unlike the king whose kingdom could be taken from him. No one can stay God's hand — unlike as God had done to the king's hand. No one can question God's actions — unlike the way that God had repeatedly questioned Nebuchadnezzar's actions.

If it is foolish to say to a human king, "What are you doing?" (Ecclesiastes 8:4), how much more foolish is it for a human king to say to the divine king, "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35).

**Daniel 4:36-37**

**36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.**

As promised, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was returned to him and he was returned to power. In fact, he says here that even more greatness was added to him.

Do you think that this is how he would have expressed his increased greatness before he learned a lesson about pride? That his greatness was **added** to him? Added by whom?

Again, the significant part of this account is that Nebuchadnezzar regained his kingdom. That proved to him and to all the people that his kingdom was not his because of his own power or genius. His kingdom was a gift from God — and perhaps at last he understood that. He perhaps finally knew the power of the God of the Hebrews. It sounds like he did — but we have been here before!

## History Between Chapters 4 and 5

This is the end of the story as far as Nebuchadnezzar is concerned in the book of Daniel or in the Bible — verse 18 is the last time his name is mentioned in Scripture.

By any measure, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most towering figures of human history, and certainly one of the most powerful rulers ever to walk the earth. But was he in charge? Was he in control? Or was he just a tool in the hand of God? And when parents choose names for their sons today — do they choose his name, or do they instead consider the name of a Jewish exile that, from a human perspective, would have been considered utterly insignificant when compared with the mighty Nebuchadnezzar? We must learn to see things as God sees them! That is a central message of this book.

Before proceeding to Chapter 5, it will be helpful to briefly consider the history that occurred between the events in these two chapters. Without any warning or explanation, the narrative leaps from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 4 to the very end (very last day!) of the Babylonian empire in Chapter 5.

**Note:** It is clear here that a large break in time occurs between these two chapters. Later we will see other large breaks in time that likewise occur without warning — but they should not come as a surprise to us since we now know that such breaks occur in the book.

Nebuchadnezzar died in 563. He was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk or man of Marduk), who released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him an honorable place in the court (2 Kings 25:27-30). (Perhaps when you name your son “Evil” you have only yourself to blame when he turns out bad!)

Two years later, Evil-Merodach was assassinated by his brother-in-law, who died four years later. He was succeeded by his son, who was murdered nine months later. When the dust cleared, Nabonidus was on the throne. He most likely married a

daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his claim to the throne. Belshazzar, whom we will meet in the first verse of Chapter 5, was the son of Nabonidus.

The final year of the Chaldean empire was 539 BC. The ruler who defeated them was Cyrus the Great. The ruler who takes charge of the city of Babylon under Cyrus is Darius the Mede. So there is a big jump in time between Daniel 4:37 and Daniel 5:1.

## CHAPTER 5

Daniel 4 focused on Nebuchadnezzar's pride, Daniel 5 will focus on Belshazzar's pride. The major difference between Chapters 4 and 5 is in the response of the king. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar ultimately repents of his arrogance and is restored to his former position. In Daniel 5, Belshazzar does not repent and is killed.

We will see Belshazzar's sins in this chapter — and we have seen those same sins before: arrogance, blasphemy, and idolatry.

The theme of Daniel 5 fits into the theme of the whole book: In spite of present appearances, God is in control. This theme is important in the context of the oppression of God's people at the hands of arrogant pagan rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Do we face oppression today from arrogant pagan rulers? Remember the theme of Daniel — in spite of present appearances, God is in control!

### **Daniel 5:1-4**

**1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels**

**which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.**

If you are looking for controversy in Chapter 5, you don't have to look any further than the first word of the first verse — Belshazzar. The transition from Daniel 4 to 5 is an abrupt one, and Belshazzar is thrust onto the stage with no indication of the passage of time or the death of Nebuchadnezzar.

In this chapter, Daniel tells us that Belshazzar was king of Babylon, that Belshazzar was the last Chaldean king, and that Nebuchadnezzar was his father. In fact, Nabonidus was the last king and Belshazzar's father. How do we explain that?

For many years, liberal critics said that Belshazzar was a fictional character invented by the author of Daniel. But, as with so many attacks from the liberal critics, archaeology has now confirmed the Biblical account. (Both they and we should remember this when we get to Darius the Mede at the end of this chapter!) Never bet against the Bible!

Thirty-seven archival texts dated from the first to the fourteenth year of Nabonidus now attest to Belshazzar's historicity. We now know both from the Bible and from

extra-Biblical history that Belshazzar existed, that he was the son of Nabonidus, that he was reigning as co-regent at this time in history, and that he was in charge of the city when it fell to the Persians — all exactly as Daniel told us.

We do, however, have some questions we need to consider.

### QUESTION 1

Why doesn't Chapter 5 mention Nabonidus (Belshazzar's father)?

We know that Daniel was aware of Nabonidus because of what is recorded in verses 7, 16, and 29 of this chapter. In those verses, Belshazzar promises to make someone the *third* ruler in his kingdom. Why the third? Because Belshazzar and Nabonidus were the first two rulers in the kingdom.

Why not mention Nabonidus by name? Because he did not play any part in the events described in this chapter. For all practical purposes Belshazzar was the only king the people served. Belshazzar may not have been the *de jure* king, but he was definitely the *de facto* king.

### QUESTION 2

Why is Nebuchadnezzar called the father of Belshazzar four times in Daniel 5 and Belshazzar is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar once in that chapter when Belshazzar was actually the son of Nabonidus?

The answer to this question hinges on the meaning of "son." One scholar has listed **seven** ways in which the term "father" was used in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and **twelve** possible meanings for "son."

"Father" and "son" can simply mean "ancestor" and "descendent." (For example, Jesus as the son of David, the Jews as the sons of Jacob with Abraham as their father.) It is possible that a genetic relationship existed between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. If Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimize his rule, then his son by her would be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This view is

strengthened by the fact that Nabonidus named one of his sons Nebuchadnezzar. Also, an earlier king (Neriglissar) is known to have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

It is even possible that Belshazzar was the literal son of Nebuchadnezzar. Only six or seven years elapsed between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Nabonidus to the throne. It is possible that the new king married a wife of Nebuchadnezzar who had a son by Nebuchadnezzar, and that Nabonidus then adopted that son. I would not call this explanation likely, but it is possible. The most likely explanation is the previous one — that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, which means that Belshazzar was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

Another explanation is that “by ancient usage the term son often referred to a successor in the same office whether or not there was a blood relationship.” This may have been the usage in Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 27:7** — *All the nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.*

In the Assyrian text commonly referred to as the “Black Obelisk” of Shalmaneser III, Jehu is called the “son of Omri,” although Jehu was not a descendant of Omri. He was of another lineage altogether. There “son” is used to mean “successor.”

### QUESTION 3

Why does Daniel say that Belshazzar was king of Babylon when his father was the actual king?

Archaeology has shown that Nabonidus took up residence at Teman in north Arabia and left his son Belshazzar in charge of the northern frontier of the Babylonian empire. Thus, Belshazzar became the *de facto* king of Babylon.

Further, tablets dating from 543 BC have been found which imply that Belshazzar and his father were on equal footing. Daniel knew what he was talking about!

Some of the ancient evidence suggests that the leader of the assassination plot against the previous Babylonian king, Labashi-Marduk, had been Belshazzar himself. It suggests that Belshazzar profited financially by the previous king's death and even suggests that it was Belshazzar who proposed his old father, Nabonidus, to the conspirators as the new king, evidently reasoning that his father would soon die, and he would then become the new ruler.

#### **QUESTION 4**

Why not just call Belshazzar the “son of Nabonidus?”

Nabonidus was a very unpopular king. This may explain why he was absent from the city of Babylon for 14 years.

Also, inscriptions have been found that show Nabonidus claimed to have authority from Nebuchadnezzar to administer his kingdom. Thus, it is quite likely that Nabonidus' sons were required to be addressed as sons of Nebuchadnezzar to stress this connection. (Belshazzar and the Queen both refer to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter.)

Once again we have evidence for an early date for this book. Knowledge of Belshazzar seems to have faded by the time of Herodotus (fifth century BC) and Xenophon (fourth century BC). If the book had been written in the second century, the name “Nabonidus” would have been used rather than the then-forgotten “Belshazzar.”



# LESSON 17

It was bad enough when Nebuchadnezzar looted the temple and stole the gold and silver vessels, but now Belshazzar and his friends are using them in a drunken feast while they praise their false gods and idols.

The Greek historians, Herodotus and Xenophon, both tell us that a banquet was in progress on the night Babylon fell. The date would have been October 12, 539 BC, about thirty or forty years after the events of Chapter 4. Daniel is now in his eighties.

What was going on outside the city during this feast? The Persian armies were camped outside the city walls. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Babylonians had suffered a crushing defeat just days before at the hands of the Persians, and Nabonidus (Belshazzar's father) had fled. Only the city of Babylon remained unconquered. The Nabonidus Chronicle also says that the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without any battle, which as we will see is precisely what Daniel 5 also tells us.

What was the purpose of this feast? Was it to rally and encourage the leaders? Was it to give the people a diversion in the face of the Persian onslaught? Was it to eat and drink today for tomorrow we die? Perhaps it was a bit of all three. Perhaps Belshazzar was simply trying to drown his fears with alcohol. Verse 1 says that Belshazzar drank wine, or more accurately, "tasted the wine." Some commentaries say that this phrase refers to a ritual that preceded the feast in which the king tasted the wine. But others think that "tasting the wine" is just a euphemism for saying that the king was drunk — which seems to fit the context very well.

Perhaps the feast was intended to build morale and encourage the king's people — to show the king's confidence in the face of the Persians. After all, the walls of the city likely seemed invincible, and the Euphrates River ran through the city; so there was an ample water supply. Herodotus tells us that the city had been stocked with enough food to last for many years.

Or, perhaps when news of Nabonidus' defeat at Sippar fifty miles to the north and his subsequent flight two days earlier became known in Babylon, Belshazzar may have moved quickly to proclaim himself the *first* ruler of the empire, the *de facto* king (with Nabonidus being moved to the *second* slot). If so, then the festival may have been a celebration of Belshazzar's coronation.

Or, perhaps the Babylonians were simply observing a customary festival that happened to fall on this day. Xenophon and Herodotus appear to support that view.

Why were the Jewish temple vessels used? First, notice how the vessels mentioned in the first chapter (written in *Hebrew*) play a prominent role in this event from the fifth chapter (written in *Aramaic*). It is this type of evidence that causes even liberal scholars to agree that Daniel was written by a single author even though two different languages were used.

It seems clear (especially from verse 23) that Belshazzar made a deliberate decision to challenge and blaspheme the God of Israel. Why? Perhaps Belshazzar wanted to show that he was greater than Nebuchadnezzar. In effect, he may have been saying to God, "You may have humbled Nebuchadnezzar, but you will never humble me!"

Also, Belshazzar may have already known about the prophecies of his defeat. In Chapter 8, we will see that in the third year of Belshazzar's reign Daniel had prophesied about Babylon's fall to the Persians. Also, Isaiah had mentioned Cyrus, the Persian king, **by name** 150 years before he conquered Babylon (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Belshazzar may have been challenging those prophecies by using the temple vessels during his drunken feast.

**Daniel 5:5-6**

**5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.**  
**6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.**

Suddenly, at the height of Belshazzar's blasphemy, drunkenness, and immorality, the revelry stops. No trumpet blast, no earthquake, no fanfare. Just the fingers of a hand that appear, write four words (two of which are identical), and then vanish — leaving only the words on the wall.

The reference to the “fingers” of God should not surprise us. Although God is a Spirit (John 4:24), God's actions are frequently described metaphorically as the acts of his hand. In response to the plagues, the Egyptian magicians remarked, “This is the finger of God” (Exodus 8:19). Exodus also describes the commandments as written by God's finger on the stone tablets (Exodus 31:18). The heavens themselves are “the work of [his] fingers” (Psalm 8:3).

As the king gazes at the words, his color changes, his limbs give way, and his knees knock together. The word “color” or “countenance” in verse 6 literally means “brightness.” That is, his bright looks, his cheerfulness, and his hilarity were

changed. Literally, the text says that “the joints of his loin were loosened,” which may suggest various other symptoms of extreme panic (which we won’t go into)!

One early commentator wrote:

Belshazzar had as much of power and of drink withal to lead him to bid defiance to God as any ruffian under heaven; and yet when God, as it were, lifted up his finger against him, how poorly did Belshazzar crouch and shiver. How did his joints loose, and his knees knock together!

The archaeologist Koldewey, who led a number of excavations at Babylon beginning in March 1899, may have discovered the very room where this event took place. Off the largest of the five courtyards in the king’s palaces was a huge chamber with three entrances that Koldewey identified as the throne room. Koldewey reports:

It is so clearly marked out for this purpose [as a throne-room] that no reasonable doubt can be felt as to its having been used as their principal audience chamber. If any one should desire to localize the scene of Belshazzar’s eventful banquet, he can surely place it with complete accuracy in this immense room.

Along one of the long walls, as Koldewey described it, was a niche opposite the entrance in which Koldewey suggests the king’s throne stood. Koldewey tells us that the walls of the throne room “were washed over with white gypsum.” Verse 5 tells us that the wall was covered with plaster.

Now how would the author of Daniel have known this fact if he had been writing from Palestine hundreds of years after this time as the liberal critics ask us to believe?

**Daniel 5:7-9**

**7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.**

The king calls out loudly or “with strength.” It is easy to picture him screaming for his wise men — and no doubt these so-called wise men will prove just as effective as they have the other times they have been summoned! It is not clear who else in the room saw the words, which may explain why the room was still noisy enough that the king had to shout.

Belshazzar promises to make the interpreter the *third* ruler in the kingdom. Why the third? Because that is all Belshazzar could promise. He himself was the second ruler, and his father Nabonidus was the first ruler (or perhaps vice versa). The top two slots were already taken!

It would be helpful if the liberals who see mistakes around every corner in the Bible would bother to read the Bible that they love to attack. If they did, then they would discover that Daniel knew perfectly well that Belshazzar was not the only king in Babylon at this time.

The wise men could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Why couldn't the king's advisors read or interpret this message? Many theories have been advanced to explain why the king's wise men could not read this message or interpret it. (Why they could not *interpret* it is easier to explain than why they could not *read* it.)

### QUESTION 1

What *language* were the words written in? Most commentators think that the words were written in Aramaic because that is the language used in Chapter 5. But others argue that the wise men would have been able to read the words had they been written in Aramaic, and verse 8 tells us they could not read the writing.

But verses 25-28 suggest very strongly that the words were in fact written in Aramaic — those verses give us the actual Aramaic words. If they were written in another language, then verses 25-28 must be giving us the Aramaic translations of the words, but that seems an odd conclusion in view of verse 25: "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." Also, there is some word play involved with the final of the four words, and that word play likely would not have come across in a different language.

But if the words were in Aramaic, then why couldn't the wise men read them? We will come back to that question in a moment.

Others think that the words were written in Hebrew. If true, this would explain why the wise men could not read the language. This is a popular view, but it means that verse 25 is not giving us the actual words that were written, but is instead giving us their Aramaic translations. Even so, that is a possible explanation.

Other suggestions include the Phoenician language and an unknown language known only to Daniel. There is no evidence for either of those suggestions.

I think the description of these events in Chapter 5 strongly suggests that the words were written in Aramaic. Hebrew is the next best option, but I think the most likely answer is Aramaic — and that the actual words written on the wall are the four Aramaic words found in verse 25.

## **QUESTION 2**

If the language was Aramaic, then how can we explain why the wise men were not able to read it?

According to Jewish tradition, the letters were not comprehensible because they were written vertically, forming an anagram, instead of horizontally. Others suggest that they were written with unusually shaped characters. Others think that only the first letters of the words may have been given, or that the words may have been jumbled.

Also, vowels were not written with consonants in Aramaic so even if the *letters* were understood, it might be impossible to read them absent context.

Some suggest that the wise men were stricken with blindness, but the king was apparently also unable to read the message, and he was certainly able to see the writing on the wall.

In short, all we know is that the wise men could not read or understand the words — we are not told why.

This event gives us a wonderful example of the unity of the Bible. The Bible was written by many different authors over about 1500 years — but each writer was inspired by God, and so we see a unity throughout the Bible, from the first book written to the last book written. There are no contradictions. As the plan of God is revealed from the beginning to the end of the Bible, we see a single unified message.

**Wayne Jackson:** One of the truly astounding features of the Bible is the fact that these 66 documents, written over a span of some 1,600 years (from at least 1500 BC to AD 100), all fit together in such a stunningly coordinated pattern. Every book has its place and its unique contribution to make to the body of sacred literature. ... A magnificent chorus of three-score and six masterpieces, collectively providing evidence of our great Creator and his redemptive love for humanity.

How do we see that in Daniel 5? The Babylonian Empire was coming to an *end* this very night — and what was happening? There was confusion about language. How did Babylon *begin*? With a confusion of language in Genesis 11:1-9. God took them out the way they came in! They had not learned their lesson.

No one who studies the Bible can fail to see that one author is behind it all — and not just in writing it, but also in doing it!

### **Daniel 5:10-12**

**10 Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezz-**



**zar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.**

The queen in verse 10 is not the wife of Belshazzar because verse 2 tells us that Belshazzar's "wives" were already present at the feast and this queen was not initially present at the feast, but came in only later when she heard about the trouble.

So who was she? She must have been a highly prestigious person to enter the banquet hall uninvited. Also, when she arrived, she seems to have taken charge. For these reasons most commentators have identified her as the queen-mother, either the widow of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus (possibly the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar) or both (if Nabonidus married the widow of Nebuchadnezzar). She was likely the mother of Belshazzar. If she was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, she may have been the famous Nitocris.

At any rate, this woman had firsthand information about Nebuchadnezzar that would not have been known by a younger wife of Belshazzar, and she seems to have personally witnessed Daniel's earlier activities in Nebuchadnezzar's court. This queen seems to have known a lot about Daniel and his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. This would be easy to explain if Nebuchadnezzar was her father. No-

tice that even the queen herself refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the *father* of Belshazzar, which suggests she had a very strong link to Nebuchadnezzar.

Whoever this queen was, she was *not* initially at the drunken feast. This suggests that she may have been the real power here since someone was presumably worrying about the Persians who were camped just outside!

Notice that the queen twice referred to Daniel by his personal Hebrew name, Daniel, which suggests she knew him well. Belshazzar, on the other hand, does not seem to have known Daniel. How can that be explained?

It could be that the king had forgotten, that the king did not recognize the now much older Daniel, or that the king was too drunk to remember much of anything. Also, Nebuchadnezzar had died over 20 years ago, and Daniel apparently did not now enjoy the same exalted position he had under Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel likely retired (or perhaps had been forcibly retired) from public life when Nebuchadnezzar died, at which time Daniel was in his sixties.

The appearance of this queen may answer another question from earlier in the chapter — how did Belshazzar know about the temple vessels in the first place? Perhaps his mother told him about the items that her father had brought back from Jerusalem.

Notice in verse 10 that the queen entered the king's presence unbidden. According to Esther 4:11 she could have been put to death for this under the Persian system. Perhaps a similar system was used by the Chaldeans. The translators of the Septuagint thought so because they felt this behavior was so odd that they added a phrase ("The king called the queen on account of the mystery") to explain it.

But is this really that odd if this queen is Belshazzar's mother and the wife of the king? She likely didn't need permission to do anything!

Again we are faced with the question of why Daniel was called *last* and not *first*. Since this happens each time he is called, I am inclined to believe that God was behind it and arranged things so that it would happen this way each time. He seems

to have wanted all of the other wise men to be proved incapable before Daniel was called — and this is just what happened each time.

Here, of course, we have another possibility — the king did not know or remember Daniel, and it was not until the queen entered that he found out about Daniel.

### **Daniel 5:13-16**

**13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet,**

**and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

Belshazzar relays the story of what has happened and offers Daniel the same rewards he offered the others if he can interpret the writing.

In verse 13, Belshazzar refers to “the king my father.” He is *not* speaking of Nabonidus but of Nebuchadnezzar. Even Belshazzar himself referred to Nebuchadnezzar as his father. It was apparently very important to Nabonidus and Belshazzar both that they legitimize their rule at every opportunity by linking themselves to Nebuchadnezzar. Also, by mentioning Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar gave Daniel an opportunity to give him a little history lesson, which Daniel proceeds to do.

Why did Belshazzar remind Daniel that he was a Jewish exile? What was the king’s purpose? He may have been attempting to intimidate Daniel by reminding him that he was just a lowly captive. (Let’s see how that plan works out for the king!)

Why does Belshazzar use the name “Daniel” rather than the Babylonian name “Belteshazzar” in addressing the prophet? Perhaps because the latter name was so similar to his own name!

### **Daniel 5:17-24**

**17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory,**

**and honour: 19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and**

**stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.**

Why did Daniel refuse the king's gifts? It would not have been wrong to accept them — he had earlier accepted the gifts and favors of Nebuchadnezzar, as had his three friends.

Perhaps Daniel felt that he was too old to get back into government service, which would have been required had he assumed the position that Belshazzar offered. (However, he did serve a role in the Persian government, which took over the very next day!)

The best explanation is that Daniel knew that neither Belshazzar, Belshazzar's rule, nor the Chaldean kingdom over which he ruled was going to last through the night. These promised gifts were meaningless!

Before Daniel interprets the message, he gives the king both a history lesson and a stern reprimand. In verse 19, Daniel reminds Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute sovereign. He could dispense life and death at his whim — unlike Belshazzar who seems to be much less powerful and mighty. Would Nebuchadnezzar have spent the night in a drunken feast with the enemy camped just outside the city? To paraphrase a famous quote of a Texas senator, Daniel was telling the king: "I knew Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was a friend of mine. You, sir, are no Nebuchadnezzar!" The great Nebuchadnezzar had submitted to God's sovereignty, while Belshazzar, who was hardly worthy to be compared with the earlier king, had not.

The “but” in verse 20 was the turning point in this event from the life of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was great, *but*... He was filled with pride and refused to give the glory to God. But as bad as Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment was, Belshazzar’s punishment was going to be worse. As with any good history teacher, Daniel reminds the king in verse 22 that he already knew all of this but he had not learned from the past.

Do you get the feeling that Belshazzar may already be regretting having summoned Daniel! If he had wondered what could be worse than having his feast interrupted by a writing finger — he is now finding out!

Notice that although Chapter 4 describes Nebuchadnezzar’s seven year humiliation, only in verse 21 here does Daniel divulge that Nebuchadnezzar lived with the “wild donkeys.” That must have been quite a sight!

As for verses 22-23, one commentator said:

There is no finer example of the preacher’s diction in the Bible than this stern and inexorable condemnation.

As we mentioned, in verse 22 Daniel tells the king that he knew all of this. How would Belshazzar have known about Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation? Certainly rumors about the event would have been known, but evidence suggests that Belshazzar may have seen those events firsthand. Belshazzar served as chief officer during the administration of King Neriglissar in 560 BC according to Babylonian historical texts. That means that the king was old enough to fill a high position in government only two years after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (562 BC). Since Nabonidus was an official in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration, Belshazzar would have lived in Babylon and would have observed personally the last years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. If true, that would make Daniel’s strong rebuke even more understandable. Belshazzar had seen with his own eyes what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and yet he had refused to humble himself before God.

**Daniel 5:25-28**

**25 And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.**

Daniel finally interprets (and possibly translates) the four words (three different words) on the wall.

Even if the king could have read the words, they would have been hard to understand. Literally they mean “Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided.” Daniel will need to tell the king (and us) what the words mean.

The first word “MENE” was repeated twice, likely to stress the certainty of its fulfillment. The word means numbered, counted out, or measured. It meant that the years of Belshazzar’s reign had been counted out to their very last one. If he had ever wondered how long he would reign as king (or live, for that matter), he now knew. The count was complete. Both his days and the days of his kingdom were numbered — they were both coming to a swift end.

The third word (and second distinct word) was “TEKEL.” That word means “weighed,” and Daniel explained that Belshazzar had been weighed and found wanting. He did not measure up. He was the classic example of a light-weight ruler! (That description reminds me of what the late William F. Buckley said when



he learned that Geraldo Rivera wanted to be the first reporter to travel into space. He said that would be a great idea because it would allow us to test the effects of weightlessness on weightlessness!)

The fourth word (and third distinct word) was “PHARSIN.” That word means “to divide,” and Daniel says that Belshazzar’s kingdom had been divided and given instead to the Medes and the Persians who were at that time besieging the city. The word “divided” here means “separated” — the kingdom was divided or separated from Belshazzar and given to another.

The “divided” or “shared” or “fragmented” may also refer to the sharing of power by the Medes and Persians. If so, this would further discredit the liberal idea that Daniel thought a *separate* Median kingdom ruled before the Persians took over.

There is a double word play at work with this final word. This fourth word is similar to the word “Persian,” which means that Daniel knew that the kingdom that defeated the Chaldeans was the Medo-Persian kingdom — and not the Medes all by themselves as the liberals suggest.

And the meaning is not that the kingdom was to be divided into two equal parts, and the one part given to the Medes and the other to the Persians, but that the kingdom was to be separated from Belshazzar or that it was to be destroyed or dissolved. In fact, verse 28 specifically states that Belshazzar’s kingdom would be given to the “Medes and Persians,” which proves that the writer of Daniel was well aware that there was no separate Median world empire succeeded by a Persian kingdom.

Why is that so important? Because we saw four worldwide empires in Chapter 2. If the Medes and Persians together make up one of those four kingdoms — then Rome must be the fourth. And we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that *predate* the Roman empire. That is why the liberals are forced to argue that Daniel treated the Medes and Persians as separate kingdoms even though even a casual glance at the text of Daniel shows that he did not.

The King James Version has UPHARSIN (rather than PHARSIN) for the fourth word in verse 25, but has PERES for the fourth word in verse 28. Why the difference? The “U” in “UPHARSIN” in the King James Version simply means “and.” Thus, the final word on the wall was “PHARSIN.” PHARSIN means “and they are dividing.” PERES is a passive participle form of the same root word and means “divided.”

# LESSON 18

Last week we ended by reading 5:25-28 and discussing the words on the wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. These words can also be translated to mean three different measures of weights. This ambiguity may also explain why the king's advisors were unable to tell the king to what the words referred. For example, does the word "pound" refer to a weight or to a monetary value? You need to know the context.

Liberals have latched onto this possible meaning and have suggested that instead of being written by God, the words were really written by a waiter at the feast who was just trying to remember how much food to serve. (This sort of crazy theory would be funny if it were not so sad. Maybe some day those liberals will also see the writing on the wall!)

Other commentators have also stressed the connection of these words with measures of weight — even though Daniel gives an interpretation in verses 26-28 that does *not* deal with measures of weight. We know what the words meant because Daniel tells us, and he did not say that they meant different measurements of weight. Nevertheless, some commentators have created elaborate theories based on these words meaning measures of weight.

For example, some argue that mene refers to mena, which equalled 50 shekels, and that upharsin (half a mena) equalled 25 shekels. They also say that tekem refers to shekel. Thus, the four words would then have stood for: mena, 50 shekels; mena, 50 shekels; tekem, 1 shekel; upharsin, 25 shekels. If you add that up you get 126 shekels. We are also told that a shekel can be divided up into 20 gerahs (Ezekiel 45:12). That would mean that the 126 shekels of Daniel 5:25 is equivalent to 2520 gerahs. Where

have we seen 2520 before? That was the number of years that the Jehovah's Witnesses counted from their (incorrect) date for the destruction of the temple to arrive at 1914 as the year the kingdom was established! (Recall that seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's madness times 360 days in a year gave us 2520.) So does this prophecy relate to something 2520 years away? No, both the text and history tell us that the prophecy was fulfilled within *hours* of when it was given. Also, Daniel gave us the meaning of the terms in verses 26-28, and he did not interpret them to mean various numbers of shekels.

Yes, numbers are used figuratively in the Bible. We will see some used that way in later chapters of this book. But when numbers are used figuratively in the Bible — we are given the numbers! The numbers are in the text! Here there are no numbers — not in the words on the wall, and not in the interpretation of the words on the wall. Once we start making up numbers, or assigning numeric codes to non-numeric words in the Bible, there is no end to what we could come up with. The first step to determining what a number in the Bible means is to actually have a number in the Bible — and we don't get past that first step here.

This is a good lesson for us as we approach some of the more difficult chapters in this book. Context is crucial, and we need to pay very close attention to what the text itself tells us about the visions that will be described.

You can “prove” just about anything with letters and numbers if you are willing to disregard context and common sense. You may have seen the books that purport to find secret codes embedded in the letters of the Bible when they are shifted and counted in certain ways.

The number 2520 coming up twice must mean something, right? Wrong. How old was William Shakespeare in 1611 when the King James Version was published? He was 46. What is the 46th word in Psalm 46? “Shake.” What is the 46th word counting backward from the end of Psalm 46 (ignoring the word “Selah” at the end)? “Spear.” Therefore William Shakespeare wrote Psalm 46. Right? Wrong! If you

think that is about the silliest theory you have ever heard about the Bible, then you should read more Daniel commentaries!

### **Daniel 5:29**

**29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

Belshazzar was true to his word even though Daniel had given him very bad news. He made Daniel “king for the day” — literally!

One might have thought that Belshazzar would have had Daniel killed on the spot for his effrontery. Why didn't he? He may not have wanted to appear untrue to his word in front of his guests. But if the king had survived the night, Daniel might not have fared very well after the guests were gone. The king may also have thought that Daniel's God would change his mind and spare him if he bestowed gifts on Daniel and made him his prime minister.

Why did Daniel *accept* the king's gifts in verse 29 after he had *refused* them in verse 17? First, verse 29 doesn't make it sound like Daniel had much choice in the matter. Second, as we have said, the gifts were meaningless. What good was it to be proclaimed (to the people in the room, not throughout the empire) the third ruler in an empire that would collapse in only a few hours?

**Daniel 5:30-31**

**30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.**

With its typical understatement of world events, the Bible uses only a few words to report one of the most significant events in world history, the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire. That night the city fell and with it the last remnants of Babylonian dominance. Belshazzar was executed only a few hours later.

According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the date was the sixteenth of the month Tishri, which most scholars agree would have been October 12, 539 BC. The banquet would then have been held on the night before, October 11, 539 BC.

The Greek historians Herodotus (484-425 BC) and Xenophon (434-355 BC) tell us how the Medes and the Persians took the city. The walls surrounding the city of Babylon were huge — there were two sets of double walls extending for miles (the outermost system being 17 miles in length). The outer walls were approximately 25 feet wide and rose to a height of at least 40 feet. These fortifications were too difficult to challenge, and so according to Herodotus and Xenophon, the Medo-Persian army diverted water from the Euphrates River (which ran under the walls of Babylon) into a marsh. With the level of the water lowered, the soldiers were able to wade the river under the walls and enter the city. Xenophon confirms what we see here in Chapter 5. He wrote that “the whole city that night seemed to be given up to revelry.” He also said that the king was killed the night the city was taken.

Here is how Herodotus, writing about 80 years after these events, explained what happened on that night:

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

Xenophon tells us that Gobryas, commander under Cyrus, led his soldiers into the palace, where they found the king holding a dagger, evidently with which to take his own life. According to Xenophon, the king and his attendants were overpowered, and the invaders "avenged themselves upon the wicked king," which obviously means that they executed him.

The Nabonidus Chronicle tells of Cyrus' invasion of Babylonia and the subsequent flight of Nabonidus after Sippar was taken on the fourteenth of Tishri (October 10, 539 BC). On the sixteenth day of Tishri (October 12, 539 BC), Cyrus' commander (Ugbaru) and the Medo-Persian army entered Babylon without a battle. Cyrus was welcomed by the city's inhabitants when he arrived on the third day of the month Arahshamnu (October 29, 539 BC).

The Cyrus Cylinder also records that Babylon was captured without a battle and that the citizens received Cyrus warmly.

Xenophon says that Gobryas was originally one of Nabonidus' governors and that he defected to Cyrus partly because the son of Nabonidus (Belshazzar) killed his only son in a fit of jealousy during a royal hunt. One of the ancient tablets says that the city yielded to Gobryas—Cyrus not appearing for several weeks—and that Gobryas was made governor and appointed other governors.

We see in these verses the fulfillment of prophecies from Isaiah 21 and Jeremiah 51 about the fall of Babylon.

**Isaiah 21:9** — *And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.*

**Jeremiah 51:52-55** — *Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Because the Lord hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered.*

Was all of this good news or bad news for God's people? It would have been possible for the next kingdom to be worse than the first, but not in this case. Though not related by the book of Daniel, the Medo-Persian kingdom's rise to power led quickly to the Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4), which allowed the return of the Jewish people to Palestine.



Verse 30 tells us that Belshazzar was killed that very night, and verse 31 tells us that Darius the Mede took over after Belshazzar.

### **Darius the Mede**

Who was Darius the Mede? We also looked at this question in our introductory lessons. One commentator has written:

The references to Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem of the book. ... The claim of the Book of Daniel to be a work of history, written by a well-informed contemporary, is shattered beyond repair by this fiction of Darius the Mede.

So does that mean this commentator rejected the message of Daniel? Not at all! Here is what else he said:

[The book of Daniel's] very historical mistakes add to the fulness of its religious message to our hearts, for the God Who maketh the wrath of men to praise Him can also convert the mistakes of His servants, whose hearts are consecrated to His service, to rich use.

That commentator is wrong on both counts. If the book of Daniel has no historical reliability, then the book of Daniel has no religious message at all. You cannot separate the two!

What does Jesus think about the historical reliability of Daniel? In Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus used the prophecies of Daniel to provide warnings for his disciples to escape the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

So was that commentator correct that Darius was just a fictional character from Daniel's imagination? Not at all.

First, it is interesting to note that Daniel gives far more information about the personal background of Darius than he does about Belshazzar or even about Nebuchadnezzar.

- Daniel 5:30 says that Darius was 62 when he began to reign. (This use of a very particular detail does not sound like a vague recollection about a forgotten or imagined king.)
- Daniel 5:30 also tells us his nationality — Darius was a Mede.
- Daniel 9:1 says that Darius was the son of Ahasuerus.

Thus, unlike even Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel tells us the age, the nationality, and the parentage of Darius.

Second, just because the name “Darius the Mede” has not been found in any ancient inscriptions does not mean that he did not exist. The critics made similar claims about Belshazzar, and archaeology later proved them wrong. (We wait in vain for their apology.)

Who then was Darius? We suggested in our introductory comments that Darius the Mede may have been an early governor of Babylon under Cyrus. The references to Darius in Daniel do not say that he ruled the Persian empire — only that he took control of the conquered Chaldean empire. It was a well-known practice of Cyrus to appoint Medes to high positions to foster goodwill and loyalty.

Which governor was he? John Whitcomb in his book *Darius the Mede* wrote the following:

Gubaru the Governor of Babylon fits the Biblical description of Darius the Mede so remarkably that the writer believes he will be recognized in due time as the monarch who played such an important role in the life of Daniel and the fall of Babylon.

So far we have mentioned three names of people who were governors or generals under Cyrus: Ugbaru (Cyrus’ general from the Nabonidus Chronicles), Gubaru

(Cyrus' governor from the same source), and Gobryas (the defector from Xenophon). How are these three people related?

As it turns out, that is a very difficult question to answer. Gobryas is the Greek form of both Ugbaru and Gubaru, and so the use of that name by Xenophon could refer to either person (and he seems to have confused the two).

Xenophon tells us that Gobryas was well advanced in years, and Ugbaru died three weeks after the city fell, so many equate the two on the basis of that clue, but others argue that Gobryas refers instead to Gubaru.

Should it concern us that Xenophon said that Gobryas was an Assyrian? No, because he referred to all Babylonians as Assyrians. Also, Gobryas could have been both a Babylonian and a Mede — just as Daniel was both a Babylonian (as a citizen of Babylon) and a Jew.

Still others argue that Ugbaru and Gubaru are the same person, just with different names in the Nabonidus Chronicles. This is unlikely because Ugbaru died soon after the city fell, whereas Gubaru did not.

In short, we know that Cyrus put generals in charge of his conquered territories, and we know that either one or two such men were very likely placed in that role here — either Ugbaru or Gubaru, who may be the same person. If not the same person, then Gubaru was likely placed in charge after the death of Ugbaru, which occurred only three weeks after the city fell. Either person could be the Gobryas we read about in Xenophon. If two people are involved, I think Gubaru is the best candidate because Ugbaru died so soon after the city fell.

What is the evidence for equating Darius with Gubaru? Ancient records reveal that Gubaru did govern Babylon during the period in question. For example, the Nabonidus Chronicles relate that Cyrus appointed Gubaru as the governor of Babylon immediately after the city was conquered. He may have continued in that position for 14 years.

The Nabonidus Chronicles reveal that Gubaru installed subgovernors in Babylon, and Daniel 6:1-2 tells us that Darius the Mede appointed subordinates to rule the kingdom.

Daniel 5:31 literally reads, “Darius the Mede received the kingdom.” That may mean that Darius (Gubaru) “received the kingdom” from a superior, namely, Cyrus. Likewise the declaration in Daniel 9:1 that Darius “was made ruler” may suggest that a superior (Cyrus) gave Darius his authority.

Concerning the designation of Darius as “king,” a governor could loosely be spoken of in this manner. He represented the royal authority after the king’s departure.

According to Daniel 5:31, Darius’ age was 62 years, and Xenophon reported that Gobryas was “a man well advanced in years.” (But this point assumes that Gobryas is Gubaru.)

If two people are involved, then Ugbaru is another possibility. But how could the Darius of Daniel be the Ugbaru of the Nabonidus Chronicles if the latter died only three weeks after the fall of Babylon?

At first glance, we only have to account for a few days of activity. We have the events in Chapter 6, which some commentaries suggest took about a week, and we have the visions in Chapters 9 and 11, which likely occurred during a single day or two. But Chapter 6 tells us that Darius set up 120 princes and three presidents, which must have taken some time, and it seems to me likely took more than just a week (but maybe not).

And, in fact, we have to account for something else as well. Darius knew about Daniel in Chapter 6, and he cared deeply about what happened to him. That relationship must have taken some time to develop, certainly more than three weeks.

An insurmountable problem for Ugbaru? Not necessarily. If Ugbaru is the Gobryas of Xenophon, then he had been a Babylonian general who defected to Cyrus. That means he could have known Daniel prior to the fall of the city.

Are there any other possibilities for Darius? Yes, there is one other strong possibility that we briefly considered in our introductory lessons, but dismissed. Having studied the issue some more, I now think we may have dismissed that possibility too quickly. Darius may have been none other than King Cyrus himself.

What is the evidence for equating Darius with Cyrus? Dual titles were not uncommon, and Cyrus and Darius were both titles. Since he was king of both Median and Persian territories, it might be expected that Cyrus the Persian would have had another title, such as Darius the Mede, that pertained particularly to the Medes. Herodotus recorded that Cyrus sometimes was referred to as the “king of the Medes” even after the fall of Babylon.

Dual Median and Persian titles also would accurately reflect Cyrus’ ancestry. The title “Darius the Mede” (5:31) indicates that Darius was of Median lineage, and later in the book the author specifically states that Darius was “a Mede by descent” (9:1). How can this be explained if Cyrus was a Persian? Cyrus’ father was a Persian, but his mother was the daughter of Astyages, the king of Media, and thus Cyrus was half Median. The Jews viewed a child of a mixed marriage according to the maternal descent. So perhaps Daniel followed a common Jewish practice in emphasizing the king’s maternal (Median) ancestry.

Daniel may have preferred the title “Darius the Mede” because it had particular significance for the Jews. Jeremiah (51:11, 28) had predicted the downfall of Babylon to the Medes, and Daniel may have employed the title to emphasize the fulfillment of those prophecies.

Two titles for the Medo-Persian king would not be out of place in the Book of Daniel. The prophecy was written in two languages, and Daniel and his three friends each had two names.

Cyrus’ age would conform to known historical data. Cicero reported Cyrus’ age as 70 when he died and cuneiform texts relate that Cyrus reigned nine years after he

conquered Babylon. Thus, in 539 BC, Cyrus would have been about 62 years of age, the same figure given by Daniel.

Babylon was Cyrus' winter residence, according to Xenophon, which would agree with Daniel's reports concerning his presence in the city.

But what about Daniel 6:28 ("So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian")? That verse could be translated as: "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian." That is, verse 28 may be explaining that Darius and Cyrus were the same person. A close parallel is found in 1 Chronicles 5:26, which reads, "So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria." Assyrian records identify Tiglath-Pileser and Pul as one and the same person.

In Daniel 9:1, Darius is designated "son of Xerxes" (literally, "Ahasuerus"). Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was certainly a royal title (it was used by other kings) and here may refer either to Cyrus' father, Cambyses, or to Cyrus' grandfather, Astyages, the king of the Medes.

Ancient Jewish sources lend support to the supposition that Darius the Mede was Cyrus the Persian. In Daniel 11:1 both the Septuagint and Theodotion read Cyrus rather than the Masoretic Text's Darius the Mede. Baldwin asserts: "This suggests that the Greek translator knew of the double name, and preferred to use the one that was better known to avoid confusing his readers." The Jewish author of *Bel and the Dragon* preserved the name Cyrus as the king who cast Daniel in the den of lions.

The visions in Chapter 7 and 8 occurred during the reign of Belshazzar. The visions of Chapters 9 and 11 occurred during the reign of Darius, while Chapter 11 occurred during the reign of Cyrus.

Again, we have evidence for an *early* date. Daniel mentions Cyrus by name in 6:28, and the Bible mentions Cyrus elsewhere — so if this book had been written centuries after these events as the liberals suggest, then wouldn't we expect it to have

Nabonidus ruling in Chapter 5 and Cyrus ruling in Chapter 6? That instead we see Belshazzar and Darius shows that the book was written at the time these events occurred. No one trying to create a forgery would have used those two names.

The theory that Darius was a fictional creation of the author of Daniel must be rejected. The return from captivity was one of the most significant events in Jewish history. To suggest that any even semi-educated Jew of the Maccabean period could be ignorant of the fact that it was Cyrus the Persian who conquered the Babylonian Empire and allowed the Jewish captives to return to their homeland is not reasonable. The Book of Ezra, which undoubtedly would have been at the writer's disposal if the book had been written during the Maccabean period, specifically declares that Cyrus released the Jews from captivity in Babylon. Ezra also understands that Darius I (not Darius the Mede) ruled Persia long after Cyrus (Ezra 4-5).

If Daniel had been written during the Maccabean period, Chapter 5 would have mentioned only Nabonidus, and Chapter 6 would have mentioned only Cyrus.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Daniel 6:1-3**

**1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the**

**king should have no damage. 3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.**

The theme of Chapter 6 will be the same theme we have seen in the prior chapters: Despite all appearances to the contrary, God is in control.

But what do we mean when we say that God is in control? Do we mean that God was in control of Daniel — that Daniel had no choice but to obey? No, it can't mean that. We know that Daniel, like us, had free will, and he could choose to obey or disobey. God can't give us free will and simultaneously control us like a puppet.

Do we mean that God was in control of these pagan kings — that God forced them to take the actions they did, so that they were not personally responsible? No, it can't mean that. God held them responsible for their bad decisions. He often turned their evil into something good for his people, but that they were held accountable for their deeds tells us that they were not puppets.

What then does it mean when we say that God is in control? We mean exactly what we see happening here in Daniel. That God has a plan for his people, and that plan was going to occur — and no one or no nation could do anything to stop it. We mean the same thing Paul meant:

**Romans 8:38-39** — *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*



Paul was not far from his own death at the hand of the Romans when he wrote that. Do you think Paul ever doubted that God was in control — even as Paul was being executed by Nero?

God is in control. Yes, men have free will, and yes, the situation may at times look bleak. But God loves his people and has a plan for his people, and that plan has happened, is happening, and will happen exactly as God intends — God is in control! That is the message of Daniel 6, just as it has been the message of the prior chapters.

# LESSON 19

Let's start with a word or two about terminology. Here is how a few of the commentaries I read describe Chapter 6:

One of the most familiar **stories** in the Bible is found in this chapter.

THE **STORY** OPENS with the new king setting up his personal form of government for Babylonia.

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with calling Chapter 6 a “story,” and I may slip up occasionally and call it that myself. But when I am *thinking* about what I should call it, I will use the word “event” rather than the word “story.” The word “story” often connotes fiction, and we are not reading fiction. Instead we are reading about actual historical *events*.

The “kingdom” over which Darius ruled was the old Chaldean kingdom that Cyrus had just conquered. This was the only earthly kingdom that Daniel has been concerned with so far, and so he continues to refer to it as just “the kingdom.” In particular, he is *not* referring to all of Persia.

Verse 1 says that Darius appointed 120 princes over the whole kingdom. The word translated “princes” in the KJV is better translated “satraps.” What is a satrap? Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his book *Persia and the Bible*, wrote:

The satrap was in charge of all aspects of provincial rule. He levied the funds necessary for his administration and provided troops for the king.

Darius' first responsibility was to appoint these 120 administrators over the newly won territory. He appoints 120 satraps and three presidents or commissioners of which Daniel becomes the chairman.

Liberals argue that there weren't really 120 satraps. Are they correct? Be careful — that's a trick question. Satraps operated in areas called satrapies, and the ancient records give various figures for the number of satrapies. Herodotus says there were 20, the Behistun Inscription of Darius I gives 23, and a tomb inscription gives 29 — none is close to 120. So why does Daniel say there were 120 satrapies? He doesn't. He says there were 120 satraps. That word can apply to various levels of administrators, including lower officials of which there could be many in a single satrapy.

Verse 2 tells us that three head administrators (including Daniel) watched over the 120 satraps so that the kingdom would not be damaged. That means Daniel was in charge of watching the tax collectors so that they could not steal from the king. (Do we perhaps see another motive at play here by some in wanting to get honest Daniel out of such a position?)

We see in verse 3 that Daniel's character and integrity are such that Darius plans to make him his prime minister. If Darius answered only to Cyrus, then this position would have made Daniel third in power, which is what the late Belshazzar had promised him!

Why did Darius think so highly of Daniel?

- Daniel had a good reputation. Verse 3 says that an excellent spirit was in him!
- Daniel had recently made a very successful prediction concerning Belshazzar.
- Daniel was not a Chaldean, but he was very familiar with their system.
- Daniel was experienced. (He was over 80 years old at this time!)

And, most importantly, God was on Daniel's side, and God wanted Daniel in this position to influence the new government.

We have seen Daniel from age 13 to age 80, and one thing we can say for sure is that Daniel did *not* suffer from the sin of *pusillanimity*! What sin is that? The word means "smallness of soul." It refers to people who shrink back from all that God wants them to be. When faced with the effort and difficulty of stretching themselves to the great things of which they are capable, they cringe and say, "I can't." Picture Moses at the burning bush. The future leader of Israel stands there stuttering that he's not qualified, and asks God to send Aaron instead.

When Daniel was 13, he did not say he was too young. When Daniel was 80, he did not say he was too old. Even at age 80, Daniel was ready to do whatever God wanted him to do! Nothing stifles church growth faster than pusillanimity!

### **Daniel 6:4**

**4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.**

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, jealousy (and possibly greed) quickly rears its ugly head. Those who are jealous and envious of Daniel seek at once to bring him down.

Nothing they could possibly do could bring Daniel down one inch. They could lie about him and change the opinion of other men, but they could do nothing to change God's opinion of Daniel — and that is the only opinion that matters.

We need to remember this, particularly when faced with false accusations. God knows the truth, and he will never be fooled by a false accusation. We know that Satan is an accuser of God's people and that he accuses us night and day (Revelation 12:10). We just need to make sure that whatever he accuses us of is not true.

This is not the only place in Scripture where something like this occurs. Jesus, also, was delivered up because of envy, and he also faced false accusers.

In Proverbs 6, God lists seven things that he hates:

**Proverbs 6:17-19** — *Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.*

Of how many of these seven things were these envious men guilty? All seven!

## **Daniel 6:5**

**5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.**

What a compliment! Do people see us this way? If people wanted something bad to say about us, would they find it? We need to make sure that the most anyone can ever truthfully accuse us of is following the law of God!

And the time is coming (and is likely already here) where that accusation alone will be enough to get us fired from our jobs or worse. In other countries, proclaiming God's word on homosexuality can get you jailed, and in many Arab countries proclaiming God's word on *anything* can get you killed.

These accusers knew that to succeed they would have to put Daniel in a position where he would have to choose between obedience to God and obedience to the government (and they knew what he would choose!).

Two questions: (1) Is that true of us? (2) Does the world know that it is true of us? Daniel's life was such that these men knew he would choose God when forced to make this choice. Are our lives such that the world knows that we too will choose God when forced to make such a choice? Or have we already shown them otherwise?

But there was a problem: Persia had no law against monotheism. The solution? They would just create a law that would look merely political to Darius, but would pose a religious issue for Daniel.

Again we see history repeat itself. The so-called "hate speech" and "hate crime" laws may sound good on the surface until you ask how their authors define "hate." For most of them, mere disagreement is equated with hatred, and so just reading Romans 1 out loud can be called a hate crime.

### **Daniel 6:6-9**

**6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O**

**king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.**

Notice that these envious accusers show up in a group to work their plan. Such people always seems to travel in a pack! Daniel stood alone before a pack of false accusers, as did Jesus.

Darius should have noticed that Daniel was not present, but as we will soon see, Darius was completely unsuspecting. He did not know that these men were out to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.

What was the proposed law? For one month, all petitions and all prayers in the realm must be directed toward Darius only. Those who disobeyed would be cast into a den of lions.

Verse 7 uses the phrase “whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man.” The word for “petition” just means request, but the reference to “any God” certainly suggests that religious requests are in view, as does the motive for this law to target Daniel for his prayers.

But what then is meant by a petition to a man? It likely refers to priests to whom petitions were directed so that the priest could mediate to the gods.

Darius likely did not see this law as making him a god to whom prayers would be directed, but rather as making him for 30 days the only priestly mediator to whom such requests could be made. He wanted to be the only middleman, and he wanted

everyone to pray through a middleman. For 30 days, Darius was to be the only legitimate representative of deity.

Why did Darius agree with such a suggestion?

- It was very flattering.
- It reinforced the idea that the empire was now under new management. It would help unify the kingdom under Darius and Cyrus.
- It was a reasonable time limit. What harm could it cause to impose this seemingly modest requirement for only 30 days?

Darius was under the impression that Daniel had agreed to this plan. (Verse 7 says all the presidents of the kingdom had agreed to the plan when in fact they had not.)

Although the penalty was severe, Darius no doubt thought that it would never be imposed. Who could possibly fail to follow this simple 30 day requirement?

Why were offenders to be cast into a den of lions instead of into a fiery furnace? The Persians used fire in their religious ceremonies and thus would not have cast anyone into fire as a form of punishment. Edwin M. Yamauchi has written the following in this regard in his book *Persia and the Bible*:

But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. ... Fire stands at the center of the Zoroastrian cult; no ceremony can take place without fire being present.

If Daniel had been written by a second century Jew living in Palestine as some suggest, then how did such an author know about this subtle difference between the Chaldean and Persian methods of execution? (And this would be the same author who they say was so badly mistaken about the well-known historical leaders of the time!)

Verse 8 tells us that the law could not be altered. Verses 12 and 15 will tell us the same thing. Why couldn't the law be changed or revoked?



Having a law that stood even above the despot was a very politically sophisticated system of government. Although we take it for granted, it was quite rare at the time (and is at risk of becoming rare once again!).

Although we can only speculate about the reason for this system, this same requirement provided the drama in the book of Esther after the decree went out to kill the Jews. (See Esther 1:19 and 8:8.)

History tells us that it also played a role during the reign of Darius III who ruled from 336 to 331 BC. Diodorus of Sicily reported the case of a man put to death under Darius III even though he was known to be perfectly innocent.

[Darius III] immediately repented and blamed himself for having committed such a great error, but it was impossible to have undone what had been done by royal authority.

Here is a tough question for us to consider: Darius was not above his own law. Is God above his own law? We might be tempted to say that God is above everything, and therefore he is above his own law and could break it if he wanted to. But that is a very dangerous road and leads to many even harder questions — if Jesus was above his own law, then how was he ever tempted to break that law?

The solution to all of this is to recognize that Darius' relation to his law is completely different from God's relation to his law. God's law is always a perfect expression of God's character and God's will. About what *human* law could we ever say:

**Psalm 19:7-8** — *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

The answer is none. That description is true only of the law of God. The law of God is perfect because it is the perfect expression of God's character. It doesn't make sense to ask if God is above or below his own law. We cannot separate the law of

God from the character of God. What we see here in Chapter 6 is a situation in which the law of Darius no longer reflected the will of Darius. That could never happen with the law of God because God's law is the perfect expression of God's will.

But with all of that being said, there is one way in which God has voluntarily bound himself — one way in which God's will for us may *not* be what ultimately happens to us. Peter in 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” But we know from other Scriptures that not all will be saved. Why? Because God has given us free will, and often man's will is not aligned with God's will. God's will is that we all be saved, yet our will may be different, and God has given us free will to obey or to disobey.

**C.S. Lewis:** There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it.

### **Daniel 6:10**

**10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.**

Note that verse 10 tells us plainly that Daniel at some point learned that the document had been signed. Thus, whatever he does next is not done in ignorance of the decree. He knows the new law, and he knows the penalty for breaking it.

The chamber in verse 10 should be translated as an upper chamber. That Daniel's house had such a chamber likely indicates his high status.

And what did Daniel do when he heard about the decree? Did he run to the king to ask that it be changed or that he be excused? No — he went before a different King! He went to God in prayer. Do we see prayer only as a last resort — or do we start with prayer as Daniel did?

Notice what we do **not** see in verse 10. We see no inner turmoil on Daniel's part — no wondering what to do. This was **not** decision time for Daniel — his decision to follow God had occurred nearly 80 years ago! All we see now is his unflinching obedience.

Daniel's prayers had been his lifeline all those years under the corrupting Babylonian influences. What would he do now that this decree had become the law of the land?

**Option 1:** He could do nothing — that is, he could compromise and simply not pray for one month. (Sadly, for some, this would hardly be noticed!) This plan would have several advantages.

First, it would be the most peaceful plan. Nobody would get upset. But Daniel knew that peace at any price was too costly if the price was disobedience to God.

Second, this plan would allow Daniel to follow the path of least resistance. It would be the easy way out. But Daniel knew that the path of least resistance never intersects the path of righteousness. In fact, for Daniel, the path of righteousness was the path of *most* resistance!

Daniel could not simply do nothing and hope for the best. He knew what James tells us:

**James 4:17** — *Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

Daniel had to act. To do nothing would have been a sin.

**Option 2:** Daniel could have gone underground and prayed silently or at night when no one could see him.

Sadly, many today seem to have adopted this plan. But God has never put out a call for secret agents! We must speak out and let the world know where we stand. If we are on God's side, then we must let the world know.

This plan might appear to be the best of both worlds. Daniel could please both God and man by just praying silently. Wrong! It is not possible to please God if at the same time you are trying equally hard to please men.

**Galatians 1:10** — *Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.*

Sometimes it is easy to just ignore what we might consider the “little” compromises. But the little things are training for the big things!

**Jeremiah 12:5** — *If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?*

**Luke 16:10** — *One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much.*

The time to take a stand against the world is early before it gets a foothold because once it gets a foothold it may be too late.

Had Daniel quit praying as he normally did and instead began to pray in secret — how would the world have viewed that? What sort of example would that have set for the Persians or for the other exiles?

The world has no problem with our religion — as long as we keep it to ourselves. But we cannot please God if we keep our religion to ourselves. And we can't be the salt of the earth if we keep our religion to ourselves.

**Option 3:** Daniel could have rationalized. Just think how much good he could do if he stayed in power. He had just gotten his power back after being without it for so long. God wouldn't want him to lose it again so quickly, would he?

We too are faced with such choices every day. Remember what Joshua said:

**Joshua 24:14-15** — *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

The false gods of the Amorites haven't gone anywhere! They are with us to this day. We must make a choice.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** — *I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.*

We must choose whose side we are on, and, once we do that, all of our other decisions will be easy. Should we compromise with the world or should we do what we know is right and stand with God? Listen to Paul's answer:

**Ephesians 5:11** — *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

Isn't that exactly what Daniel did? Not only did he did not take part in the wicked plan, but he exposed the wicked plan.

**Option 4:** Daniel could concern himself with pleasing God instead of pleasing men and not worry about the consequences — and that is exactly what Daniel did.

There was no decision to be made. Daniel had made the decision to follow God long ago, and whether he was 13 or 83, Daniel would not compromise with the world. What a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to God!

Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? It seems to have been based on statements by Solomon made at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8.

**1 Kings 8:44-45** — *If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way thou shalt send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause*

Also, God's presence resided in the temple:

**1 Kings 8:10-11** — *And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.*

While Ezekiel 11:23 tells us that this presence left prior to the destruction of the city in 587 BC, Ezekiel 43:2 tells us that God promised to return — and in fact Cyrus' order to rebuild the city had probably already been given.

Why did Daniel pray three times a day? That likely came from Psalm 55.

**Psalm 55:17** — *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

Daniel had a habit of praying to God, and that is what he was going to do. There is nothing wrong with habits if they are good habits, and we too should pray habitually and study God's word habitually — and we should not let anything stop us. Not even lions were able to stop Daniel! What does it take to stop us? Daniel would rather have been eaten by lions than stop praying to God!

For what was Daniel praying? In Daniel 9:1-2 we will discover that since Darius had begun to reign Daniel had been reading Jeremiah with regard to the 70 year period of exile. Thus Daniel knew it was time for his people to return from their exile, and indeed many may have already returned. Thus, the returning captives may have been the primary item on Daniel's prayer list, and he could hardly stop praying for them now that they needed his prayers the most.

At first glance, this event looks just like what we saw earlier with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — but there is an important difference. Here evil men were trying to force Daniel to shirk his duty for *true* worship, whereas the earlier event with Daniel's three friends was focused on an attempt to make them engage in *false* worship. Chapters 3 and 6 together warn us to avoid false worship and to pursue true worship, no matter the cost. We must avoid the strange fire, and we must use the approved fire.

### **Daniel 6:11-12**

**11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.**

**12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is**

**true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.**

This group waited around for Daniel to pray, and then they went and reported to Darius as soon as he did. “Like little children, they were peeking around corners and looking in windows.”

Notice the word “thou” in verse 12. Suddenly this law has become the king’s idea!

Darius is reminded of his decree. Darius not only remembers, but he also points out that the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked.

This passage provides absolute proof that Daniel did not believe that a separate Median kingdom conquered the Chaldeans prior to the Persian kingdom under Cyrus. The late-date hypothesis that the second kingdom is Media and the third kingdom is Persia cannot stand in the face of verse 12. Daniel treats Media and Persia as a unified kingdom — which all historians agree they were.

We are about to watch God as he changes and revokes a law that cannot be changed or revoked!

**Mark 10:27** — *With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*



# LESSON 20

Last week, we ended with the pack of accusers having just reminded the king of his decree and the penalty for disobeying that decree. Verse 13 is where their trap will finally spring shut, as they inform the king about Daniel's disobedience to his decree.

## **Daniel 6:13-17**

**13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and**

**they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.**

Notice the statement in verse 13 tying Daniel to the captivity of Judah. They are telling the king that Daniel is not one of us — likely to plant the idea that Daniel is disloyal.

The charge made against Daniel is similar to the charge made against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego:

**Daniel 3:12** — *There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.*

Likewise, verse 13 charges Daniel with having no regard for the king.

This was a false charge both times. It was not true that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego paid no need to the king, and it was not true that Daniel did not regard the king. They just did not give their ultimate loyalty to any earthly king — that belonged only to God.

But Darius' response is not what the conspirators had hoped for! Yes, Darius becomes very upset (as they had hoped), but (unlike Nebuchadnezzar with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) Darius does not become upset with Daniel or Daniel's prayers. Instead, he becomes upset with himself (verse 14) when he suddenly realizes the real reason for the decree. He had been duped by Daniel's enemies, and I am sure he now regretted not having discussed the matter with Daniel personally. Darius was likely more angry at himself than with anyone else.

Verse 14 tells us that the king labored to deliver Daniel until the sun went down. What did the king do? He likely called the lawyers! What they needed was a loophole! (Why only until the sun went down? Well, lawyers do charge by the hour...) Perhaps swift justice was also required by Persian law.

Darius no doubt respected Daniel for his loyalty to his God, and he tried to save his life. But there was nothing he could do. Providing Daniel with armor, or feeding the lions ahead of time would have undermined the law of the Medes and the Persians. A miracle was Daniel's only hope.

How did Darius know so much about God? He may have learned from Cyrus. (And, as we discussed, he may have been Cyrus!)

**Ezra 1:2** — *Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

Cyrus seems to have known a lot about God! Perhaps he told Darius about God as well. Darius, at least, would have been familiar with the decree found in the book of Ezra.

He may have heard about God from Daniel. We already know that Daniel had become a very trusted advisor, and as such Daniel must have spoken to Darius about God — just as he had years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar.

In verse 15, Darius is again reminded of his decree, and finally he resigns himself to carrying it out. But, still concerned, Darius goes with Daniel to the pit, where Daniel the octogenarian is thrown in.

Verse 16 tells us that Darius said, “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.” The verb used there could be translated as either “he *will* deliver thee” or “he *may* deliver thee.” In any event, Darius certainly hopes that God will deliver Daniel, and perhaps he was confident that he would. (We often talk about the faith of Daniel, but the faith of Darius is also impressive!)

Notice also the reference in verse 16 to Daniel serving God continually. Daniel had made quite an impression on this king!

The pit is closed and sealed by Darius and the others who are present. Seals of this sort have been found. They consist of a cylinder that is rolled across a clay tablet. Why was the pit sealed? Darius may have been concerned that Daniel’s enemies might decide to give the lions a little help.

### **Daniel 6:18-20**

**18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living**

## **God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?**

The king returned to the palace very troubled. Notice that Darius and Pilate share some similarities. Both were forced by circumstances against their will to put someone to death who did not deserve it. But Darius seems to have been much more concerned about his decision than Pilate was. Darius certainly never washed his hands of Daniel's blood.

The king ate no food, enjoyed no entertainment, and could not sleep. As soon as it was light, he ran to the pit to check on Daniel. Do you think the conspirators may have been worried by the king's reactions? They should have been! I think they were starting to sweat.

Darius refers to Daniel as the servant of the living God. To Darius, this test would determine whether or not Daniel's God was living. Once again, Daniel's faithfulness to God would give God an opportunity to show his power to a pagan ruler.

We often pray (as we should) that God will give us opportunities — but we can also give opportunities to God. God works through his church, and our activity (such as proclaiming the word of God) creates opportunities for God to show his power and wisdom to the world.

Darius had had a very bad night, and he is about to discover that his night had been much more difficult than Daniel's!

### **Daniel 6:21-22**

**21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me:**

**forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.**

Can you imagine the king's relief when Daniel answered? Can you imagine the conspirators' reaction?

Daniel calls out and tells the king that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. He also reminds the king that this was proof of his innocence.

But was Daniel innocent? Yes, he had violated the law of the land. But he had not violated the law of God, and that meant he was innocent. In verse 22, Daniel says that "before him (God), innocency was found in me." We too may be approaching a time when those who obey the law of the land are guilty and those who violate the law of the land are innocent. But that should be expected in any society in which everything is reversed — in which evil is called good and good is called evil.

**Isaiah 5:20** — *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

Verse 22 may give us a clue as to who the fourth person was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Daniel says he was delivered by an angel, but again the word angel could simply mean a divine messenger, and, as before, some believe that we have yet another Christophany (as we discussed earlier).

It is wonderful to picture eighty year old Daniel sitting in that lion's den all night speaking with that angel! Again, we should note that this was a miracle. As I mentioned before, there are many who deny the miracles in the Bible and try to explain them away. Their strained attempts to believe the Bible yet remove the miracles it contains would be laughable if they were not so sad. For example, read what John Crossan had to say about the resurrection of Lazarus in his book *Jesus: A Revolution-*

*ary Biography*: “While I do not think this event ever did or could happen, I think it is absolutely true. Let me explain.” That quote is then followed by pages of mumbo-jumbo and double speak. How ridiculous!

### **Daniel 6:23**

**23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.**

We can only imagine the king’s reaction when he hears Daniel’s cheerful voice call to him from the lions’ den! Verse 23 says he was exceedingly glad. He was overjoyed. Darius brings Daniel out and looks him over. Not a scratch is found on him (“no manner of hurt was found upon him”).

How had Daniel survived? Daniel was delivered because Daniel was faithful to God. He rightly takes his place in the roll call of faith:

**Hebrews 11:32-34** — *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, **stopped the mouths of lions**, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

Daniel is a wonderful example of someone who absolutely refused to compromise with the world throughout his entire life but instead remained loyal and true to God despite the earthly consequences and despite living in an evil pagan nation.

### **Daniel 6:24**

**24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.**

The word “accused” in verse 24 means falsely accused. It literally means those who “had eaten his pieces.” The same word was used of the accusers in Daniel 3:8. They had not falsely accused Daniel of praying, but they had falsely accused him of being disloyal to the king.

Without any trial or hearing, Darius has Daniel’s accusers and their families paraded past Daniel and thrown into the pit. They were killed before they reached the bottom of the pit. (These lions seem to have been in a foul mood for some reason, perhaps because they had been forced to just stare at their dinner all night!)

And Daniel’s reaction? He did not object. God has said that he will judge — and we should not get in the way when he does!

What was their crime? They had lied to the king, and they had tried to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.



While Darius' actions may seem arbitrary and unjust to us, we must keep in mind that ancient despots did not follow the law of Moses!

**Deuteronomy 24:16** — *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*

In fact, even the Jews did not always follow the law of Moses. In 2 Kings 10:11, for example, we read that Jehu killed everyone in the house of Ahab in Jezreel.

Why were their families killed as well? Probably to teach everyone a lesson and to minimize the chance of revenge. Darius wanted Daniel to be a secure prime minister.

### **Daniel 6:25-27**

**25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders**

## **in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.**

Darius makes a public proclamation as Nebuchadnezzar had done in Daniel 3:29 and 4:34. The king makes a decree in verse 26. How many decrees have we seen so far in this book? It seems that is all these kings know how to do — but whose decrees have mattered? Not theirs, but God's. And that is a good lesson for us today as we see our government making decrees that are opposed to God and his word.

This decree, however, was a good decree. As with Nebuchadnezzar, Darius had a new understanding of God, and it shows in his decree. It was clear to all that God was alive and that he worked in history to bring about justice and to further the welfare of his people. In fact, while this was going on, his people were, as promised, returning to the Holy Land under Zerubbabel.

Why did God allow all of this to happen to Daniel? Why not just thwart the evil plan right from the start? Why instead did God wait to deliver Daniel only after he had been cast into the lions' den? One answer is the same answer we have seen earlier in this book — God wanted to show his power to these pagan rulers.

But there may be another reason at work here. If we use early Christian art as a basis, then Christians have long viewed Daniel's emergence from that lions' den as typological of Jesus' death and resurrection. Both Daniel and Jesus faced false accusations from religious leaders. Both were accused of disloyalty to the king. Both Daniel and Jesus were arrested shortly after prayer. Pilate and Darius both sought to release their prisoner, but, in the end, both Daniel and Jesus were turned over to the executioners. But here is where we have a big difference: Daniel emerged from the lions' den without having died, whereas Jesus emerged from the tomb having died. God spared Daniel, just as he spared Isaac, but God did not spare his own son.

**Daniel 6:28****28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius,  
and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

Wait! How could Daniel prosper if this unalterable law was still in effect? How could that unchangeable law be changed and replaced with this new decree?

First, we don't know the timing. So we can't be sure when one ended and the other started.

But, second, and more importantly, Daniel had been vindicated by his trial. There was an ancient Babylonian custom that a victim would be pardoned if he were tortured and had not died by the following day.

Also, this event may have been less of a torture and more of what is called an ordeal. That is, its purpose may have been to *determine* guilt rather than to *punish* guilt. This may be indicated by Daniel's statement in verse 22 — “forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me.”

For whatever reason, we know that Daniel continued to pray, and we know that he was not thrown back to the lions because verse 28 says that he prospered. Daniel's usefulness to the king continued, and he prospered as he had during the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

This verse does not mean that Cyrus followed Darius as some suggest. Instead it states (correctly) that Darius and Cyrus ruled simultaneously (if they were different people). As we suggested earlier, it could be the case that Darius and Cyrus are the same person. If that is true, then this verse is saying: “during the reign of Darius, even (namely) the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” That is, Daniel is telling the reader that Darius the Mede is the same person as Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel also continued to pray and study his Bible. The visions in Chapters 10 and 12 were given to him during the third year of Cyrus. The visions in Chapters 9 and 11 came during the first year of Darius' reign. The book was probably written shortly after these visions were revealed, which perhaps puts its date of authorship around 532 BC (about seven years after the Persians took over in 539 BC).

# LESSON 21

## CHAPTER 7

Last week I mentioned that Chapter 7 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Chapter 7 is also one of the most important chapters in the Bible (where “importance” is defined by how often the chapter is relied upon by other Scriptures). Why? Because of verse 13 — “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven.” That phrase, *Son of Man*, occurs 84 times in the New Testament — it is the Messianic title most commonly used by Christ to speak of himself. Recall, for example, these statements of Christ:

- The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the **Son of man** hath not where to lay his head.
- But that ye may know that the **Son of man** hath power on earth to forgive sins.
- Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the **Son of man** be come.
- The **Son of man** came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.
- For the **Son of man** is Lord even of the sabbath day.
- And whosoever speaketh a word against the **Son of man**, it shall be forgiven him.

- For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the **Son of man** be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- He that soweth the good seed is the **Son of man**.
- The **Son of man** shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.
- Whom do men say that I the **Son of man** am?
- There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the **Son of man** coming in his kingdom.

And those are just a few, all from Matthew. Each time that phrase is found it points us back to this incredibly beautiful Chapter 7 of Daniel. Each time Jesus used that phrase he was pointing his hearers back to Daniel 7. Of all the Messianic titles in the Old Testament it was this one that Jesus used most often. And what does this say about those today who would attack the historical veracity of Daniel? It tells us that their attack does not end with Daniel; they are attacking Christ and his Messianic claims. Make no mistake — an attack on the word of God is an attack on God.

As we leave the first six chapters and enter Chapter 7, we are leaving historical narrative behind. Instead, we will be reading about Daniel's visions, and much of the language we see will be what is called *apocalyptic* language. We have already seen some examples of this language in the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, but we are about to see a great deal more of it.

For example, when we get to verse 8 of Chapter 7, we will read:

**Daniel 7:8** — *I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

That type of language is very different from what we have seen in the historical descriptions of the events concerning Daniel and his friends, and we need to be prepared to treat it differently.

### **What is apocalyptic language?**

Apocalyptic language is composed of symbols that are often lurid in color, violent in tone, and easily remembered. They strike the imagination and grab hold of the mind. Such language is found in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and even in the gospels and epistles.

What is the purpose of apocalyptic language? It denotes conflict and victory and judgment. It is used when God judges and smites an oppressor and vindicates his people. It is used to describe times of crisis and judgment.

Why does God use apocalyptic language? Some think that the language is used to hide the true meaning from hostile authorities and thus shield God's people from retaliation. This view makes a little more sense with the book of Revelation than it does with the book of Daniel (although I don't think it is the correct view even for Revelation). Who are the hostile authorities in Daniel? The Jews were not being actively persecuted at the time this was written. Further, writing the message in Hebrew would no doubt have been sufficient to hide its meaning from the Chaldeans and the Persians (and the text switches back to Hebrew in Chapter 8). Also, Daniel *explained* some of the visions to the pagan kings.

I think the reason God uses such language is because of its *emotional* impact. Apocalyptic books have been called oil paintings from God. The vivid and violent language conveys emotional images while also conveying historical facts — just as a painting can convey emotions and facts. Of course, each word of apocalyptic language is inspired, just as with the historical narrative language, but that inspired language uses vivid symbols to convey emotional imagery. (In fact, each letter is inspired? How do we know that? Because Paul based an entire argument on whether a word was plural or singular (*seed* or *seeds*). Jesus based an argument on the tense

of a verb (*I am* the God of Abraham.) Numbers 12:8 reminds us that God does not always speak clearly, but sometimes uses dark language. Perhaps such language is reserved for times of conflict and judgment.

How do we interpret apocalyptic language? First, we need to pay particular attention to numbers and periods of time. They have symbolic meanings that must be deduced from the evidence.

- Three is the symbolic number for God.
- Four is the symbolic number for the earth or the creation.
- Twelve is the symbolic number for God's people.
- Ten is the symbolic number for completeness.
- Seven is the symbolic number for perfection.
- Six is the symbolic number for imperfection.
- Eight is the symbolic number for renewal.

These numbers can be combined. For example, how could we denote divine perfection? By combining the divine number three with seven, the number of perfection — and that might give us 777. So how then could we denote someone who thought he was divine, but who fell hopelessly short of divine perfection — not 777, but 666.

Sometimes numbers are raised to powers (squared or cubed) to add emphasis. For example, if ten means completeness, then 1000 means complete completeness! So if we found that someone was bound for 1000 years or someone reigned for 1000 years, then that would mean that that binding or that reign would be absolutely and totally complete.

As another example, how could we denote ALL of God's people? We could start with twelve for God's people under the Old Testament, and then another twelve for God's people under the New Testament. Then we could use ten to denote complete-



ness, and then raise it to the third power either to emphasize it or perhaps even to denote that these are God's people (with three denoting God). What would we then have? Twelve times twelve times ten to the third power, or 144,000.

If seven denotes perfection, how could we denote imperfection? We have already seen one way — we would use six as something that falls hopelessly short of seven. But we could also use a broken seven to denote imperfection — and a broken seven is three and a half, which is a figure that is often used for that purpose.

Some may complain that these numbers are sometimes used literally in the Bible — and that is absolutely correct. For example, here we see a literal four kingdoms, where the number four also denotes that these kingdoms are earthly kingdoms. Also, we will see a literal 70 years of captivity, and we will see figurative uses of 70 as well.

Is this surprising? Not at all. In fact, these numbers were not chosen at random. Their figurative meaning comes from their literal meaning! Why three for God? The trinity. Why four for earth? The four directions and the four seasons. Why twelve for God's people? The twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles. Why ten for complete? Ten fingers. Why seven for perfect? The seven days of the creation week. Why eight for renewal? The eighth day is the start of a new week.

In fact, sometimes the literal usage may arise from the figurative usage. For example, why are there four earthly kingdoms between the time of Babylon and the time of Rome? God could easily have used only three kingdoms or five or more kingdoms. Why four? Is it because of the use of four to denote the world? That is, these kingdoms are earthly kingdoms as opposed to the eternal heavenly kingdom.

And why did the captivity last 70 years? Is it because 70 also denoted the *perfect* and *complete* period of time in which they could learn the lesson that God wanted to teach them? And is it also because we will see the number 70 used figuratively in this same book?

Apocalyptic language always has historical significance, so we must study history to interpret it properly.

The *usual* approach to scripture is to understand a passage literally unless we are forced to do otherwise. How could we ever be *forced* to not understand a passage literally? In Matthew 5:30, Jesus told us to cut off our right hand if it offends us. Was this a literal command or should we interpret it figuratively? This usual rule of interpretation is *reversed* for apocalyptic language — we should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced (or at least have a very good reason) to do otherwise.

Whatever we do, we should strive to be consistent. (Hal Lindsey says the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7:4 are literal yet the locusts in Revelation 9:3 are cobra helicopters. John Walvoord says the ten days in Revelation 2:10 (before the vision) are figurative yet the 1000 years in Revelation 20 (during the vision) are literal.)

The following principles are helpful in interpreting apocalyptic language.

We should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. We should be consistent in our interpretations.

Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects. (There are many judgments in the Bible, but the same language is used to describe each — Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, Jerusalem, Rome, the world.)

Dissimilarity of language does not prove distinctness of subjects. (Sometimes the Bible views the same thing from different angles, and thus uses different language to describe the same thing.)

Easy to understand scriptures should be used to understand harder passages. The Bible is its own best commentary. This basic principle of hermeneutics should be used whenever we study the Bible. We should be very wary of any interpretation of apocalyptic language that conflicts with easier passages found elsewhere. (Premil-

lennialism is based entirely on Revelation 20 and as we know is in conflict with a host of other passages.)

The time frame is crucial in properly understanding apocalyptic language. Why? Because often the same language is used to describe different judgments or events, and so the time frame lets us know which judgment or event is in view. For example, the opening verses of Daniel 12 discuss a resurrection — is that the final resurrection at the end of the world, or is that a figurative resurrection? We will answer that question when we get to Chapter 12, but the opening words of the chapter will be very helpful to us — “And at that time.”

For another example, when we get to Chapter 8, we will read about a vision that Daniel received in 550 BC. In Daniel 8:26, Daniel was told to shut up the vision. Why? Because its fulfillment, he was told, was a long way off. When we get to Chapter 8, we will see that the vision was fulfilled 400 years later in 165 BC when the sanctuary was restored after the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. Revelation 22:10 is an interesting verse to compare with Daniel 8:26. In Revelation 22:10, John was told just the opposite of what Daniel was told: Don't seal up the vision because the time for its fulfillment is at hand. By what theory do some argue that the “long way off” in Daniel is 400 years, while the “time at hand” in Revelation is 2000 years and counting? Does that make any sense?

The time frame is crucial to understanding apocalyptic language, whether that language is in Daniel or in Revelation — and we will see that there are many links between those two books.

But shouldn't we just take all scripture literally? Are the beasts in 7:3 literal or figurative? If you answer literal, then how do we explain verses 16-17, where the beasts are *interpreted* and we find that they represent *kings* or *kingdoms*?

NO ONE takes all scripture literally. Of course, when we say that we do not take all scripture literally we do not mean that we do not believe that all scripture is true. We know that God's word is truth and contains no inaccuracies — historical, sci-

entific, or otherwise. The question is not whether a particular passage is true. Instead, the question is whether God is using literal language or figurative language to convey the truth to us.

- To literalize **Genesis 3:15** is to reduce it to just describing a conflict between snakes and humans.
- To literalize **Zechariah 14:12-13** requires those that just had their flesh, their eyes, and their tongue consumed away by a plague to then lay their hand upon their neighbor and create a great tumult.
- To literalize **Isaiah 11:6-10** is to deny that Paul applied it correctly to the first century in **Romans 15:10-12**.
- To literalize **Ezekiel 16:53-55** would require the resurrection of the inhabitants of Sodom to their former prosperity despite what we read in Jude 7.
- To literalize **Ezekiel 37:22-25** would require that David and not Jesus be Israel's eternal king.

NO ONE takes all scripture literally (if they did, there would be a lot of one eyed, one handed people walking around!). Indeed, it is not logically possible to do so. Instead we need to approach the scripture with the common sense that God has given to us and that he knew we had when he gave us his word. God wants a thinking people!

One last example: Matthew 24:21 and Ezekiel 5:9, in reference to different events, both claim that the event in question will be a greater calamity than anything that has occurred or will ever occur. Logically, this could not be literally true of both events! The solution is to recognize the language as hyperbole and reject the literal interpretation.

Sometimes one hears or reads Deuteronomy 29:29 applied to apocalyptic language.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** — *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong*

*unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

The idea is that we shouldn't worry about what books like Revelation and Daniel mean because they contain secret things that belong only to God. But does this make any sense? The word *apokalupsis* in Greek means unveiled, uncovered, or revealed! That is where we get the name "Revelation" for the final book in the Bible. Apocalyptic books do not contain secret things, they contain *revealed* things. The Bible is meant to be understood — and if we don't understand it, we shouldn't blame our inability on God. He wants us to understand his word. Apocalyptic language was often meant to convey comfort to those suffering captivity or persecution. What would it say about God if he offered us comfort but worded it in such a way that we could never receive that comfort? He wants us to understand his word.

**Final comments before we begin:** Many different interpretations about the following passages have been given. Without discussing all of the other opinions, I will largely confine my efforts to presenting and providing evidence for my own opinions.

While it is hard in some places to be dogmatic, it is not impossible. Also, our inability at some points to state with certainty what a passage means does not imply that it could mean anything. We can, even in those cases, often state with certainty what the passage does *not* mean.

Of course, it goes without saying that whatever is said about these passages should be checked carefully with the word. In Mark 4 and Luke 8 we find two commands of Christ:

**Mark 4:24** — *Take heed what ye hear.*

**Luke 8:18** — *Take heed how ye hear.*

Hearing is not passive. Jesus told us to be active hearers and to watch both how and what we hear. These commands are particularly crucial today when so many are twisting the scriptures to their own and their listeners' destruction.

### **Daniel 7:1**

**1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.**

Notice that chronologically this vision occurred before the events that we studied in Chapter 6. In fact, this vision occurred prior to the defeat of the Chaldeans by Cyrus. Belshazzar was killed at the end of Chapter 5 when the Medo-Persians conquered the city.

The first year of Belshazzar probably refers to the year 553 in the sixth century BC when Nabonidus left the city of Babylon for 14 years to live in north and central Arabia. Thus, the first year of Belshazzar's reign would refer to the first year of his coregency.

This book states very clearly that this vision was given to Daniel in the sixth century BC. The late-date crowd states just as clearly that this vision was made up by an impostor in the second century BC. Whom are we to believe? To believe the late-date crowd requires us to believe that the author of Daniel was guilty of a deliberate lie here in verse 1 (and in many other places). (And if he lied, then he certainly had Jesus fooled! See Matthew 24:15.) But this same late date crowd also once told us that Belshazzar in verse 1 never existed — and now they must admit that he did. You would think they would learn something from that, but they have not.

**Daniel 7:2-3**

**2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.**

In verse 2 we see wind and a great sea. The wind often denotes the action of God. Like God, the wind is invisible yet can have very dramatic effects.

**Psalm 18:10** — *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*

**Hosea 13:15** — *Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.*

The sea often denotes the restless nations of the world as they toss and churn.

**Isaiah 17:12-13** — *Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! 13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.*

Thus, the wind on the sea denotes the actions of God on the restless nations of the world, which is exactly what we are about to see.



# LESSON 22

**Question:** “I know that there is a great deal of people in the brotherhood that love and respect you and others such as Wayne Jackson so what do you tell people when they point out that the two of you don’t exactly agree when it comes to the book of Daniel and Revelation?”

**Answer:** The short answer is that you should study both views and decide for yourself! The longer answer is that there are a number of different views on Daniel and Revelation in the brotherhood — Wayne Jackson, Jim McGuiggan, Foy Wallace, *Gospel Advocate Commentary*, to name a few. I am certainly confident in my own views on the subject (which are closest to McGuiggan’s from the previous list), but it is certainly not a case of my way or the highway. Each of those views has its strengths and weaknesses (with some having more weakness than strength!). Most differ primarily in timing, which is why I try to pay such close attention to the time frame of each prophecy. But with that said, there are other views from both inside and outside the brotherhood that violate the Scripture, and we can’t bend so far that we give any legitimacy to those views (such as premillennialism from outside the church or the AD 70 Max King theory from inside). And I am certain Wayne Jackson would agree with me on that because I have read his books on those two topics. Alexander Campbell was a post-millennialist who believed that a thousand years of peace would precede the coming of Christ, which is why his magazine was called the *Millennial Harbinger*.

## Verse 3 Continued

Here in verse 3 these four beasts come up from the sea. Later, in verse 17, we will see that they also come up from the earth (which, of course, also includes the sea).

Coming from the sea stresses that these beasts will arise from the restless nations of the world. Coming from the earth stresses that these beasts are of human origin. This fact is also stressed by the number four, which appears twice in these two verses. The number four denotes the world. Four is the number of the great elements: earth, air, fire, and water. There are four directions: north, south, east, and west. There are four seasons of the year: fall, winter, spring, and summer.

When we see the number four we should generally look for something of worldly origin that will most likely be contrasted with something of heavenly origin. Here we see four great beasts, which we will soon learn are four great kingdoms (verse 17) — and we have already seen four great kingdoms in Daniel 2. And we know what those four kingdoms were contrasted against — the eternal kingdom from God that we saw in Daniel 2:44. Those four kingdoms are of human origin. The eternal kingdom, by contrast, was not cut out by human hands (Daniel 2:45). There is a great dividing line in this book between the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God.

These four beasts are not all the same, but instead they are diverse from one another. We are about to find out how they differ.

### **Daniel 7:4**

**4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.**

The first great beast is like a lion, but it also has eagle's wings. But those wings are plucked, and the lion is made to stand as a man, and is given a man's heart. What kingdom is represented by this first beast? It must be Babylon. Why?

First, as we will see, Chapter 7 is closely related to Chapter 2, and in Chapter 2 we saw four kingdoms represented by the giant image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Those four kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Here we also see four kingdoms, so we should not be surprised if Chapter 7 turns out to be showing us the same four kingdoms but from a different perspective.

Second, a winged lion was a very common symbol for Babylon, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. One of the most common images for Babylon (still seen today in many museums) is that of a winged lion with a human head.

Third, ALL commentators agree on this point, and, although that unanimity might make us justifiably a bit nervous, here it turns out to be correct. (Interestingly, ALL or virtually all commentators agree that the Babylon of Revelation refers to Rome — but many of those commentators fail to see Rome in Daniel 7 even though many portions of this chapter are directly parallel to what we see in Revelation.) Just as Revelation uses a symbol for Rome that no one can possibly miss (a woman seated upon seven hills), so Daniel 7 uses a symbol for Babylon that no one can possibly miss (a winged lion).

Fourth, like Babylon, this first great beast is hindered and humiliated by God. Its wings are plucked, and it is made to stand up and act like a man rather than act like a lion. In historical fact, the king of Babylon was a man who was humiliated by being given the heart of a beast. In this vision, Babylon is pictured as a beast who is given the heart of a man.

### **Daniel 7:5**

**5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.**

The second beast is like a bear. It is raised up on one side, it has three ribs in its mouth, and it is told to devour much flesh. If we are correct that these four beasts represent the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this second beast should be Medo-Persia. Do these descriptions apply to Medo-Persia? Yes.

First, the historical order is correct. The Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylonian empire, and in fact in Chapter 5 we saw the very day when that transition occurred. Medo-Persia was the second kingdom in Daniel 2, so it should not surprise us that it is the second kingdom in Daniel 7. Daniel and secular historians are in complete agreement on this point — the combined Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylonian empire.

Second, one side of this bear is higher than the other side. That part of the image stresses another historical fact about the Medo-Persian empire — the Persians were dominant.

Third, this bear is told to continue eating even before it has finished its last meal. It is voracious and greedy, and that image is a perfect description of the Medes and the Persians.

But what about the *three* ribs? Usually when we see the number three in apocalyptic language we should look for a reference to God, but that is very hard to see here,

unless perhaps it is just a reminder that God is behind all that is occurring here with these kingdoms.

I think a better explanation may be either that these three ribs simply add to the picture of the greedy starving bear, or that they may depict the three major Medo-Persian conquests that occurred under Cyrus and his son Cambyses.

- The conquest of the Lydian kingdom in 546 BC.
- The conquest of the Chaldean kingdom in 539 BC.
- The conquest of Egypt in 525 BC.

If it is the latter, then this may be an example of where we take a number figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. That is, the three major campaigns of Medo-Persia are so closely tied to that kingdom, that we decide the number three here must be a *literal* reference to those three campaigns. We are about to see something similar with Greece.

### **Daniel 7:6**

**6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.**

The third beast is a leopard that has four wings and four heads, and dominion is given to it. If we are correct that these four beasts correspond with the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, then this leopard should be Greece. Do these descriptions apply to Greece? Yes. (And keep in mind as we continue that these prophecies were

written long before Greece under Alexander the Great conquered the Persians in 331 BC.)

First, as with a leopard, Greece was known for its speed. It moved and conquered very rapidly.

Second, this beast has four wings and four heads. Yes, the number four usually stresses the worldly nature of something, but here (as with the three ribs) I think there is another reason why we see the number four. After the death of Alexander, Greece was split into four pieces that were ruled by his four generals: Cassander in Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus eastward in Thrace and Asia Minor; Ptolemy in Egypt, Cyprus, and nearby Asia Minor; and Seleucus to the Indus River. (The number four is associated with Greece in the same way that the numbers 50 and 1776 are associated with the United States. The numbers are literal, but they can also be used as symbols because of their close association with what they describe.)

This use of four seems to be another example where it seems most logical to interpret a number literally rather than figuratively even though the number appears in an apocalyptic section.

We will see similar usage later in the book. Here in Daniel 7:6 Greece is depicted as a beast with four heads. Later in Daniel 8:8 Greece will be depicted as a goat with four horns. In Daniel 8:21-22 we will find out that those horns denote kings or kingdoms. (We should pause here and note that heads and horns are sometimes used to denote both kings and kingdoms. This point will be very useful to remember as we continue.)

So, the second beast is Medo-Persia, and this third beast is Greece. But the liberals would have us believe that this third beast is Persia (with the second beast being just the Medes). Does that make sense? No. This third beast shows us a divided kingdom — it has four heads! Persia remained unified until its end when Alexander the Great conquered it. Greece, however, ended as four kingdoms. This third kingdom is Greece.

Why won't the liberals agree, despite all of the evidence, that this third kingdom is Greece? Because of the fourth kingdom. If this third kingdom is Greece, then the fourth kingdom must be Rome, and if the fourth kingdom is Rome, then we have before us unmistakable and unassailable evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures — and that is something no liberal can tolerate!

And the arrogance of these liberal critics is unbounded. Instead of admitting that they are mistaken, they insist that Daniel must have mistakenly thought that Persia would be split into four pieces!

What is meant by the end of verse 6 — that dominion was given to it? That is a reminder that God is controlling things here. There is only one explanation for how Greece conquered Persia, and that is because God wanted it to happen. Why? Because God was creating the perfect cradle into which his son and his kingdom could be born — Roman peace combined with Greek language and culture.

As Horace famously stated, Rome may have conquered Greece, but Greek culture conquered Rome. The combination of Greek culture with Roman might created the perfect cradle for the coming of Christ and the beginning of his kingdom, and it was not by accident! The Greeks brought reason, rationality, logic, and language. Rome brought peace, roads, trade, law, and communication.

Although Roman religion later brought emperor worship and persecution (which Daniel will also be told about), initially it was open and tolerant, particularly during the time when Christianity was viewed simply as a Jewish sect and allowed to freely spread across the known world.

### **Daniel 7:7**

**7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured**

**and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.**

And finally we meet the fourth beast. It is dreadful and terrible. Unlike the three prior beasts, there does not seem to be a known creature to which it can be compared. It is exceedingly strong, it has great iron teeth, it devours, it brakes in pieces, and it stamps the residue from its feet. It has ten horns.

Even if we had not seen Chapter 2, we would know the identity of this fourth beast. With that description it can be none other than the mighty Roman empire. Yes, mighty, but as we saw in Chapter 2, it had feet of clay.

Rome, like this beast, was different from the beasts that came before it. The world had never seen anything like Rome.

And this beast has ten horns, which we will discover in verse 24 denote ten kings. Which ten kings? We will answer that question when we get to verse 24.

As with the rise of Greece, the only way to explain the rise of Rome is that God wanted it to occur. And, in fact, God had told Daniel that it would occur hundreds of years before it happened. How else can we explain the rise of Greece under Alexander the Great? How else can we explain the ascendancy of Rome over such great powers as Carthage, and the Hellenistic kingdoms of Macedon, Syracuse, and the Seleucid empire? Listen to a few sentences from the introduction to the recent book, *Rome and Her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War*:

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of cattle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq?



These secular historians ask why — the answer to their question is that it happened because God made it happen, just as God had already told Daniel long before that it would happen.

### **Daniel 7:8**

**8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.**

Daniel considers the ten horns of verse 7, and, while he does, something happens. An eleventh horn (called a little horn) arises up, and three of the other horns are plucked up by the roots (which would leave us with eight horns). This eleventh horn has eyes like a man, and a mouth that speaks great things. Who is this little horn? We will discover that when we get to verses 24 and 25, but let's note a few things about it here.

First, that final phrase in verse 8 should ring a bell with us. We will see it again in Revelation 13.

**Revelation 13:5** — *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

Why 42 months? How many years is 42 months? Three and a half years, a broken seven!

Second (and particularly when we get to verses 24-25), we might also be reminded of something Paul wrote:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** — *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

We often say today (correctly) that Jesus can return at any moment, but was that true in the first century? No. In fact, Paul just told us that it was not true — “that day shall not come” expect there come something else first. What was that something else? The thing Paul mentions was the coming of the son of perdition. Why? Because Daniel had prophesied that such a person would come (we are reading about him here in Daniel 7), and that prophecy had to be fulfilled before Jesus could come again. That is exactly what Paul was saying in 2 Thessalonians 2.

Who is this son of perdition? Who is this little horn? We will find out when we get to verses 24-25.

### **Daniel 7:9-10**

**9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand**

**times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.**

Here we have a great judgment scene in which the ancient of days sits at the head of an enormous court in which the books are opened and judgment is rendered. To which judgment does this refer? There are many different judgments in the Bible. The two leading candidates for this judgment are the judgment of Rome and the judgment of the world at the end of all time. Which choice fits better with the context? That question sort of answers itself, doesn't it? What have we just been looking at? Rome.

The difficulty with language of judgment is that there are many judgments and the same language is used to describe them. Remember one of our interpretive rules — similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Before we look at this example, let's look at another example — the judgment of Jerusalem in Matthew 24.

**Matthew 24:27-31** — *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his*

*elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

That language sure sounds like the end of the world — but we know that the end of the world is not what is being described there. How do we know that? Because of verse 34.

**Matthew 24:34** — *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

The word “generation” in Matthew 24:34 is the same Greek word found in Matthew 1.

**Matthew 1:17** — *So all the **generations** from Abraham to David are fourteen **generations**; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen **generations**; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen **generations**.*

The Greek word used there and in verse 34 does *not* mean “race,” despite what some of the modern versions may suggest in their (dishonest) footnotes. The Greek word for “race” is different and is found, for example, in 1 Peter 2:9 (“elect race” in the ASV).

Whatever is being described in Matthew 24:27-31, we know with certainty that it happened in the first century — and in fact that event was the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70, and verses 27-31 describe that judgment using figurative apocalyptic language.

Could such language also be used to describe the final judgment at the end of the world? Yes, and such language is used elsewhere in the Bible for that purpose, but not here. Here it describes the judgment of Jerusalem, and the time frame in verse 34 (remember our rule about time frames!) leaves no other choice.

Now let's come back to Daniel 7:9-10. We see language of judgment that is used elsewhere to describe the final judgment — just as it is used elsewhere to describe earlier judgments. What judgment is being described here? The context and the time frame point to Rome. This is the judgment of the fourth beast, and the fourth beast is Rome.

Verse 11 tells us that after this judgment the fourth beast is slain and burned with fire. Verses 21-22 tell us that this judgment was against the little horn who was waging war against the saints. Verse 26 tells us that this court would take the dominion away from the little horn.

Revelation 20 contains another great judgment scene similar to what we see here. (It also contains thrones, books, and fire.) John wrote that the judgment in Revelation 20 would come to pass soon after the book was written (Revelation 1:1; 1:3; 10:6; 22:6; 22:10). Revelation was written during the Roman persecution. Thus, the context suggests that the judgment scene in Revelation 20 also applies to the judgment of the fourth beast from Daniel 7 — the Roman empire. The judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the judgment scene in Revelation 20 both apply to the same judgment — the judgment of Rome.

Did Rome fall in the first century? Yes and no. The Roman empire did not, but the evil dynasties that are the focus of this prophecy (the first dynasty that ended with Nero, and the second dynasty that ended with Domitian) did fall in the first century. In any event, was Rome judged and sentenced by God during the first century? Absolutely yes! And, in fact, Daniel had been told about that sentence long before it was given and long before Rome did the evil deeds that caused that sentence to be given.

But this language looks so much like the end of the world! How can it apply to something else? We know from Matthew 24 that similar language is used elsewhere to apply to something other than the end of the world. We also know that from Revelation if we accept the oft repeated time frame for that book. And we know that from the Old Testament where similar language is used to describe the fall of Baby-

lon, Tyre, Assyria, Egypt, and others. If we lift these verses out of context and interpret them without regard to the surrounding verses, then we have no hope of properly understanding them.

### **Daniel 7:11-12**

**11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.**

The judgment of the court was that the fourth beast be destroyed, and this event is pictured in verse 11. The beast is burned with fire and utterly destroyed. Keep in mind that this fourth beast is Rome — first century Rome in particular — and so, as always, we need to keep that time frame in mind.

The other three beasts (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) have lost their power (their dominion was taken away), but they are pictured as still being around — their lives are prolonged for a season and a time. Why? Because they will soon hear their fate as well. They are shown as awaiting their own judgment.

The first three beasts lived on in the fourth beast. They had the same ungodly ways and goals. What did they have in common? They were all earthly kingdoms that were trying to take the place of or destroy the work of God.

We saw this already in Chapter 2, where all four kingdoms were shown by a single giant statue — and all four were destroyed by the same stone made without hands. God is showing us here in Chapter 7 the same event that he showed us in Chapter 2. These four beasts are that giant statue, and once again they are being destroyed.

We also see this same image in John's description of Rome:

**Revelation 13:1-2** — *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a **leopard**, and his feet were as the feet of a **bear**, and his mouth as the mouth of a **lion**: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

In Revelation 13, the beast (Rome) is like a leopard, a bear, and a lion. Where have we seen those three animals before? In Daniel 7, we just saw a lion, a bear, and a leopard (in that order). In Revelation 13, John mentions a leopard, a bear, and a lion (in the reverse order). Daniel and John are both looking at the same three kingdoms, but Daniel is looking FORWARD through time whereas John is looking BACKWARD through time!

The language we see here is very common in the Bible. A great enemy of God's people comes on the scene, and God rescues his people and judges that great enemy. That judgment is very often described using apocalyptic language, and very often that language reminds us of language that could be applied to the final judgment at the end of the world, but similarity of language does not prove identity of subject! We need to look at that language in context and pay close attention to the time frame. When we do that here, what we find is that the fourth beast is the Roman empire, which means that these judgments occurred long ago — just as Matthew 24:34 tells us that the judgment of Jerusalem (a different judgment described using the same language) occurred in the first century.

# LESSON 23

## **Daniel 7:13-14**

**13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.**

At the end of this remarkable judgment scene, Daniel sees “one like a son of man” come to the Ancient of Days to be presented before him and to be given a kingdom. Two questions — *who* is this, and *when* is this?

First, *who* is this? We know that this son of man is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In fact, this is where the Messianic title “the Son of Man” came from. When Jesus used that title of himself what he was saying was that he was the Son of Man of Daniel 7! He was taking a Messianic title familiar to every Jew and applying it to himself. He was applying verses 13 and 14 to himself — that he would come before the Ancient of Days to be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom! We often read right past that



title, which occurs over and over in the gospels. After studying these two verses, we will never be able to skip over that title ever again! Jesus is the Son of Man!

Second, *when* is this? So far our time frame for this fourth beast has been the first century, and I see no indication of a change in these verses. Once again, as in Chapter 2, we see a fifth kingdom — one totally unlike the other four we have seen. This fifth kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed (verse 14), unlike the other four that were just destroyed! It is the same kingdom we saw in Daniel 2.

**Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.*

When? “In the days of these kings.” Who are those kings? The kings of the fourth kingdom. The eternal kingdom of Christ — his church — was established in the first century as described in Acts 2, just as Daniel told us it would be. Here in verses 13 and 14 we are once again being shown the same first century events that we saw in Chapter 2.

But when did Jesus come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days? Not in Acts 2, but in Acts 1.

**Acts 1:9** — *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

Verses 13 and 14 are showing us the ascension of Christ back to heaven following his resurrection from the dead. And once there, he was given the kingdom that was established shortly thereafter in Acts 2.

But why can't this be the end of all time? Because when that happens Jesus will **deliver** a kingdom to God, not **receive** a kingdom from God.

**1 Corinthians 15:24** — *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.*

Jesus *receives* a kingdom in Daniel 7:14. When did that happen? That happened as soon as the kingdom was established — in the first century. The kingdom is the Lord's kingdom, the church.

And if verses 13-14 are showing us a first century event, then isn't that even more evidence that the great judgment scene we saw in verses 9-12 was also a first century event? Those verses showed us the judgment of Rome, just as Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24 to describe the judgment of Jerusalem. These verses aren't talking about Jerusalem (because the fourth beast is Rome, not Jerusalem), but Daniel will later talk about the judgment of Jerusalem. But we already knew that. Why? Because Jesus quotes Daniel in Matthew 24!

Acts 1 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those on earth. Daniel 7 shows us the ascension as it was viewed from those in heaven — and what an incredible scene it is! The victorious Christ returns to the glories of heaven and is presented before the Father to receive the eternal kingdom that he purchased with his blood. And all of this is described after the judgment scene at which the earthly kingdoms of this world — including the fourth kingdom, which had put Jesus to death — are judged and destroyed to make way for the eternal kingdom of Christ — the church of Christ! Can anyone ever look at the church in the same way after studying these verses?

**Daniel 7:13-14** — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, **and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and **his kingdom** that which shall not be destroyed.*

The church of Christ is that kingdom! We are that kingdom! Do we believe it? Is that how we see ourselves? If not, then we need to spend more time reading Daniel 7!

### **Daniel 7:15-16**

**15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.  
16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.**

At this point we still have some unanswered questions — for starters, we haven't yet determined who those eleven horns are. Fortunately, Daniel was just as curious as we are, so he asks someone standing in the court what the vision meant, and he receives the interpretation. In fact, Daniel was more than curious — he was also troubled and grieved in spirit. He had just seen some incredible images, and he wanted to know what they meant.

Now here is a Daniel study tip: Be very wary of any commentary whose interpretation of this chapter disagrees with the inspired interpretation we are about to read! The same tip applies to the inspired interpretation in Revelation 17.

At this point we should pause to consider another question: why was Daniel given this vision? A cursory reading of Isaiah might have led some of the exiles to conclude that the Messiah would appear immediately following the Babylonian captivity. In fact, liberals today believe that Zerubbabel was a disappointing Messiah figure of Isaiah's prophecies.

But Daniel's vision says NO. The Messiah will not come until two other kingdoms have come and gone. The Messiah, Daniel tells us and told those exiles, will come during the fourth kingdom (Rome).

Paul dealt with a similar problem in 2 Thessalonians, not with Christ's *first* appearance, but with his *second*. Some Christians had quit working to await what they felt would be the immediate return of Christ. Paul told them that Christ would not return until the man of perdition was destroyed. I think that man of perdition is the little horn from Daniel 7, and Paul was simply saying that Jesus could not return until all that God had prophesied in Daniel had come to pass.

Some say that the New Testament authors were under the mistaken impression that Jesus' return was imminent. That is completely wrong. Paul said just the opposite in 2 Thessalonians. While we say (correctly) that Jesus can return at any moment, that was not true in the first century before all of the events in Daniel had come to pass.

And Daniel is being told here that it was certainly not true that the Messiah would come immediately after the return from exile because they were now living during the second kingdom, and the Messiah would establish his eternal kingdom during the fourth kingdom.

### **Daniel 7:17-18**

**17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.**

The first thing we are told in this interpretation is that, as we have been suggesting, these four beasts are kings or kingdoms. But what are they? Kings or kingdoms?

The terms “king” and “kingdom” are sometimes used interchangeably, and we have to look at the context to see what is meant. In ancient kingdoms, the king was the kingdom, and the kingdom was the king. The king was the embodiment of the kingdom. This is what we saw in Daniel 2.

**Daniel 2:39** — *And after thee [King Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise **another kingdom** inferior to thee.*

The fourth beast is called a king here in verse 17 and is called a kingdom in verse 23. And verse 24 tells us that “the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings.” Those ten horns were on this fourth beast — so verse 24 confirms that the beast is a kingdom and the horns are the kings of that kingdom.

Another possibility is that the four kings in verse 17 are the four primary kings of these four kingdoms — where by primary I mean the four that are the focus of these visions and events in Daniel. If so, the four kings would likely be Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Domitian — and they may be pictured in verse 17 as representatives of the four beasts. But I think the better view is that the word “king” in verse 17 means “kingdom.”

Should God’s people have been frightened of these four fierce beasts that had arisen from the earth? No. Why? Because of a little three letter word — “but.” Notice that small but crucial word “but” that begins verse 18. Things look bad, BUT we are going to win. Our kingdom (unlike these earthly kingdoms) will never pass away. It will outlast them all. Verse 18 is a message of comfort to Daniel, and to us as well.

**Daniel 7:19-22**

**19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.**

Daniel skips quickly to the fourth beast, which in this vision was different from all the others.

What about the other three? Daniel does not ask about those or perhaps he does but does not give us the details regarding the answer he received. We will learn a great

deal about the third kingdom in the visions that occur later in the book, and also about the second kingdom.

Daniel repeats the details regarding the fourth kingdom and in doing so we learn more about the little horn. Notice that this little horn wages war against the saints. This clue casts serious doubt on the view of some that this vision is speaking about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. There, Rome was not waging war on the saints but was waging war on the Jews who had persecuted the saints. Jesus had told the saints what they needed to look for so they could escape the fall of the city. Any Christian who was in Jerusalem in AD 70 was there only because he or she had not heeded the warnings of Jesus! Daniel will have some things to say about the fall of Jerusalem, but that event is not being discussed here.

In verse 22 we see God *coming* in judgment. There are many comings of God in the Bible. We often speak of the “second coming of Christ” as if there were only two. But the phrase “second coming of Christ” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The closest we get is Hebrews 9:28 which says that Jesus will **appear** a second time — an event that will occur at the end of the world.

While Christ did not literally appear in AD 70, he did come in judgment at that time. Matthew 24:30 describes a coming of Christ, and Matthew 24:34 tells us that that coming of Christ in judgment against Jerusalem happened in the first century.

We need to consider the context very carefully whenever we read of a coming of God or a coming of Christ in the Bible. While Jesus will come again literally at the end of the world, Jesus has come before figuratively in judgment against oppressors of God’s people. Matthew 24 speaks of his coming in judgment against Jerusalem, and Revelation speaks of his coming in judgment against Rome.

Note also in verse 22 that the saints are said to possess the kingdom. What that means is that the saints are in that kingdom, which confirms that this eternal kingdom is the church, the body of the saved.

And judgment is given to the saints in verse 22. What that means is that the saints are the reason for the judgment, and the judgment is their vindication. The judgment of Rome, which is described here and in Revelation, was motivated by the prayers of the saints. In fact, the entire book of Revelation could be seen as God's answer to the question in Revelation 6:10.

**Revelation 6:10** — *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

### **Daniel 7:23**

**23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.**

Verse 23 is a completely accurate picture of the Roman empire, which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the eighth century BC to control virtually the entire known world by the first century AD. This fourth beast is Rome, which was different than all the other kingdoms in its organization, in its unity, and in its power. This fourth kingdom breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces. This fourth kingdom is *not* Greece as the liberals would have us believe; this fourth kingdom is Rome.



**Daniel 7:24-25**

**24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.**

Here we once again meet the ten horns and the eleventh little horn, and now that we know they are kings, we will try to figure out who they are.

First, do these kings rule simultaneously? We wouldn't expect kings to rule simultaneously, but some commentators have suggested that the language used here requires that they do so, but that is not true at all. In Chapter 2, the statue was destroyed at one time yet the kingdoms it depicted did not rule simultaneously. Kings and kingdoms can be treated as a unit (as, for example, if they are judged at the same time) without requiring them to have existed or governed simultaneously in time.

So who are these eleven kings? Let's look at all of the evidence we have.

## The Vision in Daniel 7

**Daniel 7:8** — *I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

## The Interpretation

**Daniel 7:24-25** — *And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.*

## The Vision in Revelation 13

**Revelation 13:1-8** — *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, say-*

*ing, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

### **The Interpretation**

**Revelation 17:10-11 — *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.***

### **Additional Evidence**

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 — *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.***

So what then do we need to find? Based on that evidence, here are the clues we need to match up with the kings:

- From Daniel 7, we are looking for eleven kings, three of which are uprooted and one of which persecutes God's people and claims to be a god.
- From Revelation 13 and 17, we are looking for seven kings (of which, at the time the book was written, five had fallen, one was presently reigning, and one would reign only a short time). These seven will be followed by an eighth king who will persecute God's people and claim to be a god. (When we determine the king "who is," we will know when Revelation was written.)
- From 2 Thessalonians 2, we are looking for a man of sin who claimed to be a god — and this person had not yet arisen when 2 Thessalonians was written (likely around AD 52 to 54).

**First Question:** Who are the eleven kings in Daniel 7?

In Daniel 7, we have eleven kings who are associated with the fourth kingdom. We know from Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 that this fourth kingdom was in power when the eternal kingdom was established in Acts 2. Thus, the fourth kingdom must be Rome. Who then are these eleven kings of Rome?

If you look at the handout from Lesson 21 (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) you will see a list of the twelve Caesars from the book *The Twelve Caesars* by the ancient historian Seutonius. They are divided into four groups.

- Julius Caesar occupies the first group alone, and we will talk about him in a moment.
- The second group of five makes up the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and they take us from before the birth of Christ during the reign of Augustus up to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul by Nero.
- The third group are the three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year, AD 69.

- The fourth group is the Flavian dynasty, consisting of Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian. Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, and that dynasty continued until Domitian's death in AD 96.

Thus, between Augustus and Domitian we have the entire first century New Testament period. So it should not surprise us at all if these prophecies in Daniel end up focusing on Augustus, Domitian, and the kings in between those two — who together make up eleven kings — the precise number of kings we see in Daniel 7, written half a millennium earlier!

**Second Question:** But the list on the handout has **twelve** Caesars. Why are we ignoring the most famous Caesar of all — Julius Caesar?

For starters, Julius Caesar is outside the relevant time frame. He died nearly half a century before Christ was born. But more importantly Julius Caesar was *not* a king. He was *not* a Roman emperor.

As an aside, some argue that **none** of these men were *kings* — instead they say they were *emperors*. But what did the Jewish leaders say about Tiberius when Jesus was before Pilate? “We have no **king** but Caesar” (John 19:15). Was Tiberius a king? His subjects certainly thought so, and in fact, by any measure, Tiberius was a king, as were all of the Roman emperors.

Was Julius Caesar the first emperor of Rome? Modern historians say no. If you consult a list of Roman emperors today you will see Augustus listed first. Why? Because Rome was a *republic* under Julius Caesar, not yet an empire. But Julius Caesar was a dictator. How could a republic be ruled by a dictator? (Do we really need to ask that question today?) Simple — just write a law. The Roman republic originally entrusted the government to two consuls so that the citizens of Rome would be protected against the tyrannical rule of a single man. But it was soon felt that circumstances might arise in which it was important for the safety of the state that the government should be vested in the hands of a single person, who should possess absolute power for a short period of time, and from whose decisions there

could be no appeal to any other body. That person was called a dictator, and Julius Caesar held that office for five terms, eventually being declared “Dictator in Perpetuity.” Now, there may be a fine line between a Roman emperor and a Dictator in Perpetuity, but there is a line.

Also, if we include Julius Caesar on the list of Roman emperors, then why not include Crassus and Pompey? They ruled with Julius Caesar in the First Triumvirate. And why not include Lepidus and Marc Antony, who ruled with Augustus in the Second Triumvirate? And why not include Sulla, whose own dictatorship in 82 BC set the precedent for Julius Caesar’s dictatorship, and the eventual end of the Republic under Augustus? In short, if we open the door for Julius Caesar, others will try to push in with him.

And yes, it is true that some ancient historians include Julius Caesar on lists along with Augustus and his followers, but that points more to the fame of Julius Caesar than to his office. And yes, it is true that Suetonius included Julius Caesar on his list of twelve Caesars, but no one is arguing that Julius Caesar was not a Caesar! What we are saying is that he was not an emperor, and historians all agree with us on that point.

But is that the only reason to start with Augustus? No. I think an even better reason to use Augustus as the starting point is that the New Testament treats him as such. Augustus was the emperor who was around to welcome the King of kings into this world, and whether or not Augustus saw that star in the sky, after that date his empire would never be the same. In addition to being the *historical* starting point, Augustus is the *natural* starting point. And starting with Augustus causes the rest of the evidence to fit like a glove.

So the eleven kings are the first eleven emperors of Rome, starting with first emperor, Augustus, and ending with Domitian. This group covers two complete dynasties, as well as three very short lived civil war kings in between.

**Question: Which kings are the three uprooted kings in Daniel 7?** This question really answers itself when you look at the list of kings. You have two complete dynasties separated by three civil war kings who reigned and died in a single year. Who else could the three uprooted kings be other than those three civil war kings: Galba, Otho, and Vitellius? I think they would have been the first to agree with their description of being “uprooted”! One was hacked to pieces in the Roman forum, one killed himself, and the other was killed when Vespasian’s army entered the city — and that all happened in a single year! Can you imagine the turmoil in our country if we had four presidents in a single year? That is what happened to Rome in AD 69.

**Question: Where are these uprooted kings in Revelation?** For the most part, Revelation ignores them. Why? Two reasons, at least. First, they were uprooted in Daniel — and so they weren’t around to be considered in Revelation. Second, and more importantly, there is an important figurative reason we will discuss in a moment concerning the number 8. (Why do I say *for the most part*? It is possible that the three uprooted kings are included among the ten horns of Revelation 17:3. See my notes on that book for more information about that theory.)

**Question: Who then are the seven kings in Revelation and the eighth king that follows them?** Daniel saw eleven kings, with three uprooted. What is eleven minus three? Eight, and so the eight kings in Revelation correspond with the eleven kings in Daniel 7 after three have been uprooted. How do we know that? We know that because both Daniel and Revelation are looking at the same kingdom — the first century Roman empire. We know that from Daniel because that time period in the first century is when the eternal kingdom was established, and Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 both tell us that the eternal kingdom would be established during the days of that fourth kingdom and the days of those kings. We know that from Revelation because the kingdom that gave rise to these kings is pictured as a blood thirsty harlot, drunk on the blood of the saints, and seated upon seven hills. That can be none other than Rome, the famous city of seven hills. In fact, coins minted at

the time the book was written show the goddess Roma seated upon the seven hills that surrounded the city of Rome.

The best explanation turns out to also be the only reasonable explanation — the seven kings of Revelation are the ten kings of Daniel after three kings are uprooted, and thus the eleventh king in Daniel is the eighth king in Revelation.

So who are the five kings who have fallen? Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Who is the king who is? Vespasian, which means that he was reigning when Revelation was written. Who is the king who will come and remain only a short time? Titus, who reigned for only 26 months. And that leaves Domitian as the eighth king.

**Question: So who is the eleventh king in Daniel? Who is the eighth king in Revelation? Who is the man of sin from 2 Thessalonians?** They are all one and the same person — the final emperor in our list of twelve Caesars, Domitian. Do the descriptions of this king from the Bible fit with what we know about Domitian? Yes.

**Was Domitian a braggart?** Listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

From his youth he was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the contrary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.

**Did Domitian claim to be deity?** Verse 25 says that he would think to change the times. In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Thus, this little horn claims to be in the place of God. Suetonius wrote:

With no less arrogance he began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, “Our Master and our God bids that this be done.” And so the custom arose henceforth of addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.



William Barclay wrote:

But with the coming of Domitian there came a complete change. Domitian was a devil. He was the worst of all things — a cold blooded persecutor. With the exception of the mad Caligula, he was the first Emperor to take his divinity seriously, and to demand Caesar worship.

**Was Domitian a persecutor of God's people?** Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine. Tertullian called him a “limb of the bloody Nero,” and that name was associated with him even into the third century. Eusebius called him “the successor of Nero.”

**Why was it important in Revelation to depict Domitian as number *eight* rather than number *eleven*?** Listen to what Milligan had to say about the number eight:

The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the significance of numbers. It fell below seven just as eight went beyond it. [The number eight] denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the great day of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power.

The Year of Jubilee when everyone got the chance to begin all over again, followed seven sevens of years. The leper who had been excluded from the congregation was given a new beginning on the eighth day (Leviticus 14:10). In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

**How does the number eight fit with Domitian?** Nero was the first to actively persecute Christians. Tertullian wrote:

Consult your annals, and there you will find Nero, the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood.

And as we just noted a moment ago, he later referred to Domitian as a “limb of the bloody Nero.” A rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was literally Nero, raised from the dead. How else would Domitian be described except by the number eight — the number of renewal?

**How was Domitian “different from the former ones” as verse 24 says?** He was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted. He began an empire policy of persecution against Christians that lasted for years after he died.

**What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for “a time, two times, and half a time”?** This phrase denotes three and a half years, a period of time that is also found in Revelation 11:2, 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, and 13:5. In each case it denotes a state of affairs in which God’s people would be persecuted yet be sustained. It denotes a temporary state of affairs — something that would not last.

Why is the number three and a half used to denote such a temporary state of affairs? Because it is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection — something that will last. Thus, a broken seven denotes something that is temporary. Another possible source is the drought that Elijah prayed for. It lasted three and a half years (James 5:17), and that period may have been the source for a period of time denoting a temporary affliction.

# LESSON 24

## **But was Domitian really a persecutor?**

Before we answer that question, let's let the ancient historian Seutonius answer another question for us — was Domitian playing with a full deck? Were the Christians dealing with a *sane* ruler or an *insane* one? Seutonius wrote:

In the beginning of his reign, [Domitian] used to spend daily an hour by himself in private, during which time he did nothing else but catch flies, and stick them through the body with a sharp pin. When some one therefore inquired, “whether any one was with the emperor,” it was significantly answered by Vibius Crispus, “Not so much as a fly.”

I think we will all agree from that description that Domitian had some serious mental health issues — which makes him even more dangerous. Perhaps a modern day example of Domitian would be Kim Jong-un, the “dear leader” of North Korea.

With that background for Domitian, let's now go back to our original question — was Domitian really a persecutor of God's people? Some argue that Domitian was not actually a great persecutor of the church, but was later turned into one by those who wanted to make him fit the description of the eighth king. Is that a fair criticism? Yes, and no. Yes, in the sense that some commentators have overstated the evidence for Domitian to perhaps make him a better fit for their theories. One such statement describes Domitian as “the emperor who bathed the empire in the blood of Christians.” We have such evidence for Nero, but not for Domitian. Is it possible Domitian did that? Yes. Likely that he did? Perhaps. Do we know for sure that he did that? No.

But saying that we do not know whether Domitian bathed the empire in the blood of the saints does not mean that we cannot know whether he was a persecutor. I think we can, and I think he was. And I would point to three sources of evidence: circumstantial, Biblical, and extra-Biblical (not listed in order of importance!).

But before pointing to any evidence, we should note that much of the extra-Biblical evidence has been destroyed, and it happened soon after Domitian's death. We are told that upon Domitian's death, the Roman Senate was:

Overjoyed ... [and assailed] the dead emperor with the most insulting and stinging kind of outcries ... Finally they passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated.

This decree, which is called the *damnatio memoriae*, destroyed all the statues and inscriptions of Domitian, such as Domitian's arch at Hierapolis and dedicatory inscriptions at the Temple of the Sabastoi in Ephesus. The handout (upper left image, available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) shows the remains of the shattered statue of Domitian that stood in front of that Ephesian temple. But they could not destroy everything — and, in particular, they could not destroy all of the coins. Look at the coin shown at the upper right of the handout. There we see strong circumstantial evidence that Domitian was a persecutor of Christians. The front of that coin (not on the handout) shows Domitian. On the reverse (shown on the handout) is Domitian's infant son, who was born in the second consulship of Domitian in AD 73 and who died in AD 82, the second year after he became emperor. That child of Domitian is depicted as seated on a globe with his arms outstretched surrounded by seven stars! The inscription surrounding the child, *DIVUS CAESARIMP DOMITIANIE*, means “the divine Caesar, son of the emperor Domitian.” If Domitian believed his son was divine, what does that tell us about how he viewed himself? And where else have we seen the image of someone called the son of God surrounded by seven stars?

**Revelation 1:13-16** — *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. **And he had in his right hand seven stars:** and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

**Revelation 2:18** — *These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.*

Coins minted during Domitian's reign show his son as a god reaching for seven stars. How could such a person not come in conflict with Christianity? Particularly when we know how unbalanced he was?

As for the Biblical evidence, we have looked at much of it already. There is a reason Christians have been seeing Domitian in the pages of Revelation for two millennia. If our interpretation is correct, then there was to be a revived persecution by an "eighth king" who would arise after the death of Nero. Who else could this be but Domitian? The Bible is our best evidence on this subject, and it does just about everything in pointing to Domitian but mention him by name. (But Nero is never mentioned *by name* in the Bible, either.)

As for the extra-Biblical evidence, there is quite a bit (but admittedly not as much as we have for Nero). When Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan in AD 111 for advice on how to conduct trials for Christians, he said that some Christians had defected "as much as 25 years ago." That would have been during the reign of Domitian. And when Pliny says he had never been present for any such trials, the only time in Pliny's life when such trials would have likely occurred is during the reign of

Domitian. When Melito, a bishop of the church in Sardis, wrote an apology to the emperor Marcus Aurelius in AD 175, Eusebius tells us he wrote, “Nero, and Domitian, alone, stimulated by certain malicious persons, showed a disposition to slander our faith.”

Tertullian was an attorney in Carthage, and in his apology to Septimius Severus in AD 197, he wrote: “Consult your histories. There you will find that Nero was the first to rage with the imperial sword against this school in the very first hour of its rise in Rome,” and “Domitian too, who was a good deal of a Nero in cruelty, attempted it ... soon stopped ... restored those he had banished. Such are ever our persecutors.” Eusebius quotes Tertullian to the effect that John returned from exile on Patmos during the reign of Domitian and lived in Ephesus until the reign of Trajan.

Hegesippus, who lived between AD 117 and 189, writes of Christians who were called before Domitian and examined by him. Upon hearing them, “Domitian despising them, made no reply; but treating them with contempt, as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed, and by a decree ordered the persecution to cease.” Eusebius, who published his church history in AD 325, describes Domitian as “the second that raised a persecution against us.”

Thus, the extra-Biblical evidence points to a Domitian persecution. Perhaps it was not as bad as Nero’s and perhaps it was intermittent at times, but it could still be very, very bad and not be as bad as what Nero had done. Domitian persecuted God’s people. To those who argue otherwise, I would respond as did Tertullian: “Consult your histories!” And also consult your Bible! How can anyone not see Rome and Domitian in the book of Revelation when those scriptures are viewed alongside the historical record — and particularly the contemporary coinage that uses the exact same imagery that we see in Revelation, from the child and the seven stars to the woman seated upon seven hills.

**Daniel 7:26-27**

**26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.**

Verses 26 and 27 contain one of the most incredible and wonderful prophecies in the Bible. We find there a prophecy that could never have come from the mind of man, and that no one would ever believe absent faith in the God who revealed it to us. These two verses are a prophecy that the church would overthrow and outlast the mighty Roman empire!

Who could believe such a thing? The Roman empire — with all of its vast wealth and power? The Roman empire — with all of its soldiers and politicians? The Roman empire — with all of its far flung territories? The Roman empire — which feared nothing and no one? How could such an empire ever be defeated by anything — much less by a small religious sect composed mainly of the lower classes and slaves? What could such a group ever do to damage Rome in any way, much less defeat it? Well, for starters, that small seemingly powerless group had very powerful friends! And that small group had very powerful weapons — the word of God and prayer! And if Rome had taken the time to read the writings of that group, they

would have known, not only that they would be defeated by that small group, but that their fate had been sealed 500 years earlier!

What we see in verses 26 and 27 is the small stone not made with human hands striking and destroying that giant statue made up of the earthly kingdoms of this world, including Rome as the base of that statue — the part that was struck by the rock.

But how can we know that these are actual prophecies? Maybe they were written after the fact. Four words — *the Dead Sea scrolls*. We have copies of Daniel that pre-date the reign of Augustus by a century. Do you see now why the liberals — despite all of the evidence to the contrary — are so insistent that the fourth kingdom in Daniel is Greece rather than Rome? If they agree that the fourth kingdom is Rome, then they must also agree that the Bible is from God and not from man — and that fact is something they will never accept.

### **Daniel 7:28**

**28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.**

Daniel was greatly alarmed by what he had seen. Why? Because he had been given a glimpse of the great persecution that awaited the people of God — and that disturbed him. Daniel loved God and God's people — so he was troubled by the persecutions that lay ahead for them. Also, Daniel bore the burden of this knowledge alone because he was either unwilling or unable to make the vision known when he first received it. (Verse 28 says that he kept the matter in his heart.)



## CHAPTER 8

With Chapter 8, the book of Daniel switches back to the Hebrew language. Recall that since Chapter 2, Daniel's record has been given to us in Aramaic.

As we mentioned earlier, the use of different languages possibly has to do with different audiences. Some argue that the Aramaic sections had messages primarily for the Babylonians and that the Hebrew sections had messages primarily for the Jews — but Chapter 7 was in Aramaic, and it had an important message for the Jews. The short answer is that we don't know why Daniel was written using two languages.

The handout (middle right, available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) shows a copy of Daniel from the Dead Sea scrolls, and the yellow arrow is pointing to the break between the Aramaic of Chapter 7 and the Hebrew of Chapter 8. Notice that it is all on the same scroll. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls completely obliterated any argument that Daniel was written in the second century BC, and yet the liberal critics fiercely maintain that position. Why? Because of the evidence? No, the evidence is against them. Then why? Because of their naturalist world-view.

Although certain symbols in Chapter 8 may remind us of symbols that were used in Chapter 7, we must keep in mind one of our principles of interpretation: Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects. While the primary subject of Chapter 7 was the fourth kingdom (Rome), the primary subject of Chapter 8 is the third kingdom (Greece).

### **Daniel 8:1-2**

**1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar  
a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel,**

**after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2  
And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I  
saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is  
in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and  
I was by the river of Ulai.**

Daniel received this vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign. If that is the third year of his coregency with his father Nabonidus, then Daniel received this vision in 550 BC.

Although we have moved forward in time two years between the vision in Chapter 7 and the vision in Chapter 8, the focus of this vision is the third kingdom rather than the fourth, which means that the subject of the vision has moved backward in time from what we were seeing in Chapter 7.

Again, we are faced with a choice in verse 1. Either this book was written and these visions were received in the sixth century BC or its author was a liar. Jesus called Daniel a prophet and said that we should believe all that the prophets had written (Matthew 24:15; Luke 24:25). The Bible is not a grocery store where we can take what we want and reject the rest. If the book of Daniel is not trustworthy, then none of the Bible is trustworthy.

I am amazed at the liberal commentaries that reject the historical accuracy of the Bible while simultaneously trumpeting the theology of the Bible. If the Bible is not accurate regarding what we *can* see, then how can we trust the Bible when it tells us about what we *cannot* see? It all reminds me a bit of 1 John 4:20 — “for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

About the time that Daniel received this vision, Cyrus was establishing the Medo-Persian Empire, which would bring an end to the period of Babylonian supremacy

within just twelve years. Nabonidus, observing this union, became apprehensive about Cyrus's intentions and attempted to forge an alliance with Lydia and Egypt to protect himself against a possible Medo-Persian threat. The whole world was anxiously watching to see what Cyrus would do. God may have given the vision at this particular time to assure Daniel and his fellow exiles that the Jews would survive as a people long after Cyrus (and Belshazzar) had passed from the scene. By now Daniel was about seventy, yet he was still faithfully serving God.

The city of Susa (or Shushan of Esther 1:2) has been identified, and the palace of Xerxes (also from Esther) was discovered there in the late 1800's. It is not clear whether Daniel was in Susa when he received the vision or if the setting of the vision was Susa. Verse 16 seems to support the former view because it occurs after the vision and shows Daniel on the banks of the Ulai river, which was near Susa (but verse 16 could also be a second vision, so we can't say for sure). Also, verse 27 says that after the vision Daniel rose up and did the king's business — but the king there could be either Belshazzar (in Babylon) or Nabonidus (possibly in Susa). Most commentaries today think that Daniel was in Babylon and saw Susa only in a vision, but I'm not so sure. Josephus said that Daniel was in Susa, and it does seem to fit well with the evidence.

This "river" was actually a wide artificial canal (about 900 feet across) that connected the Choaspes River and the Coprates River.

If Daniel was in Susa then what was he doing there? When Daniel had his vision, Susa was already an ancient city and was the capital of Elam. Later it would become the winter residence of the Persian kings. The significance of the location is probably that it was outside of the Babylonian empire and near the center of future power.

As we said, Nabonidus was likely negotiating with Lydia and Egypt, hoping to form a triple alliance against the Medes (Babylon's former friend) and the Persians. (Keep in mind that this vision was received under the old Chaldean kingdom, before Cyrus conquered them.) Perhaps Daniel was acting as an ambassador in these

difficult negotiations, which may explain what he was doing in Susa. It would also explain why Daniel was still serving as an official during (at least part of) the reign of Belshazzar, but seems to have been unknown to Belshazzar in Chapter 5. Also, there is evidence that Nabonidus himself was in Susa, and Daniel may have accompanied him there.

If you travel to Susa today (it is in Iran, so not recommended!) you can see the supposed tomb of Daniel. Both Jewish and Arab traditions say that Daniel was buried in Susa. (The image on the middle left of the handout available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com) shows what the supposed tomb of Daniel looks like today — at least before ISIS blows it up as they recently did with the supposed tomb of Jonah.)

In 1901 archaeologists discovered the famous Code of Hammurabi in Susa, where it had been taken as plunder in the twelfth century BC. That famous code had been in Susa 700 years by the time the events in Daniel occurred!

### **Daniel 8:3**

**3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.**

Daniel sees a ram with two horns, with one horn higher than the other and the higher one coming up last. What does the ram denote? We saw something similar with the bear in Daniel 7:5. It also was higher on one side, and you'll recall that the bear was the second kingdom — Medo-Persia, with the higher side denoting the dominant Persians. But, similarity of symbols does not denote similarity of subject,

so we need more than just that similarity to conclude that this ram is also Medo-Persia. Fortunately, we have much more. We have verse 20 — “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.” So there is no doubt at all about the identity of this ram. (We will discuss these kings when we get to verse 20.)

Again, one must wonder where the liberals get their idea that Daniel thought the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms at this time. How could the text be any more clear? We have one ram, and that one ram represents the Medes and the Persians. In the previous chapter, one bear represented the Medes and the Persians. The ram and the bear each act as a single unified entity. And what about Daniel 5:28? “Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” And what about Daniel 6:8? “And sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians.” How does the phrase “the law of the Medes and Persians” make any sense if they were separate kingdoms? Why don’t the liberals see this? They do see it, but they have a hidden agenda — naturalism at any cost, even when that cost is their own intellectual integrity.

This ram has two horns, which denote the Medes and the Persians. One horn is higher than the other. This higher horn denotes the supremacy of the Persians in their merger with the Medes (just as we saw with the higher side on the bear in Chapter 7). This higher horn comes up last. This temporal order is in perfect accord with history. The Medes were the dominant power until Cyrus the Great came along and brought prominence to the Persians.

### **Daniel 8:4**

**4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that**

**could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.**

This verse gives us a completely accurate picture of the military conquests of the Medo-Persians. The three areas of the Medo-Persian expansion were:

- Westward toward Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedon.
- Northward toward the Caspians and the Scythians.
- Southward to Babylon and Egypt.

In these campaigns, the Medo-Persians were nearly invincible and, as pictured here, their targets were helpless against them. Medo-Persia and its king, Cyrus, became arrogant, and Cyrus “did according to his will, and became great” (verse 4). The careful student of the Bible might infer from this language that Cyrus is ripe for a fall.

Cyrus has a fascinating history in the Bible. First, he was mentioned in Isaiah by name long before he was even born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Second, Cyrus was the king who allowed the exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem, and Ezra 1:1 tells us that Cyrus did that because God stirred up his spirit to do so. Why? Again, Ezra 1:1 tells us why — so that the word of God by the mouth of Jeremiah would be fulfilled.

Later, my plan is to have a special lesson on God and time. Specifically, I want us to consider how the prophecies in Daniel came to be fulfilled, and how God knew what was going to happen. Were the prophecies fulfilled because God caused those things to happen (which is what Ezra 1:1 says with regard to at least one prophecy) or was God simply able to look forward into time and tell us what would happen? For example, the three uprooted civil war kings in Daniel 7 — did God cause them to be raised as emperor and then killed, or was God simply able to look ahead into time and tell Daniel what was going to happen? We might be tempted to ask, what difference does it make? But if God is able to look ahead now and tell me everything

I will ever think or do, then do I really have free will? And, more importantly, how does the Bible answer those questions? (We just saw one answer in Ezra 1:1, but we will consider many other scriptures in that special lesson.) Why is such a lesson needed in our study of Daniel? Because when we get to Daniel 11 we will see some of the most detailed predictive prophecies found anywhere.

# LESSON 25

Last week we read verses 5-7 at the end of class, and we saw where the ram with two horns (Medo-Persia) was trampled by a goat from the West (Greece). There is something about this vision that tells us without any doubt that this vision was not written in the second century BC, as the liberal critics would have us believe. What is it? After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever thereafter depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him "Alexander, the lord of the two horns." (See the coin on the handout available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).) One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3, 20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

Now, of course, we know that the reason Daniel used a ram for Medo-Persia and a goat for Greece is because those were what he saw in the vision he received by God. But, if, as the liberals tell us, the book of Daniel was just made up by some unknown Jew writing from Palestine in the second century BC — such a person would NEVER have depicted Medo-Persia as a ram and Greece as a goat. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about the Eisenhower administration and the Kennedy administration and referred to the Eisenhower era as the days of Camelot. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about Reagan's defeat of Carter, and referred to Carter as the Gipper. Ridiculous, right? Yes, it is. And referring to Greece as a goat and Medo-Persia as a ram in the second century is just as ridiculous! And yet that is just what we find here if Daniel was written in the second cen-



ture as the liberals argue — which means that these visions did not come from the mind of second century BC men. In fact, they did not come from the mind of man at all!

### **Daniel 8:5-7**

**5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.**

Who is this goat from the west? If we had to guess, it would not be difficult. History tells us that Greece was the great power that conquered the Medo-Persians, but, once again, we are left with no doubt. Verse 21 tells us explicitly that this goat denotes Greece. “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is

between his eyes is the first king.” (And Greece was not a great power when that was written!)

This goat with one conspicuous horn comes from the west and charges the ram with the two horns. Again, this description is in perfect agreement with history. Alexander the Great and the Greeks came against Persia in 334 BC from Macedonia and Greece, which were in the west. Like this goat, Alexander moved fast. The hooves of this goat did not even touch the ground. (Alexander died when he was 33, but by that time he had virtually conquered the world!)

So, who was this conspicuous horn? As we just said, it must be Alexander the Great. Verse 21 tells us that this horn was the “first king.” Alexander was the first king of the consolidated Greek empire. (He was the one who consolidated it.)

This attack by the goat against the ram appears to be unprovoked. History tells us that the Greeks launched just such an attack in 334 BC, and Alexander emerged victorious just three years later. One commentator wrote:

Alexander’s conquest of the entire Near and Middle East within three years stands unique in military history and is appropriately portrayed by the lightning speed of this one-horned goat. Despite the immense numerical superiority of the Persian imperial forces and their possession of military equipment like war elephants, the tactical genius of young Alexander ... proved decisive.

Daniel is telling us that Alexander had help! He was acting out his part in a plan that God had put into place hundreds of years earlier.

### **Alexander the Great**

For a long time in world history, Greece was a side-show — a small, divided country at the extreme western end of the known world. They were a seemingly insignificant player in global events that saw the Babylonians and Persians rise and become world powers. How did Greece come to take center stage and supplant ma-

gor, world-crushing empires? And how could Daniel possibly have known about that 200 years before it happened? (We know the answer to that last question!)

Unable to ever successfully put up a united force or government, the Greek tribes developed as city-states. The most famous were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Macedonia. For 500 years, Greek history was characterized largely by a series of internal conflicts, although they had also been battling Persia off and on for quite a while. The conflicts between Persia and Greece go back at least as far as 547 BC when Cyrus the Great conquered the Greek-inhabited region of Ionia.

Xerxes is the Persian king in the book of Esther, and Herodotus describes his Greek expedition in 480-479 BC, which included the Battle of Thermopylae depicted in the recent movie, *300*, which showed the famous three day suicidal stand in a narrow pass. Although the 300 Spartans arrayed against 100,000 Persians lost that battle, that Persian invasion eventually resulted in a dismal failure for the Persians.

In 470 BC, the Persian army again suffered defeat at the hands of the Greeks, which ended their fifty year struggle with Greece. Persia maintained control over Egypt and Cyprus, but lost control over the Greek colonies of Asia Minor. Xerxes was killed in a conspiracy in 465 BC and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes I, who is the king who later allowed Ezra and Nehemiah to return.

In the last Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, which happened around 420 BC, Sparta made an agreement with Persia to use part of the Persian navy to bottle up the Athenian fleet. The Spartans won the war, but their victory came at a price — the Persians were now back in Greece.

In 370 BC, a Greek king arose in Macedonia known as Philip II of Macedon. (See the handout available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).) In seven years he was able to subdue all the Greek city-states and unite them, something that had not happened in almost five centuries.

But Philip wanted more than just a unified Greece. He also wanted Persia. In 336 BC, when his invasion of Persia was in its very early stage, Philip was assassinated,

and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Alexander III (Alexander the Great). Alexander had been educated as a child by a very famous tutor — Aristotle! Alexander came to power when he was just a teenager, and he would be dead by the time he was 30. In that short period he conquered the entire civilized world.

One of his campaigns brought him to Jerusalem. He arrived most likely around 329 BC. (He was dead by 323 BC.) The Jews were terrified of the now victorious Greeks because the Jews had backed Persia in the war. The High Priest had earlier refused Alexander's demand for provisions and men to help him conquer Tyre claiming that a treaty with Persia prevented Israel from helping the Greeks.

The Talmud describes what happened. The High Priest came out with other members of the priesthood, as well as the Sanhedrin, to greet Alexander at the gates of Jerusalem as he sat on his famous white horse. When Alexander saw the High Priest he dismounted and bowed to him. Instead of destroying and subjugating them, Alexander made an arrangement with the Jews. As long as they would be his loyal vassals and pay their taxes, they could remain autonomous.

Out of gratitude to Alexander, the Jews did several things. First, they agreed to name every child born the next year "Alexander," which must have caused some confusion on the first day of school a few years later! Second, the Jews agreed to install a system of tax collection, which would later lead to terrible corruption (as it would again later under the Romans). It was so corrupt that the Talmud held that anybody who was a tax collector was presumed to be a thief. Ironically, by showing Alexander their gratitude by naming their children after him they unwittingly opened the door to the Greek language. And with the Greek language came the Greek culture, which would create many problems down the road.

Why did Alexander spare Jerusalem? The Talmud says that Alexander had a vision. Josephus tells us that the High Priest brought out the scroll of Daniel written 200 years earlier and pointed to Daniel's vision of a one-horned goat defeating a ram in Chapter 8 and explained that it shows a king from Greece defeating the Persians.

**Daniel 8:8**

**8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.**

This goat “waxed very great” or “magnified himself.” What does that mean? It could denote Alexander’s advances into Afghanistan and India, which occurred in 327 BC. That is, Alexander magnified his empire. More likely, it refers to Alexander’s pretensions of divinity, which distressed his troops to the point that they mutinied and refused to advance further into India. Egyptian priests had told Alexander that he had descended from Zeus, and he took that very seriously. He required his comrades to prostrate themselves before him.

This horn is broken at the height of its power, and in its place arise four other horns. Here we will see that four is used literally, but there could also be a figurative meaning — these four kingdoms were man-made kingdoms.

Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC at the age of 33 due to a sudden fever brought on by dissipation. (The rumor was that he had in fact been poisoned by Cassander, the son of Antipater, viceroy of Macedonia.) After his death, attempts were made to hold his empire together, but they proved futile. By 311 BC, four of his generals had claimed independence and by 301 BC they had it. (At one point thirteen men were trying to carve out a piece of the Greek empire, but when the smoke cleared only four were left standing.)

- Ptolemy in Egypt (including Palestine).
- Seleucus in Babylonia.

- Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor.
- Cassander in Macedonia and Greece.

History tells us that the division of Alexander's kingdom was four-fold and that is what Daniel tells us as well. The difference is that Daniel told us many years before Alexander was even born!

### **Daniel 8:9-12**

**9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.**

Here we have another little horn. We saw a little horn in Chapter 7 that we identified with Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome. Should we expect this little horn to be the same person? No. The little horn in Chapter 7 came up from the

fourth kingdom (Rome). The little horn here in Chapter 8 comes up from the third kingdom (Greece). This little horn is a perfect example of our rule that similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Who then is this little horn that arises out of the Greek empire? We are given a few clues here and more clues later in the chapter. Who is the little horn? Let's summarize the clues:

- He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).
- He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).
- He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).
- He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).
- He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).
- He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).
- He understood riddles (verse 23) (KJV — understanding dark sentences).
- He had great power (verse 24).
- He caused great destruction (verse 24).
- He arose from one of the four pieces of the Greek kingdom that came about after Alexander's death (verses 8-9).

There is only one Greek ruler who fits all of these clues. The little horn of Daniel 8 must be Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire. (A bust of him is shown on the handout, and also on a coin. The reverse of that coin includes the inscription, "Theos Epiphanes," which means God Manifest. His people called him Epiphanes, which means The Mad One. The handout is available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com).) Why must Antiochus IV Epiphanes be the little horn of Daniel 8?

## Antiochus IV Epiphanes

As we have seen, after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy and his successors established themselves in Egypt and at first controlled Palestine as well. The Seleucids controlled Mesopotamia and Syria. There was constant friction between these two groups, and as was often the case, Palestine became a battlefield. In 200 BC, the Seleucids gained Palestine from the Ptolemies at the Battle of Panias.

We should keep in mind how the spread of the gospel would have been hindered if this constant warfare had been allowed to continue. The fourth kingdom, Rome, put an end to it and brought instead the famous *pax Romana*, the Roman peace. Here is how Wikipedia describes it:

Pax Romana (Latin for Roman peace) was the long period of relative peace and minimal expansion by military force experienced by the Roman Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Since it was established by Augustus, it is sometimes called *pax Augusta*. Its span was approximately 206 years (27 BC to 180 AD). ***The pax Romana is said to be a “miracle” because prior to it there had never been peace for that many centuries in a given area of human history.***

You don't need quotation marks around the word “miracle” in that last sentence!

Initially the Seleucid rule was popular with the Jews. According to Josephus, Antiochus III eased the tax burden considerably. However, he soon came in conflict with Rome and after several defeats was forced to pay a large annual indemnity. This meant that he had to tax the Jews more heavily, and understandably his popularity began to wane. Antiochus III was killed in 187 BC while raiding a temple treasury in Elam to pay off the Romans. His successor, Seleucus IV, continued this policy by plotting unsuccessfully to rob the temple treasury in Jerusalem. He was assassinated in 175 BC. As one might expect, this period gave rise to Jewish opposition and the gradual emergence of a Jewish nationalistic movement.



Antiochus IV Epiphanes came to power after the death of his brother, Seleucus IV. He needed to unify his empire against the threats of Rome to the west, Parthia to the east, and Egypt to the south. Antiochus sought to accomplish this unity by fostering Hellenism; that is, by encouraging the adoption of Greek culture and ideals. He particularly identified with Zeus and took the name *Theos Epiphanes* (“the god appearing”) because he considered himself to be a divine personification of Zeus. Due to the Roman taxes, Antiochus was virtually penniless when he assumed the throne, so he increased taxes and continued to rob temples.

Although they all disliked the taxes, the Jews were divided about Hellenism. Younger Jews were eager to adopt Greek culture and integrate it into Jewish society, but most older Jews were uncompromising traditionalists. Matters came to a head in Jerusalem when two men tried to out bribe each other in an effort to have Antiochus make them High Priest. The winner supported the establishment of a Greek gymnasium within sight of the temple. There, young men (including priests) studied Greek culture and took part in sports. The intertestamental book of First Maccabees contains the following description:

Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the custom of the heathen. And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen.

Greek sports were conducted without clothing. Also, when First Maccabees says that they made themselves uncircumcised, it is not just speaking figuratively. Some of the Jews actually tried to reverse their circumcision with surgery.

Later, the High Priest (who had obtained that position by paying Antiochus a bribe) assisted the king in plundering the temple and said nothing while Antiochus murdered citizens and nearly destroyed the city. An altar to Zeus was built in the temple and sacrifices were offered on it. And that was not all.

Antiochus issued decrees forbidding the practice of Jewish religion on pain of torture and death; the Sabbath and the festivals were not

to be observed and circumcision was forbidden; copies of the Torah were to be destroyed and Jews were to be forced to offer sacrifices to Zeus and eat the meat of the sacrifice. Pigs were deliberately chosen as the sacrificial animals because they were considered unclean by the Jews.

One elderly priest, Mattathias, refused to sacrifice to Zeus and, with his five sons, he rose up and killed the king's officers who were trying to force him to comply. This event led to the Maccabean Revolt, which eventually gave rise to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity. This nation lasted only 79 years. In 63 BC, the Romans under Pompey conquered Jerusalem and once again the Jews were under foreign domination.

Now, let's look at those clues again. Who is the Little Horn of Daniel 8?

**Clue #1:** He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).

This clue accurately describes the directions of the Seleucids. The "glorious land" is Palestine.

**Clue #2:** He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).

The phrases "stars of heaven" and the "host of heaven" refer to the people of God, who at this time were the faithful Jews. This symbol for the Jews may point back to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5. Antiochus caused many "stars of heaven" to fall as he caused them to renounce their covenant with God.

**Clue #3:** He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).

Antiochus declared himself to be the divine personification of the Greek god Zeus. See the coin on the handout available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com). The phrase *Theos Epiphanes* on the reverse side of the coin means "God Manifest."

**Clue #4:** He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).

Verse 11 says:

*Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.*

This prince of the host may be Jesus Christ himself, whom we also saw in Daniel 7. That is how far this little horn magnified himself! It was by him that the burnt offering was taken away. (The Hebrew here simply says that the *daily* was taken away. That is, the daily activities of the priests were stopped.) As we have seen, Antiochus did just that.

**Clue #5:** He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).

Antiochus looted the temple and set up an altar to Zeus in the sanctuary.

**Clue #6:** He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).

Even the Roman Pompey refused to disrupt the Jewish worship, but not so with Antiochus. He definitely had a bold countenance!

**Clue #7:** He understood riddles (verse 23) (KJV — understanding dark sentences).

A better translation is that he was skilled at double dealings. Again, this was true of Antiochus. History tells us that he was extremely crafty and devious.

**Clues #8 and #9:** He had great power, and he caused great destruction (verse 24).

This, of course, as we have seen was also true of Antiochus.

In summary, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the little horn that arose out of the Greek empire and persecuted the people of God ruthlessly. He overthrew the sanctuary and caused the daily sacrifices to end. He caused many of God's people to fall by causing them to renounce their covenant with God in favor of Greek culture and Greek gods.

Verse 12 gives us the reason behind Antiochus' success. It was through transgression. God didn't lack power; it was just that the people were evil. They followed Antiochus and allowed Antiochus to do what he did.

Also, in verse 12 we see that Antiochus would cast the truth down to the ground. In fact, he forbid scriptural faith and service to God on pain of death.

### **Daniel 8:13-14**

**13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.**

Daniel hears a “holy one” or “saint” (probably an angel) ask how long the sanctuary and the people would be trampled underfoot. A second “holy one” provides the answer — the sanctuary will be restored after 2300 days (literally 2300 “evenings and mornings”).

The phrase “how long” should remind of us of a similar verse in Revelation 6.

**Revelation 6:10** — *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long**, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

As we mentioned earlier, that verse has been called the theme of the book of Revelation. Here we have the same question, “How long?” but the answer we get in verse 14 is curious — 2300 days. (We will see this question again in Daniel 12:6.) The 2300 days of verse 14 presents one of the most difficult interpretive problems in the book of Daniel — and, not surprisingly, the commentaries are all over the map on what it means!

As for **clearly wrong views** of the 2300 days, they are numerous. Here is one example. The Millerites were followers of William Miller, who in 1833 decided that Jesus would return in 1843. Why? He started with 457 BC (which is about the year that Ezra led the second return from exile, with the return under Cyrus being the first and the return in Nehemiah being the third), and then he counted forward 2300 years based on verse 14 and based also on the “year-day method” of Biblical interpretation (about which we will soon have much more to say). Christ’s failure to return as Miller predicted became known as the Great Disappointment, out of which arose the Seventh-Day Adventists, and eventually the Branch Davidians. So, yes, we can draw a straight line between Miller’s false views of verse 14 and the events that happened in Waco in 1993.

Yes, it matters what we believe about Daniel. And, yes, it matters when people purport to know when Jesus will return even when the Bible tells us that Jesus himself does not know when that day will be (Mark 13:32). We can see what happens when false teaching such as that creates the inevitable “great disappointments.”

# LESSON 26

Last week we ended by reading verses 13-14, and we discussed the interpretative difficulties in determining what is meant by the 2300 days in verse 14, which is the curious answer given to the question of “how long?” in verse 13. Before we try to determine what is meant by the 2300 days, what would we expect the answer to the question “how long?” to be? How long will God’s people be trodden under foot? Elsewhere with similar questions we have seen God answer “not long,” and we have seen God provide comfort by telling his people that their troubles will be only temporary. Perhaps we should not be surprised if we see a similar answer here.

Last week we discussed a clearly wrong answer to the question. The Millerites in the 1800’s used verse 14 to teach that Jesus would return in 1843. As we saw, that false teaching led to a Great Disappointment, from which came various false religious groups. Today we will discuss three possible views for the 2300 days, at least two of which are wrong, but we will not be able to say definitively which of those three is right.

Why is Miller’s view a false teaching if we can’t say for sure what the 2300 days means? Because not being able to say for sure what something means is very different from not being able to say for sure what it does not mean! We know that Miller’s view was wrong because it violated other Scriptures — namely, Mark 13:32, which tells us that not even Jesus knows that day of his return. It also violates the Scriptures that tell us Jesus’ return will not come with signs but instead will come as a thief in the night. Also, we know that Jesus did not return in 1843, which means that Miller falls under the condemnation of all false prophets:

**Deuteronomy 18:22** — *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

And worse, Miller's false teaching about Daniel would put Daniel under that same condemnation if Miller had been correct about what Daniel was saying — but, of course, Miller was not correct.

Verse 13 begins with a holy one speaking, and that holy one then answers the question "how long?" that is posed to him. Who is the holy one in verse 13? Most take him to be an angel, but Calvin argues that he is Christ. Perhaps, but that is just speculation. We aren't told who he is.

Last week we discussed the desecration of the temple and the persecution of God's people that occurred under the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and we discussed how the transgression of some of God's people in readily accepting the Greek culture helped make that desecration and persecution possible. We also discussed the Maccabean revolt, which led to the restoration of the sanctuary by Judas Maccabaeus on December 14, 164 BC. That revolt also led to the ruling Jewish Hasmonean dynasty, which was first semi-independent and later fully independent of the Seleucid empire. Palestine became a Roman client state in 63 BC, and the Hasmonean dynasty was replaced by the Herodian dynasty in 37 BC.

The Jewish Hanukkah holiday celebrates the rededication of the temple in 164 BC. Here is how Josephus describes it:

Now Judas [Judah the Hammer; son of Mattathias] celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days, and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival

of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission, they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights. I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.

This same feast is called the feast of the dedication in John 10:22.

So, back to the 2300 days in Daniel 8:14. That 2300 day period is the answer we are given to the question of how long the sanctuary will be trodden under foot until it is cleansed. Literally, the answer is “evening, morning, two thousand and three hundred.” What does the 2300 days mean? Is it literal or figurative? (I have looked at more commentaries on this one question than I have about any other issue in this book — and I still don’t have a definitive answer!)

We have at least three choices:

- The “evening, morning” could refer to the evening and morning sacrifices, in which case 2300 evening and morning sacrifices would occur over a literal 1150 days.
- The “evening, morning” could be taken as a Hebrew day (as in Genesis 1, “there was evening and there was morning”) so that we have a literal 2300 days.
- The number 2300 could be figurative.

**View #1:** The time period is a literal 1150 days, which would be three years and 55 days (1150 days contain 1150 mornings and 1150 evenings for a grand total of 2300 mornings and evenings). (Note that 1150 days is three years + 70 days if we use a 360 day lunar year, which is used elsewhere in prophetic literature, at least for short periods of time.)



This view is appealing in that the altar to Zeus was set up in the temple about 1150 days before it was cleansed. (Historians tell us that the period between desecration and rededication was 1106 days, but we can't be sure of the point of the initial desecration in view here, and it is possible that the Bible is rounding the numbers.)

**View #2:** The time period is a literal 2300 days, which would be a little over six years and 100 days.

Some commentators argue that a Hebrew reader would never have understood the language in verse 14 to refer to only 1150 days. They point out that when the Bible wants to express half days it uses two numbers, as in 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:4). So under this view verse 14 is referring to 2300 days.

But a problem with this view is that nothing really notable (that we know about) occurred six years and 100 days before the temple was cleansed. Antiochus came to the throne in 175 BC, and some argue that his persecution of the Jews started around 170 BC, which is about six years prior to 164 BC. But the appointment of the High Priest by bribery and the construction of the Greek gymnasium near the temple all occurred prior to 170 BC, and in fact Antiochus was busy fighting the sixth Syrian War against the Ptolemies in 170 BC, with the real persecution picking up with his return in 168 BC — so the date of 170 BC for the beginning of the persecution seems to be without much basis.

**View #3:** The time period of 2300 days is figurative. But there is a problem with this view — the number 2300 is not an obvious symbolic number or a multiple of such numbers. Even so, this view is strengthened by the apocalyptic nature of this chapter and the chapters on either side, as well as by the figurative time periods we see elsewhere in this book. But what is the symbolic meaning?

The period of 2300 days is a little over six years (which falls just short of the perfect seven). If we instead take 1150 days, then we are a little short of three and a half years (a broken seven). Both of those figures have been used elsewhere to refer to a persecution that is temporary.

Either way, the intent of the figure would be to stress that the persecution would end — it would not be permanent. That is just what we would expect the answer to be. The problem with this view, of course, is that none of the usual figures give us a perfect fit with 2300 days.

**My View:** I think either **View #1** (literal 1150 days) or **View #3** (figurative 1150 days) is correct, and I slightly favor **View #3** over **View #1**.

Why 1150 days? The phrase “evenings and mornings” in place of “days” is a key phrase here, and I think it stresses that the removal of the “daily” sacrifices was the center of attention in this event. Verse 26 refers to the vision as the vision of the evening and the morning.

Why symbolic? Our rule is that we choose symbolic unless we have a really good reason to do otherwise. A literal 1150 days makes sense, so that is an option, but the use of a broken seven to denote a temporary persecution is a common symbol in the Bible.

But why 1150 for a broken seven? That is a very good question. (Did you ever notice that whenever the teacher says that is a very good question, he never has a very good answer?) In Revelation 12:6, we see 1260 days used to denote a broken seven — 1260 days is three and a half lunar years (with 360 days in a lunar year). But in Revelation 11:2, we see yet another symbol used for a broken seven — 42 months, which is also three and a half years. In Daniel 7:25, we saw “a time and times and the dividing of time” used to denote a broken seven. So all we can say is that various symbols are used in the Bible for a broken seven, and we can’t say for sure why 1150 was used here rather than 1260. Perhaps God wanted to assure Daniel that the terrible persecution would not just be temporary, but would *really* be temporary, and so he used a symbol slightly shorter than three and a half years. Perhaps it is important that 1150 days is three years + **70 days** if we use a 360 day lunar year because we have certainly seen the number 70 used elsewhere in the Bible.

Perhaps our struggle to make 1150 fit the usual symbolic scheme suggests that we should interpret the number literally, in which case it most likely denotes the time between the first offering of swine to Zeus in the temple until the cleansing of the temple.

We can't say for sure which of these three views is correct, but we can say that the interpretation of the 2300 days does not appear to be a critical feature in understanding the vision — why? Because Gabriel's interpretation in the second half of this chapter says nothing about it, and Daniel does not ask him about it.

Why didn't Daniel ask about it? If Daniel took the number literally, then he was likely very relieved to hear that the trampling would last only 2300 days — there was no need to inquire further. If Daniel understood it figuratively, then he would have experienced the same relief — the persecution would be temporary. And I like what one commentary says about the use of *days* rather than *years* in verse 14: “The fact that it is expressed in days reminds the troubled Israelites that the Lord will not let this period extend a day beyond what they can bear.”

Remember that the question in verse 13 (how long?) is also found in Revelation. There the answer is soon (1:1, 1:3, 22:6, 22:10). The answer here is the same. God's people are being persecuted, but their affliction is temporary — unlike the affliction of their persecutors, which will be eternal.

We may be tempted today to ask, “how long?” How long until we are no longer trampled underfoot by societies and governments that reject God and that have thrown his word behind their backs? How long? The answer today is the same answer that Daniel heard when that same question was asked — our current situation is temporary. The permanent is yet to come. Whatever we are facing here on earth, it can be measured in *days*.

**2 Corinthians 4:18** — *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the*

*things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

### **Daniel 8:15-17**

**15 And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.**

After the vision (or perhaps, after the first vision, if Daniel is now having a second vision), Daniel sees the angel Gabriel and hears a voice asking Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel.

Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that gives us the name of an angel. The only other angel who is named in the Bible is Michael, and we will meet him in Chapter 10 of Daniel.

The War Scroll from the Dead Sea scrolls lists four angels by name: Michael, Gabriel, Sariel, and Raphael. The book of First Enoch expands the list to seven by

adding Uriel, Reuel, and Remiel. But we only know two of those names from the inspired text.

Gabriel tells Daniel that the vision is for the time of the end. What does he mean by this? The phrase “time of the end” is one of those phrases that requires us to examine the context very closely. Although we might be tempted to think “the end” must always refer to the end of the world, that could not be the case here. The vision very clearly ends with the cleansing of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus. Thus, the time of the end refers here to a time even before the birth of Christ. We see similar uses of the word “end” elsewhere in the Bible:

**Ezekiel 7:2-3** (regarding the end of Jerusalem under the Babylonians) — *Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; **An end, the end is come** upon the four corners of the land. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.*

**Habakkuk 2:2-3** (regarding the end of the Babylonians 70 years later) — *And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but **at the end** it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

These uses of the word “end” mean the same thing — the end of whatever is being described in the vision or the prophecy. The point is that God is in charge of the timing, and God will determine when the “end” occurs. The fulfillment is sure and will not occur by accident.

**Daniel 8:18-19**

**18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.**

In verse 18, Daniel is in a deep sleep. The same Hebrew verb used here is used to describe Jonah's "deep sleep" as he slept through a violent storm (Jonah 1:5), and a related Hebrew word is used for the "deep sleep" that God caused to come upon Adam when he took part of his flesh to create Eve (Genesis 2:21). It is not clear whether Daniel fainted from or was just exhausted from all that he had seen, but from verse 17 I think it is most likely that Daniel fainted (although when he faints in verse 27, the word "fainted" is used). In any event, the angel sets Daniel on his feet again.

Here we see even more clearly what is meant by the time of the end. The "time of the end" in verse 17 is called "the time appointed the end" in verse 19. It is the time that God has appointed for the events in the vision to be completed.

The "indignation" in verse 19 refers to the outpouring of God's wrath against the enemies of his people and against sin. The appointed time is the time when the vision will be fulfilled.

**Daniel 8:20-22**

**20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.**

Here we have the explanation of the vision, which we have already discussed. Recall that the ram was Medo-Persia and the goat was Greece. As history tells us, Greece defeated Medo-Persia and then split into four pieces after the death of Alexander the Great. These four kingdoms did not arise “with his power.” That is, they were ruled by Alexander’s generals and not by Alexander’s sons. Alexander had a son that was born after Alexander’s death, but that son and his mother were soon murdered.

**Possible problem:** Verse 20 speaks of the “**kings** of Media and Persia.” Did Daniel believe that the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms when these events occurred? No. Daniel clearly sees here that Media and Persia are represented by a single ram. That is, they act as one beast with a single will and a single mind. They are, as history also tells us, a single entity at this time. Daniel elsewhere refers to the law [singular] of the Medes and the Persians, which makes absolutely no sense if they were separate kingdoms with separate kings.

Why, then, does Daniel refer to the “kings” (plural) of Media and Persia when in fact Cyrus was in charge of both? We have already noted that the word “king” is

sometimes used in Daniel to mean “kingdom,” so the most likely explanation is that the ram denotes the combined *kingdoms* of Media and Persia. We know that the words “king” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably in the next verse, verse 21 — “And the rough goat is the **king** of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first **king**.” The goat is called the *king* of Greece, yet the first *king* is a horn on the goat. Thus, the goat must be the *kingdom* of Greece. But, with that said, if we are consistent in how we view verses 20 and 21, then the horns in verse 20 would be kings rather than kingdoms, as is the horn in verse 21.

What is the meaning of verse 20 if “king” really means “king”? Verse 20 could be pointing to the king of Persia (Cyrus) and the last king of Media (who was Cyrus’s own grandfather, Astyages) whom Cyrus defeated to become the one king of the Medes and the Persians. That is, the one ram was a combination of those two kingdoms led by those two kings.

### **Daniel 8:23-25**

**23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall**



**destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.**

Here we have a description of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whom we have also already discussed. Recall that each of these items fits Antiochus precisely. In Jewish writings, he is referred to as Antiochus the Wicked.

Verse 23 tells us that he would arise in the latter time of their kingdom. Although, chronologically he ruled about midway in the timespan of the Seleucid kingdom, God's interest in the Seleucids ends with Antiochus IV (as we will see in Daniel 11). The kingdom began to decline with the death of his father Antiochus III.

This type of focus is not unusual in the Bible. There were many Roman emperors, but as far as God was concerned there were only eleven. He talks about the first eleven in Daniel and in Revelation, but says nothing about all the others that followed. God's interest in Rome (and in the Seleucids) seems to have ended as soon as they were judged and sentenced — and that may be the most frightening thing about these visions!

Notice that without warning there is about a 150 year break between verse 22 and verse 23. Alexander died in 323 BC, and Antiochus IV came to power in 175 BC. We need to keep this in mind as we get closer to Daniel 11, where we will also see such breaks.

Verses 24 and 25 have some curious phrases, especially in the King James Version.

- “He shall destroy wonderfully” — that means he shall cause *fearful* or *extraordinary* destruction.
- “He shall cause craft to prosper in his hand” — that means he will cause *deceit* or *trickery* to succeed.

- “By peace shall destroy many” — that means he will destroy many *without warning or while they are at ease*.

Verse 25 tells us that “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.” Who is the Prince of princes? We saw the Prince of the host in verse 11 and said that it could be a reference to Jesus. I think we see the same Prince here, and again this could be a reference to Jesus. If these are not references to God the Son, then they must be references to God the Father. (The use of the phrase “without hand” that follows further suggests that he is standing up against God in verse 25.) An assault against God’s people is an assault against God.

Verse 25 tells us that Antiochus IV would be broken by no human hand. History tells us that after making an unsuccessful attempt to pillage a wealthy temple in Elymais, he died of a sudden mysterious illness. Daniel is telling us here that the illness was anything but mysterious! God removed Antiochus from the scene just as he would later remove Herod from the scene in Acts 12. The Bible, and particularly the book of Daniel, is full of men who thought they were God.

- Nebuchadnezzar thought he was God — and he found himself out grazing in the field like an ox.
- Domitian thought he was God — and he was assassinated by one of his own servants.
- Alexander the Great thought he was God — and he died young and in pain after a drinking binge.
- Antiochus thought he was God — and he died suddenly of disease.
- Herod thought he was God — and he was eaten by worms.

We look at those men who thought they were God, and we may say, “I’m glad we aren’t like that!” And I fear the greater the sin, the more likely we are to have that reaction. Murder? Adultery? But doesn’t the Bible tell us that we can be guilty of those sins — without ever committing the acts (Matthew 5:28, 1 John 3:15)? Perhaps

we should take a closer look at the sin of putting yourself in the place of God. We may never say it, but can we still be guilty of it?

What was the first temptation? Genesis 3:5 — “ye shall be as gods.” Do we really think Satan has given up on that one — especially after it worked so well? Do we really think you have to be Alexander the Great to succumb to that temptation? How many of our own troubles can be traced back to the thought that we are God? That we are all knowing? That we are all powerful? That we control the universe? That we are above time? That death cannot touch us? That we sit above and alone, having need of no one? That we are unchanging and unchangeable? That our word is truth? That our will be done?

It makes for an interesting study, and I would point you to an excellent book called *The God Players* by Earl Jabay. But we should also note the extreme danger of such delusions from the examples we see in the Bible of those who thought to take the place of God. We are the creature, not the creator — and our troubles begin as soon as we forget that.

**Romans 1:25** — *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*

## **Daniel 8:26**

**26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.**

Daniel is told to seal up this vision because it pertains to many days hence. How many days hence? The vision was received in 550 BC, and it was fulfilled in 164 BC. Thus “many days” refers here to a time period of 386 years. Daniel was told to seal

the vision up because it dealt with events that would pertain to people who would live much later. This vision was not directly applicable to the people of his own day.

In Revelation 22, John was given the **opposite** command!

**Revelation 22:10** — *And he saith unto me, **Seal not** the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

Why was John told to not seal up the words? Because the time for their fulfillment was near! This crucial time frame is also mentioned elsewhere in Revelation.

**Revelation 1:1** — *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which **must shortly come to pass**.*

**Revelation 1:3** — *For **the time is at hand**.*

**Revelation 22:6** — *These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things **which must shortly be done**.*

**Revelation 22:10** — *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: **for the time is at hand**.*

Thus, Daniel was told to seal up a vision that referred to a time less than 400 years after he received it, yet John was told not to seal up his vision. Does it make any sense at all to teach (as most do) that nothing in Revelation has yet been fulfilled 2000 years later and counting?

Those who begin their study of Revelation by ignoring the time frame in the opening verse of the book have no chance of correctly interpreting the book — and most commentaries begin just that way. Daniel 8:26 and Revelation 22:10 provide a very good starting point for discussing the prophecies in these two books and especially the prophecy in Revelation.

**Daniel 8:27**

**27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.**

Daniel fainted due to the vision and was sick for some days. Why? Because he saw what would one day happen to God's people. Even though it would not happen to him or to anyone he knew, still Daniel was disturbed. This is certainly a lesson for us. We should be concerned for God's people everywhere and for all time — present and future.

We should be distressed by the persecutions directed around the world at Christians and at those who profess to be Christians. And we should be very thankful for the freedoms we enjoy, while understanding that those freedoms will not last forever. There is but one eternal kingdom, and the United States is not it. While we enjoy these freedoms, we have a tremendous responsibility to take advantage of them to spread the word. God has opened a door of freedom for us, and he expects us to go through it while we can, because one day that door will close.

How can we show our concern for *future* Christians? One way is by carefully guarding the truth that has been entrusted to us. That is how we show our care and concern for God's people in the future.

**1 Timothy 6:20** — *O Timothy, keep that [or guard that] which is committed to thy trust.*

**Jude 3** — *Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

This is not just the elders' or the preacher's responsibility. It is everyone's responsibility. Another way to show our concern for God's people is by prayer — and we will see Daniel doing that very shortly.

Notice that even after the explanation, Daniel confesses in verse 27 that he did not fully understand the vision. (That confession should provide some comfort to us in our efforts to understand these visions! Maybe he too was puzzling over the 2300 days!)

Daniel was about 70 when he received this vision, but verse 27 tells us that he got back to work doing the king's business as soon as he recovered from his illness, and we know that Daniel was doing God's business in his work for the king. There is no retirement from our service to God!

# LESSON 27

## CHAPTER 9

### **Daniel 9:1-2**

**1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.**

This vision was received by Daniel during the first year of Darius' reign. As we have suggested, Darius was most likely a governor that Cyrus placed over the newly conquered Chaldean territory, but he may have been Cyrus himself. Either way, the first year of his reign would have been the first year of the Persian rule over the Chaldeans, which began in 539 BC.

Verse 1, which says that Darius was **made** king over the newly conquered realm of the Chaldeans, is the best evidence that Darius was a governor under Cyrus rather

than Cyrus himself (unless the “made” refers to God making him king, which means it could still be Cyrus).

Chapter 10 will begin “in the **third** year of Cyrus king of Persia,” and Chapter 11 will begin “in the **first** year of Darius the Mede” (as does this chapter). It might seem odd at first that Daniel would use both names to refer to a single person, but Cyrus would not be the only person in this book with two names. In fact, it seems to be the norm in this book (written in two languages!) for people to have two names!

By this time, as we have been with Daniel all the way from age 13 to age 80, we likely have a question for him — what is your secret, Daniel? How were you able to remain so faithful to God for so long? How were you able to speak truth to power so courageously in the presence of kings? How were you able to remain faithful as a teenage exile in a foreign land? What is your secret? The answer is that it was no secret at all. What is Daniel doing in verse 2? He is studying his Bible, and in verse 4 we will see him praying to God. Daniel’s “secret” was prayer and Bible study. It was speaking to God in prayer and listening to God in his word. Are we looking for modern day Daniels? Look for those Christians who focus on prayer and Bible study. Do I want to be a Daniel? Then I need to pick up my Bible and get on my knees. That is how Daniel himself became a Daniel!

And notice that prayer cannot be divorced from Bible study. In 1 John 5:14 we read that “this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will**, he heareth us.” How can we know that we are asking for something according to God’s will if we are ignorant of God’s will? And how do we learn about God’s will? From God’s word. Prayer and Bible study must always go together.

Notice, also, that although Daniel was a prophet himself, he found it important to read and study the written word. We are **not** prophets. How much more important a role should Bible study play in our lives!



Daniel was a prophet, and yet Daniel was a student of the written word. And Daniel was not alone among the prophets in that.

**1 Peter 1:10** — *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently.*

And Daniel, at age 80, did not think that he had nothing left to learn! He continued to study God's word throughout his entire life.

What was Daniel studying? Verse 2 tells he was studying the writings of Jeremiah. Notice that Daniel already knew that the book of Jeremiah was an inspired message from God even though Jeremiah had died just a few decades earlier. Daniel did not need to wait around to hear from some counsel that Jeremiah belonged in the inspired canon. Daniel knew that it did, and Daniel calls it "the word of the Lord" in verse 2. God gave us his word; it did not come from any counsel of men. Those counsels may have **recognized** the inspired word, but they did not determine or create the inspired word.

What part of Jeremiah was Daniel reading? The reference to 70 years in verse 2 helps us pinpoint it.

**Jeremiah 25:11** — *And this whole land shall be a **desolation**, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**.*

Notice that word "desolation" — it is a key word in this chapter.

**Jeremiah 29:10** — *For thus saith the Lord, That after **seventy years** be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.*

Stop and think about verse 2 the next time you are reading Jeremiah — Daniel was reading that same text 2500 years ago! Our Bible is a link to the past. When we read Isaiah, we can think of Jesus being handed that Isaiah scroll in Luke 4. We can think

of the books and the parchments that Paul asked for in 2 Timothy. And we can think of Daniel reading Jeremiah. The Bible is our connection to the people of God throughout history.

These passages from Jeremiah speak of 70 years of Babylonian captivity. Is this a *literal* 70 years? Some believe that the 70 year figure here is symbolic, with seven denoting the perfection of God's work and ten denoting the completeness of the punishment. (If instead 70 is literal, then there is almost certainly a symbolic reason why God chose 70. The number was determined by God; it was not chosen at random!)

Other commentators suggest that the 70 years is being used here just to denote the length of a normal life span. That is, the exile will last about the length of a normal lifespan.

**Psalm 90:10** — *The days of our years are **threescore years and ten**; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

**Isaiah 23:15** — *And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten **seventy years, according to the days of one king**: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.*

A problem with these theories (that 70 is figurative or just a normal lifespan) is that Daniel knew how long he had been in captivity, and the prayer that follows in this chapter suggests that Daniel believed about 70 years had passed. That is, he seems to have been watching the clock. I think there must be a literal meaning to the 70 years from Jeremiah's prophecies (in addition to a likely figurative reason why God chose 70 years).

If the 70 year figure is to be taken literally, then to what period does it refer? There are several theories.

**Theory #1:** The first deportation likely occurred in 605 BC. If we count out 70 years from the date, we get 535 BC, which is the year when, some suggest, the first exiles finally returned to Jerusalem. Remember that Chapter 9 is dated around 539 BC, a few years before 535 BC.

**Theory #2:** Others start the clock in 586 BC, when the temple was destroyed. Counting 70 years from that year brings us to 516 BC, which they say was when the temple was rebuilt. But this view would mean that, instead of being just a few years away from the 70 year fulfillment, Daniel in Chapter 9 would have been over twenty years away from its fulfillment. I don't see how Daniel could have possibly understood Jeremiah to mean 70 years from 586 BC.

The better view is the first view. Jeremiah's 70 year clock began with the first deportation in 605 BC. By the time of Chapter 9, in 539 BC, 66 years had passed. Daniel reads Jeremiah and realizes that the time of exile is almost over. When we get to Daniel's prayer, we will see that a theme of that prayer is "hurry up!" (verse 19). Daniel was not planning to return himself, or at least there is no evidence that he did, but he wanted his fellow exiles — most of whom had never seen their homeland — to return and rebuild the city and the temple soon. Daniel must have wondered how it would occur. The Persians had just replaced the Chaldeans, but so far there had been no change in the Jews' situation. But Daniel knew, with his eye of faith, that it would happen!

We saw the word "desolation" in the verses that Daniel was reading from Jeremiah. We also see that word in verse 2 of this chapter, where Daniel quotes Jeremiah. The word "desolation" occurs eight times in the closing five chapters of Daniel, and we also see that same word in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, where Jesus refers to Daniel in describing the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In Daniel the word "desolation" is used in two ways — first, to describe the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11) and, second, to de-

scribe the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BC (Daniel 8:13 and Daniel 11:31).

What does the word “desolation” mean? We all know the dictionary definition: laying waste; rendering uninhabitable; making unfit for habitation, wasted, or ruined; wretchedness; grief. Why is that word important? Because desolation is the end that awaits anyone who is apart from God, and the Jews, God’s chosen people, had been on that sad path prior to their exile. They were heading for desolation, and that desolation occurred when the Babylonians captured the city, exiled the people, and finally destroyed the temple. There would be repentance later under Ezra and Nehemiah, but once again the people would reject their covenant relation with God, and once again there would be a desolation — this time under Antiochus and the Greeks. Again, there would be repentance (under the Maccabeans), but it would not last. God’s own people rejected God’s only begotten son, and the desolation that would follow from that would be final — and it came not at the hand of the Babylonians or the Greeks, but at the hand of the Romans. God provided a way of escape for the faithful remnant, but there was only desolation for the others. And if you are counting, that final desolation was the third desolation. God’s long suffering toward the Jews came to an end in AD 70.

That word “desolation” is important, because that one word tells us what the 70 week prophecy at the end of this chapter means (which we will study in depth shortly). Listen as Jesus tells us what desolation means, in one of the most heart-breaking passages from the New Testament, particularly to students of the Old Testament:

**Matthew 23:37-38** — *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you **desolate**.*

That in a nutshell is the message of Chapter 9 and the meaning of the prophecy that ends this chapter. When you read commentaries that spin off in a thousand different directions with a thousand different wild theories about the 70 weeks, keep the word “desolation” in mind — and read Matthew 23 and 24. Jesus himself ties Matthew 24 to specific prophecies in Daniel — and Matthew 24:34 tells us that those prophecies were fulfilled in the first century. (Always look for the time frame! If you miss that, you will miss everything.)

### **Daniel 9:3**

**3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:**

One commentator wrote:

Daniel’s prayer in this chapter ranks as one of the finest in Biblical literature. Unfortunately, because of the tremendous impact of the prediction found at the conclusion of Chapter 9, the prayer in the opening section has received scant attention.

If so, that is very sad. Verse 3 tells us something very important about Daniel, and something that we should have already known about Daniel — Daniel took prayer very seriously. If we want to be like Daniel, then we should also take prayer very seriously.

**Karl Barth:** To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.

**Samuel Chadwick:** The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless

work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.

**Alan Redpath:** Much of our praying is just asking God to bless some folks that are ill and to keep us plugging along. But prayer is not prattle: prayer is warfare.

Yes, the prayer in verses 4–19 is for a specific time and a specific situation, but it can also teach us much about prayer and can show us how a true servant of God should approach the Sovereign of the Universe on behalf of his people — something that we should also be praying for daily.

Notice from verse 3 the spiritual preparation that Daniel went through before he even began to pray. He fasted, mourned (ashes), and clothed himself with sack-cloth. Yes, we are to pray without ceasing, and yes, we are to be instant in prayer, but prayer requires preparation, and particularly the type of focused petitionary, confessionary prayer that we are about to see from Daniel. Daniel did not approach the throne of God flippantly or casually.

One attitude we see very clearly in Daniel’s prayer is his **earnestness**. His prayer was fervent and impassioned. We see the most extreme earnestness in the prayer of Christ in the garden.

**Luke 22:44** — *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

And we see it in the church’s prayers for Peter.

**Acts 12:5** — *Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.*  
[ASV]

James 5:16 tells us that an effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and James points to Elijah as an example of someone who prayed earnestly. He could have just as easily used Daniel as an example. As one author has written:

This should be our attitude as we pray. So often earnestness is missing from our prayers. They seem so rote, so mechanical, without passion.

How can we maintain earnestness in our prayers? Perhaps the writer of Hebrews gives us the answer.

**Hebrews 13:3** — *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

The earnestness of prayer returns when we pray for people as though we were in their same situation — because when we actually find ourselves in that situation, earnestness in prayer is rarely a problem!

The attitude of Daniel shows us that we should come into the presence of the Lord with an earnestness that storms the gates of Heaven, but a humility that realizes that he is sovereign and we are sinful.

### **Daniel's Prayer**

The first time I taught Daniel, I divided this prayer up into subsections and read and commented on each subsection separately, as we have been doing all throughout our study of this book. But I think that was a mistake for this prayer. (That which we dissect, we kill!) To really see this prayer, we need to see it all at once. We need to hear it from start to finish as Daniel prayed it. So before we talk about it, I want to read the entire prayer in verses 4-19. But you have an assignment while I read!

First, think back and imagine Daniel praying alone in his upper chamber. Think about the great historic event that had just occurred — the overthrow of Babylon

by the Persians. But think about what was happening behind the scenes, and about God, who was in complete control of what was going on. Daniel knew that God was in control. What was the greatest historical force of the time? The great Persian army? The mighty Babylonian army? Or was it perhaps the eighty year old Daniel praying alone in his room? I think we all know the answer to that question! John Knox was a man famous for his power in prayer, and Queen Mary of England used to say that she feared his prayer more than all the armies of Europe. How powerful is prayer? Prayer can do anything that God can do.

Second, notice the *pronouns* that Daniel uses in his prayer — pronouns for God, pronouns for himself, and pronouns for the people.

Third, notice Daniel's *concerns* in his prayer. Who is Daniel most concerned about? Who is Daniel *not* concerned about?

Fourth, notice Daniel's *requests* in his prayer. What does he request? What does he *not* request?

Fifth, notice Daniel's use of Scripture in his prayer.

Sixth, look for the word "desolation," and also for the word "covenant."

### **Daniel 9:4-19**

**4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and**



**from thy judgments: 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, be-**

**cause we have sinned against him. 12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to**

**all that are about us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.**

### **Verses 4-6**

Perhaps the first thing we notice in this prayer is that there is absolutely no evasion. Daniel confesses his own personal guilt and the guilt of the entire Jewish nation. He makes no excuses — the Jews deserved their punishment.

Daniel loved his people, but he knew that they had turned away from God despite his repeated warnings and mercy. They had forsaken the law; they had embraced idols; they had killed the prophets that God had sent to warn them. They were without excuse.

**2 Chronicles 36:16** — *But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until*

*the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.*

And Daniel holds nothing back. Seven different aspects of Israel's sin are set forth in verses 5-6. Israel had "sinned," "committed iniquity," "done wickedly," "rebelled," departed from God's precepts, departed from God's judgments, and had not "hearkened unto thy servants the prophet." Daniel knew exactly why he and his people were in exile.

The mention of the covenant in verse 4 is important. The prophets had long tried to bring the people back into their covenant relationship with God. The people, however, thought that they would be safe so long as God's temple was in their city. That is the attitude that Jeremiah spoke against in the temple sermon of Jeremiah 7:1-29.

**Jeremiah 7:4** — *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.*

But something had happened that the people did not ever dream would happen — God had abandoned his temple, as we see in Ezekiel 9-11.

**Ezekiel 11:23** — *And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city.*

Daniel knew what had happened, and Daniel knew what had caused it to happen.

But notice that when Daniel prayed for his people, confessing the sin that caused God to punish them by the deportation, he did not distance himself from his people. Instead, Daniel identified himself with them in his confession of sin. Notice how Daniel uses the first person plural pronoun.

- **Verse 5:** ***We** have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.*
- **Verse 6:** *Neither have **we** hearkened unto thy servants the prophets.*

• **Verse 8:** *We have sinned against thee.*

And the same continues throughout the remainder of the prayer. When we confess sin, we sometimes have a tendency to confess the sins of other people, or if we do not do that, we sometimes confess sin in a manner meant to excuse ourselves. Daniel was not like that. (The Pharisee was like that when he thanked God that he was not like those other people!)

If anyone could have pointed a finger at others, Daniel could have. What had Daniel done wrong to be dragged off at age 13? There is not a single bad thing said about Daniel anywhere in the Bible — and there aren't many people in the Bible about whom that can be said! Couldn't Daniel plead innocent? No — not before God. We all stand as sinners before God, even Daniel. Daniel identified with his people, and Daniel confessed his own sin along with theirs, saying, “we ... we ... we ... we.”

And while we are on the subject of pronouns, did you notice the variety of pronouns that Daniel uses for God? He uses the third person for God (him, he, his) and the second person (thy, thee, thine). Why the difference? Perhaps the third person is used more for praise, with the second person used more for petitions — but we can't say for sure. We do see it elsewhere. Psalm 23, for example — “*He* maketh me to lie down in green pastures: *he* leadeth me beside the still waters. *He* restoreth my soul” ... “for *thou* art with me; *thy* rod and *thy* staff they comfort me.” There the shift may be used to show the Psalmist becoming closer to God — the change in pronoun occurs right after he says “I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”

### **Verses 7-10**

Verses 7-10 stress the humiliation of the Hebrew people in the eyes of the surrounding heathen nations. Why was that important to Daniel? Because the Jews had a special place in God's plan.

**Deuteronomy 7:6** — *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a spe-*

*cial people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.*

God had promised them military success as long as they remained faithful.

**Deuteronomy 28:7** — *The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.*

God had promised that they would be respected by the surrounding nations.

**Deuteronomy 28:10** — *And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.*

But now all of that had changed. After the death of King Josiah in 609 BC, the Jews had become objects of scorn, had been deprived of their freedom, and were being ridiculed for their belief in the one true God. This was more evidence of how far they had fallen because of their disobedience to God, and, as we will see, Daniel's real concern is that the ridicule of God's people had become ridicule of God.

# LESSON 28

## Verses 11-14

In verses 11-14 of his prayer, Daniel praises the justice of God in dealing with his people according to all of the warnings and promises that had been given to Moses. Should we be surprised that Daniel was praising God's justice when he and his fellow exiles were suffering under that justice? It is not surprising at all if you know Daniel. As one commentator noted:

To Daniel it was more important for the God of Israel to retain his integrity and uphold his moral law than for his guilty people to escape the consequences of their infidelity. Had God not fulfilled his word of judgment, little credence could be placed in his word of grace. If a nation like Judah, instructed so perfectly in the truth of God, could fall into idolatry and immorality and defy the Lord to punish them as he had promised to do, why should anyone obey the Almighty or believe in him?

The punishment of the Jews vindicated the holiness and righteousness of God and demonstrated to the world the sanctity of God's law and word. And that was why Daniel here praises and exalts the justice of God.

Verse 12 says that the calamity was unlike anything that had ever happened in the world. Is this literal? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that this was the first of the desolations targeted against God's people and Jerusalem. But no, with regard to the literal severity of the destruction. The language simply stresses the extent of the trouble that befell the city. Matthew 24:21 makes a similar statement about the fall

of Jerusalem in AD 70. The statement here in verse 12 is describing the destruction of the same city, but in 586 BC. A similar description is found in Ezekiel.

**Ezekiel 5:9** — *And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.*

Notice that Daniel twice reminds God about what God himself had said in the law of Moses (verses 11 and 13). Is it proper to quote the Bible when we pray? I have heard some answer no. Why? Because, they say, God wrote the Bible, and he already knows what is in it. But if I can tell God only things that he does not already know, then I will not have much to pray about! If we take Daniel as an example, then I think we can quote the Bible when we pray (although, as with most things, it is possible to go overboard with that). Consider the following quotes:

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer:** The most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of Scripture. In this way we shall not become the victims of our own emptiness.

**E. M. Bounds:** The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved.

**Dick Eastman:** By bringing God's word directly into our praying, we are bringing God's power directly into our praying.

**Armin Gesswein:** God's word is known at the throne. Use it every time you pray. It is your prayer language.

Some religious groups have special prayer books. So do we — our Bible is our prayer book.



**Verses 15-19**

In verses 15-19 of his prayer, Daniel appeals to God's pity on the exiled nation and the ruined city of Jerusalem. He bases his appeal on God's honor and glory. He asks God in verse 17 to restore the sanctuary for God's own sake.

What is Daniel's primary concern in this prayer? It is not the discomfort of the Jews, or his own discomfort. Instead, Daniels' concern is the tarnishing that Daniel and his people have inflicted upon God's image and God's reputation in the eyes of the world. In verse 19 Daniel says:

*Delay not, for thy own sake ... because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

To Daniel, the worst part of the captivity was that someone might look at it and conclude that God was not able to deliver his people. Daniel did not pray, "Get me out of this!" Instead Daniel's primary concern was for God and for God's reputation. (Is this how we look at things? Do we think of God first as Daniel did?)

**2 Timothy 2:19** — *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

In verse 19 Daniel asks God to do three things: hear, forgive, and act — and, as we will soon see, it doesn't take long for Daniel to get an answer to that request.

But notice also that Daniel prayed for the very thing that the Bible had assured him would happen. Daniel did not sit back, and apathetically say that God will do what God wants to do in God's own time, and there is nothing I can do about it. Daniel knew better than that. He knew that although God certainly works according to his own plans and timetable, God nevertheless works through people—through their actions and through their prayers. God's people are not passive observers in the plan of God; they are active participants. We have a role to play, just as Daniel did. And, as Calvin said, "nothing ... can be better for us than to ask for what he has promised."

**Daniel 9:20-21**

**20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.**

Sometimes God's people have to wait months, years—even a lifetime—for God to answer their prayer. Not so with Daniel. While Daniel was praying, Gabriel came to him in swift flight (perhaps indicating that angels do, in fact, have wings as they are so often depicted).

Prayer has been called the world's greatest wireless connection — and perhaps there is no better example of that than what we see here. And that is not a new illustration — a 1908 commentary on this section of Daniel included the subtitle, *The Electric Telegraph of Prayer*.

Notice that the use of the term “man” in verse 21 does not imply that Gabriel was a man rather than an angel. The Hebrew word “man” simply means that Gabriel appeared in human-like form.

The “time of evening oblation (or sacrifice)” means late afternoon. Of course, no actual sacrifice could have been offered in Babylon (or even in Palestine) without the

restored altar, but the Jews still observed sunrise and sunset as appropriate times for offering praise and worship to God.

One commentator on verse 21 wryly noted that if Gabriel was going to catch many of us in prayer, he would have to be swift indeed!

### **Daniel 9:22-23**

**22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.**

Daniel receives wisdom and understanding in response to his prayer. But prayer doesn't work like that today. Right? When we pray we never see angels flying swiftly to answer our prayers. But because we do not see them as Daniel did, does that mean they are not there? The age of miracles is over, but we know that does not mean God is not at work in this world. We know that God hears and answers our prayers, and he may still use swift angels behind the scenes for that purpose.

Notice how eager God was to answer Daniel's prayer. Verse 23 — "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth." God is more eager to answer than we are to ask. This is the nature of prayer. Not that I am stumbling toward God but that God is running towards me just as the father ran to meet the prodigal son. "The fatted calf, the shoes, the robe, the ring; All for me, unworthy son. But sweet-

er to me, the most wonderful thing, God ran to meet me. I saw God run!” That is how God responds to his children.

Verse 23 says that Daniel was greatly beloved by God. Why?

- Because Daniel had refused to compromise with the world.
- Because Daniel was faithful and true to God.
- Because Daniel was a man of prayer.
- Because Daniel studied his Bible and knew it was true.
- Because Daniel was a man of great faith.

Do we want to be “greatly beloved” by God as Daniel was? Then that is what we should do. Daniel is an example we can follow.

### **Daniel 9:24**

**24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.**

As one commentator noted:

Reading commentaries on the last four verses of Daniel 9 is akin to entering a bewildering maze: so many choices of ways to take, so many blind alleys and dead ends; which is the way out?

In AD 400, Jerome simply listed nine conflicting opinions of “the great teachers of the church” and left it “to the reader’s judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed.” Another noted:

The history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks is the Dismal Swamp of Old Testament criticism.

This section of Daniel 9 is one of the most commented upon sections in the entire Bible. It has been called the “backbone” of all prophecy, which I believe we will see is a bit of an overstatement. (The vision is concerned with the Jews and with Jerusalem, so, while very important, it is not the “backbone” of all prophecy. (Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 53 are much closer to being backbones than is Daniel 9.) In any event, we are going to need to proceed very carefully.

### **What is the setting?**

Daniel has been reading and praying about a seventy year decree upon the Jews found in Jeremiah. God uses that decree in Jeremiah as an opportunity to tell Daniel about another decree also regarding the Jews and Jerusalem — a decree of seventy weeks.

### **What is the seventy weeks decree?**

First, it is an answer and a swift response to the prayer that began Chapter 9, and we must not forget that fact. If our interpretation of this decree goes adrift from Daniel’s prayer about his people and about their sin and their future and their city, then our interpretation is almost certainly wrong. And, this decree is not *just* an answer to Daniel’s prayer, it is an answer swiftly delivered by Gabriel himself in response to that prayer.

Second, the decree gets its name from verse 24 — “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Those seventy weeks are divided into three subsets of weeks: Verse 25 will mention seven weeks and 62 weeks, which

combined give us 69 weeks. Verse 27 will mention a final week, which then accounts for all 70 weeks. Verse 27 will also cut that final week in half.

The “seventy weeks” in verse 24 is literally “seventy sevens,” but all translators agree that the phrase means seventy weeks. In fact, the same word “sevens” is also translated “weeks” in Daniel 10:2 — “in those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.” But we should not miss the symbolism in the Hebrew word for “seven” being used here to denote a week. When we see “week” in this chapter, we should be thinking “seven.” So when we see a week cut in half, what do we see? We see a broken seven, which is a symbol that should be very familiar to us.

### **The Importance of Verse 24**

Verse 24 is crucial in understanding verses 25-27. Many commentaries rush right past verse 24 in their hurry to get to the events in the following verses, but we must not make that mistake. Why? Two reasons. First, verse 24 gives us the focus of the prophecy, and second, verse 24 gives us an all-important time frame for the prophecies that follow.

What is the focus of the prophecy? “Thy people” and “thy holy city.” That is, the Jews and Jerusalem. Any interpretation of this prophecy in which the Jews and Jerusalem are not the focus is a wrong interpretation.

How does verse 24 give us a time frame? Because verse 24 gives us a list of six things that are to be accomplished by the seventy weeks decree, so if we can figure out when those things occurred, then we have a strong indication of the time frame for the prophecy.

The six items in verse 24 that are to be accomplished by the decree are listed across the top of your handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)):

- To finish the transgression,
- To make an end of sins,

- To make reconciliation for iniquity,
- To bring in everlasting righteousness,
- To seal up the vision and prophecy, and
- To anoint the most Holy.

After reading that list, we should already have a good idea as to the termination point for this vision — but let's take a closer look at each of the six events.

### **Event #1: To finish transgression.**

This event could mean that under this decree the transgression of God's own people would reach its peak or its limit. That is, the transgression of the Jews who rejected Christ (as well as all of the prophets) would reach its peak and then be punished. We see such descriptions elsewhere.

**Matthew 23:31-32** — *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

**1 Thessalonians 2:14b-16** — *For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

**Matthew 21:37-43** — *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard*

*cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

But “to finish transgression” could mean something else. It could mean that transgression would be dealt with effectively and finally under this decree, which of course is what occurred at the cross.

**Hebrews 9:15** — *And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

Either way, the first event in our list of six occurred in the first century.

### **Event #2: To make an end of sins.**

This event also occurred in the first century, and it was also accomplished at the cross.

**Hebrews 9:26** — *For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*



**Hebrews 10:12-14** — *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

**Romans 8:3** — *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*

### **Event #3: To make reconciliation for iniquity.**

Again, a first century event, and again, an event that occurred at the cross.

**Romans 5:10** — *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

**2 Corinthians 5:19** — *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

### **Event #4: To bring in everlasting righteousness.**

Again, a first century event, and again, an event that occurred at the cross.

**Jeremiah 23:5-6** — *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

**2 Corinthians 5:21** — *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**Hebrews 1:8** — *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

**Romans 3:21-22** — *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.*

**Romans 10:4** — *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

### **Event #5: To seal up vision and prophecy.**

What does this event mean? It could mean that this decree would bring about the fullness of God's revelation, and that afterward there would be no further revelation by visions and prophets.

**Hebrews 1:1-2** — *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

**1 Corinthians 13:9-10** — *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

It could also point to the hardening of the Jews that occurred at this time. That is, the prophecy would be sealed to them because they would not understand it due to their hardness of heart.

**Isaiah 29:10-11** — *For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.*

**Romans 11:7-8** — *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.*

**2 Corinthians 3:14** — *But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.*

Again, whichever event we choose, both happened in the first century.

### **Event #6: To anoint the most holy.**

If the “most holy” refers to a person, then it must refer to Christ who was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power at his baptism.

**Luke 3:21-22** — *Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*

**Acts 10:38** — *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good,*

*and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

**Luke 4:16-21** — *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

The “most holy” could refer instead or in addition to the church of Christ — the new dwelling place of God, which God has also anointed. This view fits well with the context since the decree ends with the destruction of the old dwelling place of God — the Jewish sanctuary.

**2 Corinthians 1:21** — *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.*

**1 John 2:27** — *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.*

**Ephesians 2:19-22** — *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the founda-*

*tion of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Again, either way, this event occurred in the first century.

### **The Verse 24 Time Frame**

What we have seen is that all six of the events in verse 24 occurred in the first century. These are the six things that the seventy weeks decree was to accomplish — and they were all accomplished in the first century. You should start with verse 24 if anyone ever tells you that the fulfillment of the seventy week decree is yet future.

### **Daniel 9:25-27**

**25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the**

**end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.**

### **What is our Game Plan?**

As we have said, these three verses are some of the most difficult and most commented upon verses in the entire Bible. How are we going to tackle them?

First, can we be dogmatic about the meaning of this prophecy? Yes and no. There are some fine points about which we can easily differ and remain within the confines of Scripture. But there are some other points about which we must remain firm. For example, the termination point of this prophecy was in the first century. Why is that important? Isn't it just a timing issue? Yes, it is a timing issue, but it is a very important timing issue. Why? Because the focus of this prophecy is the people of Daniel, the Jews, and if the termination point of this prophecy is the end of the world, then this prophecy is telling us that God has a special plan of salvation for the Jews under the New Covenant different from the plan for non-Jews, which we know is **not** the case.

**Galatians 3:28** — *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Yes, God has a wonderful plan for the Jews, but it is the same wonderful plan that God has for everyone else.

**Romans 1:16** — *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

So what then is our game plan in tackling these difficult verses? There are nine events in these three verses, and those nine events are shown on your handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) next to the eight circled letters A through H. (Event F has two events.) The seventy weeks are divided into three main divisions: a seven week period, a 62 week period, and a final one week period. That final week is further subdivided into two half weeks. **Our task is to place those nine events in their proper positions within the 70 weeks.** Some of those placements are very difficult, others are less difficult, and others are easy.

### **What is Event A?**

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 25** — *“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.”*

This event and the next event are easy to place. Verse 25 tells us that Event A is the start of a 69 week period (7 weeks + 62 weeks). Our only question is which commandment is in view. The natural answer would be the decree of Cyrus, which led to the first return from exile and which would occur very shortly after this prophecy was received from God. But some argue that Cyrus's decree was not to build Jerusalem, and they argue that this commandment refers to a later return. We will address those arguments later when we look at some other views about the seventy weeks prophecy. All we need for our purposes now is to note that Event A occurs at the beginning of the 70 weeks, and on this point all commentators are in agreement.

### **What is Event B?**

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 25** — *“Unto the Messiah the Prince.”*

All commentators also agree that Event B ends the 69 weeks, and all agree that the Messiah is Christ. There is some disagreement over what part of Christ’s life is in view here. His birth? His baptism? His death? His resurrection? His ascension? His coming in judgment against Jerusalem in AD 70? We will investigate that question as we move on through the list of events, but for now all we need to know is that Event B ends the 69 week period.

Why is the Messiah called a Prince? Because in addition to being our perfect High Priest, Jesus is also King of kings and Lord of lords. We see that same combination in Zechariah.

**Zechariah 6:13** — *Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*

And recall that Jesus cannot be our High Priest under the old law, which confirms that the old law has been permanently replaced by something better.

**Hebrews 7:14** — *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*

**What is Event C?**

Let’s start by reading the text.

**Verse 25** — *“The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”*

Event C is a little more difficult to place. Verse 25 tells us that from the command to restore Jerusalem up until the Messiah will be seven weeks and 62 weeks. The end of verse 25 describes the rebuilding efforts. That ordering, along with the division into seven weeks followed by a much longer 62 weeks, causes almost all commenta-



tors to conclude that this rebuilding occurs during the initial seven weeks and is completed at the end of that seven week period. That is, from the command to restore Jerusalem until the restoration of Jerusalem takes seven weeks, and then from that point until the Messiah comes is 62 weeks. Thus, Event C occurs after the initial seven week period and before the following 62 week period. This part of the decree speaks of the rebuilding efforts under Nehemiah and Ezra. The events described in those books explain what is meant by the “troublous times” in verse 25.

By the way, we will look soon at some different views of the seventy week prophecy that are based on the notion that each day in this seventy week period is a year. That chronological view really breaks down here. Under that view, seven weeks would denote 49 years, but it did not take 49 years to rebuild the city. (One particularly desperate commentator has suggested that they may have finished much earlier but it took them a long time to clear away all the extra construction material and garbage! That’s a lot of garbage — in more ways than one.) If we agree, as I think we must, that the seven weeks to rebuild the city is figurative, then that should confirm that the seventy weeks is also figurative. (More about this view later.)

# LESSON 29

Last week we began our study of the seventy week prophecy by looking at verse 24. We discovered that verse 24 is crucial to understanding verses 25-27 because (a) verse 24 gives us the focus of the prophecy (Daniel's people and their holy city, Jerusalem), and (b) verse 24 gives us the all-important time frame, which is the first century — the time when all six of the events in verse 24 were accomplished.

We then read verses 25-27, and we began looking at the nine events that are shown on your handout from last week (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)), represented by the eight letters A through H (with event F having two events).

We discussed and placed Events A, B, and C onto the seventy week time line. Event A is the command to rebuild the city, which begins the 70 weeks. Event B is the coming of the Messiah, which comes at the end of the first 69 weeks. Event C is the rebuilding of the city, which is placed at the end of the first seven weeks.

That means we are now ready to consider Event D, but let's skip Event D for now and look instead at Event E (for a reason that will become clear in a moment).

## **What is Event E?**

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 27** — *“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”*

When we get to Event E, we are faced with a crucial question for our interpretation — who is the “he” referred to in Events D, E, and F? (They are circled on your

handout.) Does this pronoun “he” refer to the same person in each instance or to different people?

As for that last question, read verse 27 again — “And **he** shall confirm the covenant ... **he** shall cause the sacrifice ... to cease, and ... **he** shall make it desolate...” I think a natural understanding of that language suggests that only one person is in view: *he* does this, *he* does that, and *he* does this other thing. Unless we have some very, very strong indicator to the contrary, I think we should look for one person as the subject of the pronoun “he” in Events D, E, and F. If we look for the antecedent of the pronoun, we have two possibilities in verse 26 — either the Messiah or the prince that shall come (the Roman General Titus).

Of those three “he” events (D, E, and F), I have started with Event E. Why? Because I think Event E is the most helpful of the three in determining the identity of that one person to whom the word “he” refers.

What happens with Event E? “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” The location of this event in the seventy weeks is easy — this event occurs during the final week, and unlike some other final week events, this one apparently occurs throughout the entire final week.

What is the event? “He shall confirm the covenant.” Two questions — which covenant, and how is a covenant confirmed? (And we still have our initial question remaining: who is doing the confirming?)

### **Which covenant?**

We have two obvious possibilities: the old covenant and the new covenant. The focus of this prophecy is “thy people and upon thy holy city” (speaking to Daniel in verse 24), and so we might suspect that this covenant is the *old* covenant. However, as we know, the new covenant was the culmination of the promises under the old covenant, and the new covenant came into force under the Messiah, who (as evi-

denced at least by Event B) seems to be the focus of the final week, and so we might just as easily suspect that this covenant is the *new* covenant.

We know that the new covenant came into effect after the death of Jesus, that is after the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16). We know that the ordinances of the old covenant were nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). And we know that the new covenant made the first old, which then vanished away (Hebrews 8:13). But surface vestiges of the old covenant remained for some time after the cross. Hebrews 10:11 says that “every priest **standeth** (present tense) daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” They were still going through the motions, as their old covenant waxed old and decayed (Hebrews 8:13). After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, they no longer went through the motions because they were no longer able to do so.

We see the phrase “last days” often in the Bible. Whenever we do, we should always ask, “the last days of what?” Often the phrase “last days” refers to the last days of the old covenant, and particularly to the time between when the new covenant came into force at the cross and when the old covenant finally vanished in AD 70 after waxing old and decaying. Acts 2:17 refers, for example, to the “last days” as including the establishment of the kingdom in Acts 2. I think those “last days” denote the entry of the new covenant and the exit of the old, which, although no longer in force after the cross, continued in practice until the temple was destroyed in AD 70 — and to this very day the sacrificial system has never been restored after that complete and final desolation.

Think about Hebrews 8:13 again — “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old **is ready to vanish away.**” Doesn’t that verse suggest that the old covenant had not yet vanished away when Hebrews was written, but was ready to do so? And we know that Hebrews was written before AD 70. How? Because Hebrews 10:11 shows the priests still standing and offering sacrifices. After AD 70, Hebrews 10:11 would have been written in the *past* tense.

Are we saying that the old covenant remained in effect until AD 70? No. The old covenant was removed at the cross and was replaced with the new covenant. Hebrews 7:14 makes it very clear that Christ could not become a high priest until the old covenant was removed, and Hebrews 8:1 confirms that Jesus was High Priest in the first century (as he is now).

So then which covenant is in view in 9:27? Let's hold off some more on answering that question until we look at another question.

### **How is a covenant confirmed?**

To answer that question we can turn to Galatians 3.

**Galatians 3:17** — *And this I say, that the covenant, that was **confirmed** before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

That verse is discussing two covenants: God's covenant with Abraham and the old Mosaic covenant with Israel. We are told in that verse that the law came 430 years after the covenant with Abraham was *confirmed*. What was that confirmation?

First, that confirmation cannot be anything that occurred during the lifetime of Abraham. Why? Because Abraham preceded Moses by over 600 years, not 430 years. Abraham was 75 when God first called him (Genesis 12:4) and 99 when Isaac was conceived (Genesis 17:1; 18:14). By the time Isaac was born, the original promise had been in effect for 25 years. Isaac then lived to the age of 180, died, and was buried in Canaan (Genesis 35:29). Isaac's son Jacob was an old man himself by the time his sons went down to Egypt to beg food from Joseph. The family of Jacob went to Egypt as honored guests, only to wind up as slaves generations later. They spent over 400 years in Egypt (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:15) before Moses led them out and they received the law at Sinai. The traditional period between Abraham and Moses is 645 years.

So what event then did Paul by inspiration have in mind when he wrote that the covenant was *confirmed* 430 years before the law?

The birth of Isaac could hardly qualify as “offspring as numerous as the stars” (Genesis 15:5). Nor could the promise of possessing the land (Genesis 15:7) be dated from the time of Abraham, who, as far as we know, never bought a square foot of property except the burial plot of Sarah.

What then is it that happened 430 years before the law and that *confirmed* the covenant with Abraham? It must be the fulfillment of the prophecy that Abraham’s offspring would go down into a foreign land to be enslaved for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). That helps us answer the question as to how a covenant is confirmed. A covenant is confirmed when the events of the covenant take place, or perhaps *begin* to take place.

### **So which covenant is it in Daniel 9:27?**

It could still be either one. Events from each covenant were occurring in the first century. The dire warnings from the first covenant were about to occur with finality in the events of AD 70, and the establishment of the eternal kingdom and the wonderful miracles and signs were occurring under the new covenant, even before the new covenant came into effect at the cross.

But, and this is the central clue that tips the scales in my view, which of those events were just *beginning* to occur under the covenant and were occurring during the *entirety* of that final week, which we know begins with the coming of the Messiah? In my opinion, the confirmation of the **new covenant** better fits a week-long confirmation.

And why would the *old* covenant need any confirmation? It had already been confirmed over and over again. What Jew in the first century could have possibly complained that God had not confirmed the old covenant? And who was it in the first century who needed the old covenant to be confirmed?

The better interpretation in my view is that the covenant in verse 27 is the *new* covenant. Jesus and the apostles confirmed the new covenant over and over again starting with Jesus' own miracles and continuing with the miracles of the apostles up until AD 70. Those who rejected that covenant had no excuse for doing so — it had been confirmed for them by the Messiah himself.

**Matthew 11:3-5** — *And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Most of those signs had been prophesied under the old covenant (Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 26:18-19, 61:1), and Jesus was confirming the new covenant by performing those signs. In fact, that was the point of Jesus' answer to the disciples of John — do you want to know if I am he, then look for the confirmation in “those things which ye do hear and see.”

### **Who then is confirming the covenant?**

That is, back to our original question, who is the “he” who is confirming the covenant? We have now answered that question. Jesus confirmed the new covenant personally, and he did so through his miracles and through those he sent out to preach.

**Mark 16:20** — *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

**Hebrews 2:3-4** — *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

This type of confirmation had long been prophesied for the last days.

**Acts 2:16-17** — *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

Peter was saying in Acts 2 that the “last days” prophecy of Joel 2 was happening on that first day of Pentecost following the resurrection — “this is that,” Peter said. All present could see the confirmation of the new covenant, and many seeing it believed and were baptized.

The new covenant was confirmed by Jesus and the apostles. No one who rejected the new covenant had any excuse for doing so. It had been confirmed over and over again by mighty works. And yet the Pharisees had witnessed those wonderful miracles and had ascribed them not to God but to Satan! Is it any wonder that it was always in that context that Jesus discussed the unforgivable sin? What could be worse than to witness the mighty works confirming the new covenant and to ascribe those mighty works to Satan? Yet that is what some did. And for that reason, their final desolation was coming.

God had promised Daniel long ago that the covenant would be confirmed to Daniel’s people during the prophetic week leading up to the end in AD 70. We know from Romans 1:16 that the gospel was to the Jew *first* and also to the Greek. Why? Why to the Jew first? Was it just because the Jews were there first and it took longer to get the message to the others? I don’t think the evidence supports that conclusion.



**Matthew 10:5-6** — *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

**Matthew 15:24** — *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

I think we see a much better explanation here in Daniel 9. God had promised that the covenant would be confirmed to the Jews in the time between the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of their city. I think that is why the message went first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

### **What is Event D?**

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 27** — *"In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease"*

The "oblation" in verse 27 refers to the evening temple sacrifice, which would have been done around 3 PM. We saw the same word earlier in verse 21. Sometimes "oblation" was used to denote a grain offering.

Event D should be easier to place now that we know who the "he" is in this verse. Had we started with Event D we might have thought "he" was the Roman General Titus who destroyed the city — and many commentaries adopt that view. And Titus certainly did cause the sacrifices to cease. Not only was the temple destroyed, but the priestly records were also destroyed, which effectively brought the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system to an end — and they have not returned even to this very day. Antiochus had earlier done the same thing, and it is described as such in Daniel 11:31. So it would certainly be correct to say that Titus caused the sacrifices to cease, and if we were willing to say that the "he" in this clause does not have to be the same "he" in the prior clause, then maybe it is Ti-

tus. But if we take each “he” in this verse to be the same person, then it is Jesus who is causing the sacrifices to cease because Titus did not confirm the covenant.

If the “he” is Jesus, then we have two possibilities for when the sacrifices ceased. They ceased first in *substance* at the cross, and second, they ceased in *practice* in AD 70 — and Jesus caused both cessations (using Titus as a tool in the judgment of AD 70).

The sacrifices ceased at the cross because at that time they lost their meaning and their reason for existence. Those sacrifices pointed forward to the cross, and so after the cross they ceased, even if the actions of the priests continued on for some time after the cross.

**Hebrews 10:1-3** — *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

**Hebrews 10:11-12** — *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*

And the sacrifices also ceased in AD 70 with the judgment against Jerusalem, which Matthew 24 describes as a coming of Christ in judgment against the city.

So which is it? The cross or AD 70? The timing we are given helps us answer that question — this cessation occurred *midway* through the final week. The destruction of the city is the focus and occurs at the *end* of the prophecy (Event F, which we

will consider next), so on that basis I favor the view that this midweek event is the cross. The Jewish sacrifices ceased at the cross.

And if the midweek event is the cross, then that helps us answer an earlier question — what event in the life of Christ is the coming of the Messiah in Event B? It must be either his birth or his baptism, and I favor the latter because that is when Jesus began to confirm the covenant, which we know occurred throughout this final prophetic week.

Jesus begins his ministry at the beginning of that final week, he is cut off midway during that week (Event G, which we will discuss in just a moment), and he returns in judgment at the end of that week. All throughout that week, his new covenant is being confirmed with signs and wonders.

### **What is Event F?**

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 26** — *“And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

**Verse 27** — *“For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”*

These verses describe the desolation that Jesus told us in Matthew 24:34 happened in the first century. So where do these verses go on our seventy week time line? The language itself answers that question (and, in fact, we have already answered that question as well). Verse 26 twice refers to “the end,” and verse 27 refers to the “consummation.” Event F is located at the end of the seventy weeks, and it describes the first century destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

By the way, the use of a “flood” in verse 26 to depict the judgment presents a problem for the premillennialists. “The **end** thereof shall be with a **flood**.” Is the “end”

in that verse the end of the world at the end of all time as many teach? If so, then how do we reconcile that view with the covenant in Genesis 9:15?

**Genesis 9:15** — *And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

### What is Event G?

Let's start by reading the text.

**Verse 26** — *“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”*

Verse 26 tells us that this event and Event H occur after the 62 weeks, which tells us they occur in the final week, but verse 26 does not tell us **when** in that final week they occur.

We know what the cutting off means.

**Isaiah 53:8** — *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

And we know what it means that the cutting off was not for himself.

**Isaiah 53:4-5** — *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

This “cutting off” ushered in the blessings listed in verse 24. It also resulted in the destruction of the city in AD 70 because the Jews were at that time punished for having rejected and having cut off God’s son.

Other translations have “and after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.” What would that mean? That language would point toward the faithless Jews who rejected Jesus. They were not his people. He had nothing in their city and in their sanctuary. And remember from Matthew 24 that Jesus had told his followers what to look for so that they could escape the destruction of the city. Those that were his escaped, while those no longer his were destroyed.

So when in the final week did this cutting off occur? We have already answered that question when we looked at Event D. If we were correct that Event D happened at the cross, then this cutting off must be pointing to the same location as Event D, midway through the final week.

### **What is Event H?**

Let’s start by reading the text.

**Verse 26** — *“And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”*

We have also already placed Event H. It refers to the destruction of the city, which happened at the end of the final week, where we also placed Event F.

**Matthew 23:37-38** — *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stoniest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

**Matthew 24:15** — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)*

**Luke 21:20** — *And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*

### **Is that view the only possibility?**

No. Some argue that the final week begins at the cross, which would then put the destruction of the temple by Titus at the midway point, and the final and complete destruction of the city at the end of the final week. That is certainly possible, but I don't think it fits as well. Placing the cutting off at the beginning of the final week seems unlikely because of the confirmation that is occurring throughout the entire week. Placing the cutting off at the end of the week wouldn't work at all because that is when Jesus is coming in judgment against those who cut him off. If for that reason we conclude, as I think we should, that the cutting off occurs midweek, then that confirms we were right when we concluded that the cessation of sacrifices that occurred midweek also refers to the cross. Either way, the seventy weeks end with the first century destruction of Jerusalem, and we can't give on that point for any number of reasons, not the least of which is that Jesus himself pointed us back to Daniel for the fulfillment of that very event.

### **How are symbols used in this prophecy?**

There are several important symbols in the prophecy of the seventy weeks (or the seventy sevens) — and, not surprisingly, they all involve the number seven.

First, the “week” itself is symbolic. Recall that the word translated “week” is the Hebrew word for seven. Seven denotes perfection. That the week is the basis for the entire prophecy lets us know that this prophecy is going to perfectly accomplish whatever it is about (which, as we have seen, is the judgment of Daniel's people and the holy city). We see this same symbol with the use of seventy weeks, or

seventy sevens, which reinforces the perfection of the judgment. The figure of “seventy sevens” is found elsewhere in the Bible.

**Genesis 4:24** — *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

**Matthew 18:21-22** — *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

In each case, the “seventy times seven” figure denotes something that is perfect and complete. (Perfect and complete vengeance and perfect and complete forgiveness.) What was perfect and complete about the decree that Daniel received in Chapter 9? The decree in Daniel 9 was God’s final decree with respect to the Jews under the law of Moses. It was the perfect and complete end for the old covenant, which at that point vanished away after waxing old and decaying. This decree represented the completion of God’s work with regard to the Jews. This decree embodied all of the elements that were needed to completely fulfill all of God’s promises to the Jews. As far as God was concerned, this decree was his final word with regard to the Jewish age. The “seventy by seven” symbol was the perfect symbol to denote this statement of God’s completed activity. God is telling Daniel that this is a final decree. One day the Messiah will come, and the city will be destroyed. That all happened in the first century.

Second, we see seven weeks depicting the time in which the temple and the city are rebuilt and restored. Again, God had foretold these events, and God caused them to happen. The restoration was perfect, but that perfection did not prevent the people from once again rebelling and falling away from God.

Third, we have one week at the end of the seventy week period, which includes the time from the coming of the Messiah up until the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. The work of the Messiah was perfect. Jesus accomplished all that he came

to do. (Premillennialists deny this, but they also fail to comprehend the meaning of these beautiful symbols.)

Fourth, we have a half week, three and a half days, which is a broken seven. We have seen this symbol before, and we know it denotes something that is temporary. In this case, the key three and half day period is the second half of the week. Why? Because it begins when the Messiah was cut off; that is, it begins at the cross. Was that the end? Was that permanent? Not at all. Jesus soon came with power and judgment against those who had cut him off. A broken seven is the perfect way to depict Jesus' triumph over death after what to many looked like a defeat at the cross. Any time an event is followed by three and half periods of time, that is God telling us that that event is *not* the end of the story!



# LESSON 30

Let's quickly review each of the nine events we considered last week, and ask for each a single question: Why was that event placed where it was on the "Seventy Week" time line shown on the Lesson 28 handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com))?

**Event A:** Event A is the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Why was it placed at the beginning of the seventy weeks? Because of the word "from" in verse 25. This event is the starting point of the seventy weeks.

**Event B:** Event B is unto the Messiah the Prince. Why was it placed at the end of the first 69 weeks? Because of the word "unto" in verse 25. From Event A unto Event B will be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

**Event C:** Event C is the rebuilt city. Why was it placed at the end of the initial seven weeks? Because of the order in verse 25 — seven weeks and 62 weeks — and because we would expect (and, in fact, in hindsight we now know) the rebuilding to occur after the command to rebuild and before the coming of the Messiah. If Event C did not occur after the initial seven week period, then why else would verse 25 split the 69 weeks into seven weeks and 62 weeks?

**Event D:** Event D is the cessation of the sacrifices. Why was it placed halfway through the final week? Because of the phrase "in the midst of the week" in verse 27.

**Event E:** Event E is the confirmation of the covenant. Why was it placed throughout the final week? Verse 27 tells us — he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.

**Event F:** Event F is the end and the consummation. Why was it placed at the end of the seventy weeks? Because it is the end and the consummation! Where else would we place “the end”?

**Event G:** Event G is the cutting off of the Messiah. Why did we place it halfway through the final week? Because (a) we determined that the “he” in verse 27 must be Christ because Christ confirmed the covenant, (b) if the “he” in verse 27 is Christ, then Event D, the cessation of the sacrifices, also refers to the work of Christ, and (c) Christ caused the sacrifices to cease at the cross. Thus, Event D is the cross, and we know from the text that Event D occurs in the midst of that week. Event G is also the cross (“cut off” from Isaiah 53), and thus Event G must also be at the midway point in the final week. (If instead we take Event D to be the end of sacrifices in AD 70, then the cross is at the beginning of the week, which makes it odd that Event E tells us the confirmation occurred during the entire final week — when we know that confirmation occurred throughout the ministry of Christ and the apostles.

**Hebrews 2:3-4** — *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

**Event H:** Finally we have Event H, which is the destruction of the city by the prince that shall come, Titus the Roman general. That event must be placed where we placed Event F, “the end.”

### **Other Views about the Seventy Weeks**

How else do some interpret this “seventy weeks” decree? Any approach to the prophecy can be placed in one of two buckets: it is either a chronological approach or a non-chronological approach.

## The Non-Chronological Approaches

The approach we just considered is a non-chronological approach. Non-chronological approaches assume that the “seventy weeks” refers to a state of affairs (rather than a period of time) and that it symbolically describes the events in the prophecy.

## The Chronological Approaches

The chronological approaches assume that the “seventy weeks” refer to a specific period of time in which the events mentioned in the decree will come to pass. There are two main chronological viewpoints.

**Note:** Neither viewpoint believes that the “seventy weeks” are literal since no one has ever claimed that all of the events in the decree occurred within 490 days of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. No one (not even the most rabid premillennial literalist, of which there are many) takes everything in this vision literally!

Before looking at the two main chronological approaches, it will be helpful to review the history of the exiles’ three main returns to Palestine.

### Return Number 1: 539 BC

In 539 BC Cyrus gave a decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Some historians think the decree was given in 538 BC. We will use the 539 BC date instead.) This decree can be found in Ezra 1 and 2 Chronicles 36.

*Ezra 1:2-4 — Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place*

*help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.*

**2 Chronicles 36:23** — *Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.*

The leaders of this return were Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Jeshua. After their return, work on the temple was begun, sacrifices were made, and the Feast of the Tabernacles was celebrated. The Samaritans had prospered during the Jewish deportation, and they were not happy when the exiles returned. Their guerrilla tactics stopped work on the temple for 19 years until 520 BC. The temple was completed in 516 BC. This return is described in the first half of Ezra.

### **Return Number 2: 458 BC**

Ezra, a descendant of a High Priest killed by Nebuchadnezzar, was concerned about the spiritual condition of the Palestinian Jews. There was great disparity between the rich and the poor. Most of the exiles had been men, so mixed marriages with non-Jews had become very common. Many of the children from these marriages did not even speak Hebrew. The Jewish law had been neglected. Prophets from this period speak of murder, adultery, perjury, and injustice. Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. This decree is found in Ezra 7:12-26.

**Ezra 7:11-13** — *Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect*

*peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.*

Ezra led 1500 men with their families to Jerusalem. He read the law to the people, who were very moved when they realized how far they had strayed from the law of God. He commanded that the mixed marriages be dissolved, that the non-Jewish wives be sent back to their own lands, and that the walls be rebuilt. (Some have suggested that the commands to send the women out of the city and to rebuild the city walls may not have been unrelated!) The Samaritans again caused trouble. They reported the “treasonous” rebuilding of the wall to Persia, and they then proceeded to tear down the wall. This return is described in the second half of Ezra.

### **Return Number 3: 445 BC**

Nehemiah, a cup bearer in the court of Artaxerxes, asked the king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The king agreed, perhaps because he wanted a fort close to the Egyptian border. This is the decree found in Nehemiah 2.

**Nehemiah 2:2-6** — *Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen*

*also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.*

The Samaritans ridiculed their efforts and spread rumors that Nehemiah planned an insurrection and wanted to be king himself. The wall was rebuilt in 52 days. This return is described in the book of Nehemiah.

### **The Millennial Chronological Viewpoint**

The starting point for this view is the decree given 445 BC by Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. (That is, the starting point for this view is the third return.) Verse 25 tells us that, from this point, it will be 69 weeks (7 + 62) until the Messiah comes. Using the so-called “universal prophetic Day equals a Year” principle (more on that later...), they add 69 weeks of years (69×7 or 483 years) to this starting point. Here is where things really get complicated. If we add 483 years to 445 BC we arrive at the year AD 39, which misses Jesus’ ministry and death by a wide margin. (Keep in mind that when you add years to a BC date to obtain an AD date there is no year zero. For example, the year 1 BC + 1 year is the year AD 1.) The solution? Instead of counting 483 solar years (containing 365 days each), they count ahead 483 lunar years (containing 360 days each) to reach the year AD 32, which they claim is the year that Jesus was crucified. (Most researchers think that the crucifixion occurred a few years earlier.)

The use of lunar years is called by some “the prophetic mode of reckoning,” and such years are used in the Bible to figuratively depict some things using short periods of time, usually with a lunar *month* rather than a lunar year. All sorts of problems arise when lunar years are used to literally depict long periods of time. The only reason the premillennialists use lunar years here is that they miss their target by a mile when they use solar years.

After the 69 weeks (483 lunar years), they tell us that the prophetic clock stopped and has not ticked once in the intervening 2000 years. Instead, we have been living

in a prophetic gap period that they call the church age. The last of Daniel's seventy weeks will occur, they say, when the Rapture begins. The final three and a half years of these seven years will be the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist will reign on earth. Following those seven years, Jesus will return to reign for a thousand years on Earth.

Some initial and enormous problems with this view is that it ignores the first century time frame of this prophecy that we got from verse 24, it ignores the focus of the prophecy that we also got from verse 24, and it ignores the prayer at the beginning of Chapter 9 that caused this prophecy to be personally delivered by an angel to Daniel. It also causes the gospel to make a distinction between Jew and Gentile even though Romans 10:12 tells us "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." It also ignores the repeated warnings in the New Testament that the end will **not** be preceded by any signs but instead will come as thief in the night.

There are a host of other problems with the millennial viewpoint, many of which do not have a direct bearing on the passage we are considering. Without going into all of these, we will pause for a few moments and consider the general premillennial approach to interpreting scripture.

### **Problems with Premillennialism**

First, does it make any difference what we believe about premillennialism? Is it all just a matter of opinion? Should we make an issue out of it? We looked at one opinion on that issue back in Lesson 9. Recall what Professor Carroll Osburn of Abilene Christian University had to say on pages 90 and 91 of his book *The Peaceable Kingdom*:

There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether more than one cup in communion is acceptable, whether the communion bread is to be pinched or snapped, whether one can eat in the church building, whether funds can be used from the church treasury to support orphan homes; whether the Lord's Sup-

per must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on ... premillennialism, ... congregational organization, or ... whether baptism is “for” or “because of” the remission of sins.

Yes, if you sent your child to ACU with current tuition at \$29,450 a year, that is the sort of Bible teaching they would receive, assuming they received any Bible teaching at all. According to Professor Osburn, premillennialism (and baptism and instrumental music, for that matter) is on par with the raging controversy over whether communion bread should be pinched or snapped. That is, premillennialism, baptism, and instrumental music are just side issues that don't really matter so long as we all just believe that Christ is the Son of God. But can I honestly say that I believe that Jesus is the Son of God if I ignore what he has to say about baptism and acceptable worship? If I ignore what he has to say about the end of the world? If I ignore what he has to say about the authority of the scriptures?

But let's get back to the one so-called side issue that is of particular interest to us. Is premillennialism a side issue that doesn't really make that much difference? To answer that question, let's turn to John Walvoord, who was perhaps the leading proponent of premillennialism. Here is what he had to say about its importance:

If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible ... that is something else. ... It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.

Thus, according to Walvoord, premillennialism is a “determining factor in Biblical interpretation.” And if you read their commentaries, you soon find out that this is



no exaggeration. They manage to work those thousand years into practically everything even though the “1000 year” figure they rely on occurs only in Revelation 20.

With all due respect to Professor Osburn (which isn't much), it does make a difference what we believe about premillennialism. It is not a side issue, it is a main issue. Why? Because the premillennialist doctrine has consequences that run counter to the very heart of the gospel. Premillennialists teach that one day the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system will be restored. In this way, they belittle the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and his eternal priesthood. They teach that Jesus is not presently ruling over Israel. Thus, they belittle his claim to have all authority in heaven and earth. They belittle his title of King of kings and Lord of lords. They teach that Jesus' mission on earth was a failure, and that the church (his body) was a result of that failure. Thus, they belittle the plan of God, and they belittle the importance of his church. They teach that our Lord and Savior was a failure who caused God to come up with a Plan B at the last minute.

Can I say that Jesus is the Son of God and yet claim that he was a failure? That his church was a mistake? That he does not have all authority? That his sacrifice was not sufficient? Professor Osburn apparently thinks that I can.

I cannot claim on one hand that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (as Scripture affirms in 1 Timothy 6:15) and claim on the other hand that premillennialism is true. The two claims are logically inconsistent. In fact, premillennialists deny that Jesus is today reigning as king — so they likewise seem to admit the inconsistency.

It makes a great deal of difference what we believe about this important issue. It strikes at the very core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Premillennialism is false, and we must continue to proclaim that.

As I mentioned in Lesson 9, we owe a great debt to Foy E. Wallace for keeping it out of the Lord's church. Foy Wallace (then the editor of the *Gospel Advocate*) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) in 1933 about the thousand year reign. Brother Wallace was largely respon-

sible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church. (What would the situation be like today if he had just ignored the problem back then? I hate to think. That sort of problem rarely goes away by itself. Someone must have the courage to stand up and refute it.)

### **Reasons Why the Millennial Chronological Viewpoint is Wrong**

**Reason #1:** There is no proof that the so-called “Day Equals a Year” principle is in operation here. Although this principle is sometimes claimed to be some sort of “Universal Prophetic Principle,” it is in fact used with certainty only twice in the Bible.

**Numbers 14:34** — *After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, **each day for a year**, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.*

**Ezekiel 4:6** — *And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee **each day for a year**.*

How do we know the principle is in operation in these two passages? Because God tells us explicitly each time. Does that mean God couldn't use it elsewhere without telling us? No, but it does cast doubt on the idea that he would. Why tell us there but not here?

But could it be a *universal* principle? No. There are many cases where it is clearly not in use. The creation account leaps to mind. Was the creation week a seven year period? I know of no one who believes that it was.

We know with certainty it is not a universal principle — not even in prophecies. Jonah was in the belly of that fish for three days, and we learn in Matthew 12:39-40 that those three days were a prophetic sign of the time between the cruci-

fixion and the resurrection. Did that take three *years*? It would seem it must have if there is some sort of a *universal* principle in operation.

There is no universal principle of Biblical interpretation that requires us to view days as years. To take that view here requires an assumption because God does not tell us here (as he does elsewhere) that the principle is in effect.

**Reason #2:** Beginning with the 445 BC decree from Nehemiah is just an assumption, and not a very good one. The prophecy clearly has a starting point, but what is it? Verse 25 tells us that the starting point was the time when the word went out to restore and build Jerusalem. When was that? If it were not for the efforts to make a chronology fit this prophecy, then there would never have been any question as to the starting point: it is the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. Let's consider the facts.

God had prophesied that Cyrus would rebuild the city. Some deny that he did, but listen to Isaiah.

**Isaiah 44:28** — *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

**Isaiah 45:13** — *I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Cyrus gave a decree relating to Jerusalem in 539 BC. Daniel received this vision around 539 BC. Put yourself in Daniel's place. Which decree would you have thought God was speaking about? The only decree you knew about! The decree that Cyrus had just given must have been the one that God was referring to. And if the starting point was a decree that would not occur until after the days of Esther, then why was Gabriel in such a hurry to deliver it to Daniel?

The context virtually demands that we take the starting point of this prophecy to be the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. If you take that decree as your starting point, then you will **never** reach the cross in 69 weeks of years (483 years) — lunar or solar.

**Reason #3:** The use of lunar years to reach their target date is baseless. Going back to the lunar calendar to make the numbers work out is (pardon the pun) *lunacy*. No country (ancient or otherwise) has ever used lunar years to count out long periods of time without including some method of intercalation (the insertion of days into the calendar) to reconcile the lunar and solar years. At the time of Daniel, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Sumerians, Persians, and Egyptians all had methods in place for reconciling lunar and solar calendars. None of those countries would have measured a long period of time with lunar years — and neither did God. Yes, lunar months (not years) are sometimes used to give us nice round numbers for short prophetic symbols, but they are not used to pinpoint precise events hundreds of years into the future.

**Reason #4:** They miss the date of the cross — perhaps by as much as several years. This inaccuracy is particularly troubling based upon their own comments regarding the accuracy of what they call the *Divine Chronology*. Here is what one leading proponent had to say:

And accuracy as absolute as the nature of the case permits is no more than men are here entitled to demand. There can be no loose reckoning in a Divine chronology; and if God had designed to mark on human calendars the fulfillment of His purposes as foretold in prophecy, the strictest scrutiny shall fail to detect miscalculation or mistake.

I agree that the strictest scrutiny will not detect an error on God's part. However, even a casual scrutiny is enough to detect numerous errors on the premillennialists' part.

## **The Non-Millennial Chronological Viewpoint**

This view, which is popular in the church, begins with the decree of 458 BC when Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. (That is, it begins with the second decree — the decree found in Ezra 7.) Again, verse 25 tells us that 69 weeks will elapse before the Messiah comes. Applying the “Day Equals a Year” principle to the 69 weeks gives us 483 years, as before. Taking the starting point of 458 BC and adding 483 (solar, this time) years, we arrive at the year AD 26, which is about the year that Jesus was baptized (which we agreed was most likely the event that marked the end of the 69 weeks). Verse 27 tells us that in the middle of the seventieth week, the sacrifices will cease. This, they say, occurred when Jesus died on the cross and ushered in the new Christian age (which also agrees with our conclusions). Again, this seems to fit chronologically since Jesus’ earthly ministry lasted about three and a half years.

Most in the church rightly reject the millennial approach, but this non-millennial approach is very popular. Let’s consider a few arguments against the non-millennial chronological viewpoint.

### **Reasons Against the Non-Millennial Chronological Viewpoint**

**Reason #1:** Again, there is no proof that the “Day Equals a Year” principle is in operation here. There are only two places in Scripture where we know it is used, and the reason we know it is because each time God explicitly told us it was being used.

**Reason #2:** Verse 25 requires that seven weeks (49 years) elapse from the decree in 458 BC until the city is rebuilt. That is, verse 25 under this interpretation would have the city rebuilt in 409 BC. But, Nehemiah suggests that the city was rebuilt in 444 BC during the reign of Artaxerxes.

**Reason #3:** There is no particular reason to begin with the decree in 458 BC from Ezra 7, except that it seems to work. As we mentioned earlier, there is much more reason to believe that the prophecy begins with the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.

**Reason #4:** Verse 26 tells us that the seventy weeks includes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in AD 70. There is no way to make this AD 70 event fit with a 490 year chronology beginning in 458 BC. If the first half of that final week is a literal three and a half years, then why not the second half?

In short, I think the non-millennial chronological view is wrong, but just because it doesn't make sense — not because it violates the Scriptures (which makes the non-millennial chronological view very much *unlike* the millennial chronological view in that regard).

**A Final Potential Objection:** The seventy years in Jeremiah that we started with in Daniel 9 was a literal seventy years. Why then should we take the “seventy sevens” figuratively? First, as we have mentioned, NO ONE takes it entirely literally since seventy weeks does not give us enough time to get to the Messiah from the time of Daniel. Second, I think the seventy years in Jeremiah is both literal and figurative. God chose the number seventy for a reason. Third, our rule with apocalyptic language is that we will take numbers figuratively unless forced to do otherwise. Certainly we are not forced to do otherwise here. But even if we tried to take the 490 years literally, there is no way to make a chronological system of 490 years fit the events in this vision, which includes the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and begins at the latest in 445 BC (and most likely begins in 539 BC!). As shown on the handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)), the first return gives us 608 years to AD 70, and the third return gives us 514 years — and the prophecy almost certainly was about the first return. Thus, we are in effect FORCED to view the value of seventy as symbolic unless we had rather use a faulty chronology.

**One last point about Chapter 9:** Jerusalem was destroyed in **AD 70** — is that number seventy somehow tied in with all of the other seventies we have seen here? The answer is, almost certainly, no. The AD system of numbering did not appear

until 500 years after AD 1. But we can say, at least, that the city of Jerusalem fell *about* seventy years after the birth of Christ, which is definitely interesting.

# LESSON 31

## CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 is a prelude to the final vision in the book of Daniel. Although only 21 verses long, Chapter 10 shows us some of the most puzzling and intriguing events in the Bible. This chapter, perhaps more than any other, lifts the curtain on the unseen spiritual world that surrounds us. It would be easy to go over a cliff of speculation in this chapter, so we will try to stay well-grounded with what has been revealed to us, realizing that much about these issues has not been revealed.

### **Daniel 10:1**

**1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.**

The third year of Cyrus would be the third year of his reign over the Chaldeans, not the third year of his reign over Persia — which would have been twenty years earlier.



Each of the four visions in Chapters 7–12 is dated, and the visions appear in two groups of two: the first and third years of Belshazzar and the first and third years of Cyrus (with the first year of Darius' reign being the same as the first year of Cyrus' reign over Babylon).

We know that this vision occurred *after* Cyrus's decree that the Jews could return to Palestine because Ezra 1:1 tells us that decree went out in the *first* year of Cyrus. Cyrus' third year would have been 536 or 535 BC, two years after Gabriel's appearance to Daniel in Chapter 9 and a short while after the first return of the Jewish exiles to Palestine. The timing here is important because Daniel, who was obviously concerned about the exiles, may have just heard that work on the temple had been halted. This news may explain why will see Daniel mourning in verse 2.

Daniel was now close to 85 years old, having been in exile for over 70 years. Perhaps Daniel's Babylonian name (Belteshazzar) is used in verse 1 to remind us that he is still in exile.

Why didn't Daniel return with the others? It may have been because of his age, or perhaps he felt that he could be of more use remaining behind and continuing his service for the king.

What does Daniel tell us in verse 1 about the word that was revealed to him? He tells us three things.

**First, Daniel tells us that the word was true.**

Daniel received this vision and this word from God, and thus he knew that the word and the vision were true. The vision contained prophecies that would certainly be accomplished.

The liberals do not approach this book from that perspective. Instead, they determine what they think the vision must mean, and then they check to see if the events in their interpretation ever occurred (and, no surprise, they hardly ever have!). They then conclude that the author of Daniel was mistaken since the events he predicted never came true. For an example of this liberal approach to Biblical

interpretation, consider the following excerpt from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* commenting on Daniel 11:40–45.

Predictions that Ptolemy will provoke another war with disastrous results, so that Antiochus will conquer Libya to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, but on his way back will perish somewhere along the coastal route. None of these predictions was fulfilled.

You can sense the glee as the author makes that final comment. “Here is what Daniel said would happen, but it never happened. So much for those fools who think the Bible is always right.” But notice that the commentator himself is never in any doubt with regard to his own conclusions. He couldn’t be wrong, could he?

If instead we believe that the word of God is true, then the situation is different. If we make some conclusion about the Scriptures that later turns out to be in conflict with historical or scientific truth, then we must be the ones in error — not God. It is our fault for misunderstanding his word. God’s word is truth no matter what we have to say about it.

**Romans 3:4** — *Let God be true, but every man a liar.*

**John 17:17** — *Thy word is truth.*

Not just that God’s word is *true*, but God’s word is *truth*. Just as 1 John 4:8 tells us that God is love, John 17:17 tells us that God’s word is truth. And John 14:6 tells us that Jesus (the word made flesh) is truth. We have nothing to fear from truth. Truth is on our side!

**Second, Daniel tells us in verse 1 that the word involved great conflict.**

The King James Version translates this phrase as “the time appointed was long.” The Hebrew word translated “time appointed” in the KJV is more properly translated “army” or “host” going forth to war. The ESV translation is better — “And the word was true, and it was a great conflict.”

The “conflict” here is the warfare that we will see in Chapter 11. That is, the vision will involve conflicts between many different peoples and nations. The world would love to reduce the word of God down to something you might find on a greeting card — something like “be good to feel good” or “let God, and let live.” In fact, judging by the sad state of Bible bookstores these days, many self-professed Christians care more about pithy statements on wall plaques and bumper stickers and pictures of angels than they do about the Bible or books about the Bible. The peace at any price crowd would like us all to just ignore any statements in the Bible that they deem offensive or non-inclusive; any statements that involve conflict. Can’t we all just focus on the happy verses? But no one who makes it his primary goal to avoid all conflict will ever be pleasing to God. We are called to live in conflict with the philosophies of this world. We are at war, and we have been given weapons for that warfare.

**2 Corinthians 10:4** — *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

What sort of soldier is it who seeks to avoid all conflict? Not a very effective soldier. The word of God involves great conflict — not just here in the closing chapters of Daniel, but all throughout the Bible. In fact, the great conflict begins in the opening chapters.

**Genesis 3:15** — *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

The only way to avoid conflict is to stop doing what we have been called to do — but that will just bring us into conflict with God, which means there is no way to avoid all conflict. The only question is with whom we will be in conflict.

Religion is a deadly serious business. The world wants to put it on the sideline, out of mind and out of the public square, but we can never let that happen. We are to

be the salt of the earth and the light on the hill — and doing those things will always create conflict.

**Matthew 10:34** — *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

**Third, Daniel tells us in verse 1 that he understood the word and the vision.**

In Daniel 8:27, Daniel confessed that he did not fully understand the vision that he received in that chapter even after an angel appeared to help him understand it. How is this vision different? The primary difference is that the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is longer and contains more details. This extra detail seems to have helped Daniel understand what was in store for his people. Also, the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is largely historical narrative, and in that sense it is more straightforward than the earlier visions.

### **Daniel 10:2-3**

**2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.**

Once again we see the extent of Daniel's spiritual preparation. Daniel prepared himself to seek God and study his word. Daniel got results when he prayed. God heard his prayers and acted to answer his prayers. If we want similar results, then perhaps we should prepare ourselves as Daniel did.

For easterners, anointing oneself with oil was a daily ritual except for those who were sick, who were mourning, or who were facing a crisis. Here, Daniel abstains from the oil because he is mourning.

Note also that Daniel abstained during this time from meat and wine. The inference of course is that normally Daniel did *not* abstain from these foods. Thus, the dietary changes he made when he first arrived in Babylon seem to have been just temporary. (Some have said that Daniel was a vegetarian all of his life, but this verse casts serious doubt on that idea.)

Why was Daniel mourning? As we have suggested, Daniel may have heard bad news from the exiles who had left several years earlier for Palestine. As we know from the book of Ezra, the news was not all good. His people were facing hardships back in Jerusalem. Also, he may have mourned because he was left behind — he had not seen his homeland since he was 13.

Also, the vision in Chapter 8 had described the horrors that lay in store for God's people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The vision in Chapter 9 had told Daniel that one day the Messiah would come, only to be cut off, and that soon afterward the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed — and this would be God's last word with regard to the Jews. The vision in Chapter 11 that Daniel is about to receive will have even more to say about the horrors that would soon face God's people. What else could Daniel do but mourn? Daniel knew that there was a time to mourn, and he knew that that time was now! (When we look at the depths of the depravity and sin that surround us on all sides today, perhaps we should also mourn more often.)

### **Daniel 10:4-6**

**4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of**

**Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.**

Daniel received this vision on the twenty-fourth day of the first month. The first month of the Jewish calendar was Nisan. The Passover celebration took place on the fourteenth day of that month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day. Thus, Daniel received his vision ten days after Passover. While traditionally this was a time of feasting, Daniel had instead spent the time fasting and mourning.

Daniel was standing on the banks of the great river Hiddekel, which the Septuagint identifies as the Tigris River. It was the third river that went out of Eden in Genesis 2:14. Earlier Daniel had a vision next to the River Ulai, which flows into the Tigris River. As you recall, it was unclear if Daniel was actually at the River Ulai or rather was just seeing the river in his vision. The wording here, however, seems to suggest that Daniel was actually present at this river when these events occurred.

Daniel was not the only prophet to receive a message from God next to a river. Ezekiel received several visions by the River Chebar, which may have been a canal connecting the Tigris with the Euphrates. In fact, what Daniel witnesses here has some other similarities to Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1. Daniel 10:6 mentions beryl, lightning, lamps of fire, polished brass, and the voice of a multitude. Ezekiel 1 mentions burnished brass in verse 7, burning coals of fire, lamps, and lightning in verse 13, beryl in verse 16, and "the noise of an host" in verse 24.

Who is Daniel seeing here in verses 5 and 6? The description in verse 6 is very similar to the description of Christ found in Revelation 1.

**Revelation 1:14-16** — *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

This similarity has caused some to conclude that Daniel was seeing the preincarnate Christ, a so-called Christophany, which we have discussed as a possibility several times earlier in this book, including with regard to the fourth person in the fiery furnace. Others argue that this could not be Christ because, as we will soon see, the man in this vision fought with the prince of Persia for three weeks until he was helped by Michael. Could that be true of Jesus? I agree with those who think not. Others solve the problem by arguing that the person in verses 5-6 is not the same person who lifts Daniel up in verse 10 and starts speaking to Daniel in verse 11. We will say more about this theory when we get to verse 10.

In short, we can't say with certainty, but I agree with those who don't think the person we will see later in verse 10 is Jesus. I don't think it would take Jesus three weeks to deal with the prince of Persia, and Jesus would not need any help to do so! So if this man in verses 5-6 is the same person we see in verse 10, then I also don't think this man in verses 5-6 is Jesus.

### **Daniel 10:7-9**

**7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw**

**this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.**

The word that the angel brings is also called a vision in verse 14, but this vision in verse 7 occurs before the angel says anything. So the vision in verse 7 is the vision of verses 5-6, not the vision that follows in Chapters 11 and 12.

Daniel's companions are not able to see the vision, but they experience a great quaking that causes them to be afraid and to flee, leaving Daniel alone. Daniel's experience is similar to that of Saul on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:7 and 22:9 tell us that Saul's companions could not see Christ or understand his voice, but they did sense enough to be frightened.

Daniel's appearance changed when he saw the vision in verses 5-6. I love the KJV in verse 8 — "my comeliness was turned in me into corruption." I also like verse 8 in the New English Bible: "My strength left me; I became a sorry figure of a man."

As we saw before, Daniel again appears to faint dead away as a result of the vision, and specifically in verse 9 as a result of hearing the voice of his words, which verse 6 tells us was like "the voice of a multitude."

### **Daniel 10:10-12**

**10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.**



**11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.**

Who lifts Daniel up in verse 10? I think we can make a good argument that this person in verse 10 is **not** the same person we saw in verses 5-6. Why? Because verses 5-6 was a vision as verses 7-8 tell us three times. Daniel faints as a result of the vision, and in verse 10 someone physically touches him and physically sets him upon his knees. Verse 11 tells us this person was sent to Daniel. In short, verses 10-12 do not sound like a vision to me. If verses 5-6 are a vision, but verses 10-12 are not a vision, then we have two different people and our problem is solved.

The description in verses 5-6 is similar to the description of Christ in Revelation 1 because verses 5-6 are also describing Christ — and the man who appears in verse 10 and who we later learn fought with the prince of Persia is an angel. (If that is not the case, then again I think the best explanation is that Daniel was seeing an angel in both verses 5-6 and also here in verses 10-12.)

Again, Daniel is said to be greatly beloved by God in verse 11. A literal translation is “man of preciousness.” Daniel was precious in God’s sight. Do you want to be precious in God’s sight? If you are in the Lord’s church, then you already are. Revelation 21 contains the most beautiful description of the church found anywhere in

the Bible, and verse 19 says that “the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.” The church is precious in God’s sight!

Why were Daniel’s prayers so effective? What was his secret? Verse 12 says that Daniel set his mind to understand, and he humbled himself before God. Thus, the angel says, God heard his words.

**James 4:6** — *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

It is a sad fact that although God is always able to hear us, sometimes God chooses not to hear us. Why? Because of our sinfulness.

**Isaiah 59:1-2** — *Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.*

That was not Daniel’s problem! When Daniel prayed, angels were dispatched!

### **Daniel 10:13-14**

**13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.**

One commentary described these verses well when it said: “One of the strangest accounts in the Bible is now unfolded.” Several questions arise immediately from verse 13:

- Who is speaking? (We have already answered this one. It is almost certainly an angel and not Christ, even if Christ was seen in the vision of verses 5-6.)
- Who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and, a related question, **what** is the prince of the kingdom of Persia?
- What happened during those 21 days?
- Who is Michael (that one is easy) and what did he do to help?
- Who are the kings of Persia?

**Who is the prince of Persia?** Let’s start with the related question — **what is the prince of Persia?** It seems certain that he was not just a man. What man could withstand an angel on a mission from God and cause Michael to have to come to that angel’s rescue? Almost all commentaries agree that the prince of Persia was an angel.

Was the prince of Persia a good angel or a fallen angel? Again, most commentaries also agree on this point — this prince withstood an angelic messenger from God, which strongly suggests that this prince was an evil angel.

**Jude 1:6** — *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

The prince of Persia is apparently the satanic agent assigned to work with Persia in fighting the will of God. Jesus referred to Satan as the “prince of this world” in John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11. The prince of Persia was most likely a servant of the prince of

this world. It is possible that the prince of Persia was Satan himself — “the prince of this world,” as Jesus called Satan, was certainly the prince of Persia as well.

We would be foolish to think that Satan is not organized in his fight against God and against the people of God. Satan has a plan, and Satan is working to carry out that plan. And that was particularly true at this time when the plan of God was beginning to unfold as God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ.

**What happened during the 21 days?** We know from verse 12 that Daniel’s prayers were heard from the very first day, but here we learn that it took 21 days for the answer to arrive. What happened? The angel in verse 13 says that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” We are not told anything more.

We do know the significant role that Persia played in the plan of God. Satan also knew this. Cyrus had been mentioned by name in Isaiah over 100 years before he was even born! One thing you can say for sure about Satan — he is a Bible scholar! Satan knows the word of God inside and out! We see that, for example, in Matthew 4. Satan knew Persia was important to God, and so Satan set his sights on Persia, and he appears to have placed a powerful fallen angel there to thwart God’s plans.

An interesting question to consider is how much Satan knew about the plan of God. Satan obviously knew that the Jews were part of God’s plan, and so he sought to frustrate their efforts at every turn. Satan, of course, knew that Jesus as the Son of God was the focus of God’s plan, and so he put temptations before him at every opportunity. But what about the death of Christ? Did Satan see that as a victory? If he did, then as we know he was badly mistaken, because as John 12:31 and Hebrews 2:14 tell us, Satan was defeated at the cross. I think that Satan first saw the cross as a victory, but later realized his mistake at the last moment. Why? Because Matthew 27:19 tells us that Pilate’s wife sought to have Jesus released because of a dream she had. Who was behind that dream? I think Satan was. I think Satan thought he was about to win his greatest victory — but discovered too late that he

was about to experience his greatest defeat. Is it any wonder that he then turned on the Lord's church with such fury?

**Revelation 12:12** — *For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

Satan may have used an underling to handle Persia, but I think we see from Revelation that Satan was in personal charge of Rome in its efforts to destroy the church. Satan himself seems to have been the prince of Rome.

**Who is Michael, and what did he do to help?** In the KJV, verse 13 says "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." A better translation is "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia." That is, the final clause is describing what was going on before Michael arrived.

Michael, of course, is also an angel, and we will see him again in Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 12:1. Here he is called one of the chief princes. In Jude 9 he is called an archangel. He also makes an appearance in Revelation 12:7. One conclusion we can draw is that apparently there is a hierarchy of angels in which Michael occupies a very high position. The word archangel in Jude 9 means first or chief angel.

We aren't told what Michael did to help, but he seems to have had no trouble with the prince of Persia, which would seem to conclusively answer the question of whether the other person rescued by Michael is Christ. We know that Michael is not above his Master.

**Who are the kings of Persia in verse 13?** The kings of Persia are most likely the actual rulers of Persia. It could include Cyrus himself, as well as those given power to rule by Cyrus, such as Darius, who is called a king in Daniel 9:1, even though as a governor he was subject to Cyrus. The other option is that these kings of Persia are also fallen angels working against God, but I favor the former option.

**Why was Satan so interested in Persia?** The short answer is that Satan was interested because God was interested. Satan constantly seeks to thwart God's plans. But, unlike some of the other earthly kingdoms of the world, Persia was not wholly evil and was not wholly opposed to God's plans. In fact, it was Persian rulers, beginning with Cyrus, who permitted the three returns we talked about earlier. Satan, no doubt, was very interested in preventing or hindering those returns and rebuilding activities — and we see his efforts not only here with Persia but also with the Samaritans and with some of the Jews themselves who quickly fell away after their return.

Do we think Satan is any different today? On what is Satan focused today? Where is the spiritual battle ground today?

**Ephesians 3:10-11** — *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The manifold wisdom of God is today being made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places **by the church**. And Satan knows that very well. Satan began trying to destroy the church as soon as it was established, and he is still trying to do that today. He attacks the church from within with false teachers (Acts 20:29) and from without by creating religious confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Satan's target has always been where God's people dwell — in the garden in Genesis, in Israel, away in exile, during the returns, and now in the church. Where the people of God are — that is where you will always find Satan hard at work.

What is our role in this great conflict? Our job is to take up our position in God's army and remain faithful and true to his word.

**Ephesians 6:13-18** — *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil*

*day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*

Those are our weapons and our armor — truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer, and supplication. You mean to say that prayer is a weapon? Absolutely! I would say just ask Rome — but prayer took them out long ago!

# LESSON 32

**If Persia had its own (evil) angel, do we also have our own (good) angel?** There is a great curtain between us and the spiritual world that surrounds us. Verses such as Daniel 10:13 give us a tantalizing glimpse behind that curtain.

We are reminded of the incident in 2 Kings 6:15-17 in which Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant would be opened so that he could see the great angelic army that surrounded them. What would we see if our eyes were likewise opened?

One thing seems very clear — there is an unseen spiritual war going on that is directly related to events occurring in this world.

**Ephesians 6:10-12** — *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

So do we have our own angels? There are some very suggestive verses on that question:

**Hebrews 1:14** — *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

**Revelation 2:1** — *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write ... [and also for the other six churches]*



**Matthew 18:10** — *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

**Acts 12:15** — *And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.*

**Daniel 12:1** — *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...*

**Daniel 10:20** — *And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.*

As for whether nations have angels, we know from the book of Daniel that at least Persia and Greece had their own (apparently, evil) angels (Daniel 10:20), and Israel had the angel Michael (Daniel 12:1). Also, some point to Deuteronomy 32:8 to argue that every nation has its own angel.

**Deuteronomy 32:8** — *When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*

That last phrase, “the children of Israel,” in the KJV is better translated “the sons of God,” and it is the same phrase that we find in Job.

**Job 1:6** — *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.*

*The Living Bible* (which I do **not** recommend for serious Bible study) has the following paraphrase:

*When God divided up the world among the nations, He gave each of them a supervising angel!*

That is hardly a translation, but it does give an idea of what some believe is being taught there. Others also point to Isaiah 24 to argue for a linkage between kings on earth and angelic beings.

**Isaiah 24:21** — *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.*

What these and other such verses tell us is that there is a great deal going on that we know nothing or very little about because God has not revealed it to us. What is revealed gives us wonderful glimpses of the permanent spiritual world that surrounds our temporary physical world. We can only speculate — and there is nothing wrong with speculation so long as it is labeled as such and it does not violate the Scriptures. But we must be careful not to go too far and become preoccupied with demons or angels as many have done. C.S. Lewis said the following about the preoccupation that some have with demons:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

That is also true for angels, as evidenced by the TV shows, books, movies, and shelf space at “Christian” book stores devoted to the subject.

So do we have guardian angels today? Matthew 18:10 suggests that children do, and Hebrews 1:14 may suggest that Christians do as well. What do children and Christians have in common? They are saved — children are saved because they have never been lost, and Christians are saved because they have obeyed the gospel. Perhaps God assigns guardian angels to all who are saved.

If so, then what do guardian angels do? We aren't told much at all about that question. Hebrews 1:14 says they "minister." Luke 16:22 may tell us that the angels provide an escort for us after death, and perhaps that is all they do. Perhaps God uses angels to carry out his providence. The specifics are not revealed to us.

What about the converse of that question? What do guardian angels NOT do? We can say much more about that question than we can about the other. We know many things that guardian angels do NOT do. For starters, they do not add or subtract from the word of God, because doing so would bring them under the curse of Revelation 22:18 — and besides that, what would they add? The word of God is complete and makes us complete — nothing needs to be added to it. Second, they do not bring another gospel, because doing so would bring them under the curse of Galatians 1:8. Third, they do not perform miracles, because the age of miracles has ended (1 Corinthians 13:10). Fourth, they do not violate our free will, because not even God himself does that (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). So, while we may have uncertainty about what angels are doing today, there is much less uncertainty about what angels are NOT doing today.

Do angels walk among us? Some argue they do based on Hebrews 13:2 — "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." But I think that verse is pointing us back to Genesis 18-19. I think that today, with the age of miracles having ended, the angelic host is an unseen spiritual host, not a physical one.

**One last point on verse 13:** Anyone looking at the world at this time would have seen Persia as powerful and significant and the Jews as powerless and insignificant — their temple destroyed, their land desolate, and their people captive in Babylon. But was that the case in the *spiritual* realm? No, in that realm, the Jews had a powerful archangel on their side. If we are ever tempted to see ourselves as insignificant, we need to look at ourselves with spiritual eyes — we need to see ourselves as we appear to God in the spiritual realm.

**When are the “latter days” that are mentioned in verse 14?** The phrase could simply mean “later” or it could point to the latter days of the Jewish age. This latter interpretation seems to fit the context better. Many assume that the “latter days” refers to the end of the world, but as we saw in Acts 2, the “last days” occurred in the first century.

If we do take the “latter days” to refer to the end of the world, then we need to be aware of some consequences of that belief. Verse 14 states very clearly that this vision concerns the role of the Jews in the latter days. As I have already suggested, I think the “latter days” refers to the time when God’s special plan for the Jews would come to an end. This happened in the first century and fits nicely with how Peter described the last days in Acts 2. But could this vision also relate to events that will occur at the end of the world? We need to be very careful how we answer that question. To answer the question “yes” is to logically imply that the Jews still have a special role to play in the plan of God, which many today teach is true. If we take Daniel to refer to the end of the world in this vision, then the idea of a future Jewish role in God’s plan follows as a logical consequence of verse 14 — we cannot avoid it. Thus, we need to be careful about the time frame we choose for this prophecy.

What does the Bible have to say about the future role of the Jews in God’s plan?

**Romans 10:12** — *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

**Acts 13:32-33** — *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

All of the promises to the Jews were fulfilled in Christ. What remains to be fulfilled for the Jews that is peculiar to them? Nothing.

**Jeremiah 33:14-16** — *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.*

Notice the time frame in that prophecy from Jeremiah. When would all Israel be saved? When God causes the righteous branch to grow up among them — that is, in the first century. Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes. Does God have a plan for the Jews today that is different from his plan for Gentiles? Absolutely not!

Finally in verse 14 Daniel is told that this vision is for many days. In fact, the vision again takes us up to the first century, which means that “many days” was a little over 500 years. The first verse of Revelation says that it concerns things that must shortly come to pass. The third verse says that the time is at hand. Those statements are repeated in the last chapter of Revelation in verses 6 and 10. And why is it then that so many people tell us that Revelation is describing future events that have not yet occurred 2000 years after the book was written? If “many days” means 500 years in Daniel, are we really going to say that 2000 years is a short time in Revelation? (Yes, a thousand years is as a day in God’s sight, but Revelation was not written for God, it was written for us!)

**Daniel 10:15-19**

**15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.**

There are many similarities between the first half of Chapter 10 and the second half of Chapter 10.

- Daniel's strength was sapped (twice in 10:8 and twice in 10:16-17).
- Daniel's face was toward the ground (10:9 and 10:15).
- Daniel was roused by an angel (10:10 and 10:18).
- Daniel was called greatly beloved (10:10 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told not to fear (10:12 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told why the angel had come (10:12 and 10:20-21).
- The prince of Persia is mentioned (10:13 and 10:20).

Why did two such similar events occur back to back? We aren't told, but have you noticed how often the number two rises to the surface in the book of Daniel? How many people in this book have two names? How many languages are used in this book? (Two, Hebrew and Aramaic.) How many kings do we see that come in pairs? (Nabonidus and Beleshazzar, Cyrus and Darius) To what could this be pointing? The two covenants perhaps? Doesn't this book tell us a great deal about the transition between the two covenants? (It is also a very interesting study to investigate how often the number two appears in the book of Revelation.)

Daniel is unable to speak until "one like the similitude of the sons of men" touches his lips in verse 16. In verse 18 he will be touched by "one like the appearance of a man." Most likely these individuals are angels, and most likely they are the same angel — but we are not told that with certainty. (We do see the same angel as before speaking again in verse 20.)

What we do know with certainty is that Daniel seems to have been completely overwhelmed by what was happening to him in this chapter — and very understandably so when we step back and look at what happened to him here. He has certainly had an encounter with an angel, and possibly with more than one, and he very possibly began the chapter by having a vision of Christ.

We are reminded of Isaiah 6:5 where, after seeing the vision of “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” Isaiah said:

*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

His lips were also touched in that chapter. And we are reminded of another passage from Isaiah:

**Isaiah 40:9** — *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

Isaiah is speaking there of Jesus, and I believe Daniel had just seen Jesus in verses 5-6. Is it any wonder that Daniel turned his face toward the ground and was unable to speak? Daniel’s responses to his visions and visitations are worth our careful study. Often he is overcome and unable to speak for a time. Indeed, he sometimes loses consciousness for a moment and must be revived. I think that we have sometimes been guilty of emphasizing that Jesus is our friend (which is certainly true) at the expense of also emphasizing that Jesus is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe who upholds the universe by the power of his word and possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. Listen again to what Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6:

**Isaiah 6:1-4** — *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the*



*door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

Verse 1 tells us that Uzziah had just died — which meant there was no king, right? Hardly! Isaiah saw the true king — and I think that Isaiah was seeing Jesus on that throne rather than God the father. Why? Because John 12:41 says that Isaiah “saw his glory and spoke of him” (with reference to Christ). And we are also reminded of John’s vision of Christ in Revelation 1:13-16, which as we said is very similar to verses 5-6 of this chapter.

**Isaiah 40:9** — *Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

Why does it matter how we see God? Of course there are many answers to that question, but one answer stands out in particular — our attitude toward sin is directly related to our attitude toward God. Our view of sin is directly related to our view of God. How we behold God is directly related to how we behold ourselves.

**Isaiah 6:5** — *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

How often do we find ourselves saying that? If not often, then perhaps it is because we have not seen the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up — and we should see that each time we open the word of God.

If we have become lax about sin, then perhaps it is because we have tried to lower God down to our level instead of seeing God sitting upon that throne, high and lifted up. John Calvin said:

Hence that dread and amazement with which, as Scripture uniformly relates, holy men were struck and overwhelmed whenever they beheld the presence of God. ... Men are never duly touched and im-

pressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.

And we can add that men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their sinfulness until they have contrasted themselves with the holiness of God.

Think again about Isaiah 6 — “Holy, Holy, Holy.” That is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times. You never read that God is love, love, love or mercy, mercy, mercy. But you do read (and we do sing) that God is holy, holy, holy — and when we really understand that, we will see ourselves and our sin in a whole new light, just as Isaiah did. When we see that God is holy, holy, holy, we understand that we are guilty, guilty, guilty — and we understand our need for a Savior.

Voltaire said that “God made man in His image, and man returned the favor.” Instead of coming up with new gods, I fear we have often been guilty of trying to re-fashion the one we have. And the result? One author has said that we are like Lancelot in search of the Holy Grail who finds himself at the end of his quest at a Tupperware party. The world has tried its best to trivialize God.

Our so-called Christian society has tried to reduce God to some catchy phrase or fish symbol we stick on our bumpers. Some even parade around in so-called “Christian T-shirts” with slogans such as “This Blood’s For You,” which brings Christ’s atoning sacrifice down to the level of a beer commercial.

When Isaiah saw the Lord on his throne and when Daniel saw Christ they were not driven to put a new slogan on their clothing or a catchy phrase on the bumper of their chariot. They were driven to their knees.

We have already learned much in this book of Daniel about the eternal kingdom of God. Let’s read what the book of Hebrews tells us about that kingdom.

**Hebrews 12:28-29** — *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may*

*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.*

Our God is a consuming fire. You don't contain a consuming fire. You don't trivialize a consuming fire. You aren't casual around a consuming fire. You don't daydream in the presence of a consuming fire. You aren't bored by a consuming fire. You don't turn your back on a consuming fire. You ignore a consuming fire at your peril.

If there is one message that our world needs to understand it is that God is a consuming fire. No one will obey the good news, until they understand the bad news. And the bad news is that apart from Christ we all stand guilty as charged in front of a consuming fire.

The world fears terrorists. The world fears disease. The world fears war. The world fears poverty. Those things are nothing when compared with the consuming fire.

**Matthew 10:28** — *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Daniel is strengthened by the angel in these verses, and for good reason. There is bad news ahead! His people are going to undergo serious trials. Daniel has already been shown that, but soon he will learn more about those trials that lie ahead.

### **Daniel 10:20-21**

**20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and**

**there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.**

The question here in verse 20 is rhetorical. The angel had already answered it in verse 14 when he told Daniel that he had come to help Daniel understand what would befall his people in the latter days.

Although we have a picture of spiritual warfare involving the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, it is important to note that the outcome of the battle was never in doubt. God had already told us how the battle was going to end!

Persia and Greece were a part of God's plan, yet Persia and Greece were supported by demonic powers. The faithless Jews that rejected Christ were also critical to God's plan yet they were also acting on the side of Satan in their rejection of the Messiah. Is that a contradiction? No. Paul dealt with that problem in Romans 9–11. The Jews' rejection of Christ allowed God to bless the whole world. Thus, they might ask, how could God hold them responsible for rejecting Christ? Paul's answer was that just because God is able to use evil people to further his own good aims does not mean that those evil people are no longer responsible for their actions. What evil man could possibly say to God, "You are not allowed to use my evil to accomplish something good unless you give me credit!" That idea, as Paul points out in Romans, is ludicrous.

Daniel was very important to God. Indeed, God's dealings with the powers of the world were put on hold for a moment so that this angel could answer Daniel's prayer. Verse 21 says that the angel would show Daniel "that which is noted in the scripture of truth." That is a beautiful description of God's word — and perhaps one that we should use more often.

Again we see that the book of Daniel was part of the Bible as soon as it was written. There was no need for any counsel of men to vote on it. God assembled the Bible, not man.

The scripture of truth shows God's control and knowledge of the future. The future that God is about to tell Daniel about is so certain that it is already written down. It is as if it had already happened.

This angel and Michael appear to be outnumbered. They are contending by themselves against the demonic powers of Persia and Greece. But, of course, no one is outnumbered when God is on his side.

**Romans 8:31** — *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Yes, there will be conflict. Yes, we are at war. But no, we are not alone. And that is the central message of Chapter 10. Before we study Daniel 11, I think it will be helpful to look with some detail at the general subject of prophecy in the Bible.

## SPECIAL LESSON ON PROPHECY

How does prophecy work? How is prophecy related to our free will? Let's look at some questions about the prophecies in the Bible, before we study one of the Bible's most amazing predictive prophecies — Daniel 11.

I use the "tent peg" method of Bible study. With that method, you study difficult passages of Scripture by first planting firm tent pegs from Scripture for things that you know are true and that will not change. You can then build your tent around these tent pegs as you study the difficult passage. Much of the religious confusion in the world comes from people who put up their tents without having first planted firm tent pegs into the ground.

As we begin our study of prophecy and how it works, we should start with a very important tent peg — and that tent peg is man's free will. If we build a tent in which I do not have free will to choose my actions, then that tent will collapse. Why? Because we know that man has been given free will.

**Genesis 2:16-17** — *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

**Joshua 24:15** — *Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*

That verse would seem to be definitive on the question of whether man has free will. If we were not able to choose, then *how* could God command us to choose? And if our choices were compelled rather than free then *why* would God need to command us to choose?

**Deuteronomy 30:19** — *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

**2 Peter 3:9** — *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

**1 Timothy 2:4** — *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

We know that it is not God's will that any should perish, but we also know that many will perish. What is thwarting God's will? Our will. Our free will.

**Ezekiel 18:20** — *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the*

*righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

**Ezekiel 18:32** — *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

The message in Ezekiel 18 is that each person is responsible for his own sin and not for the sin of another. How could that be true if we do not have free will? If we don't have free will, then wouldn't it logically follow from Ezekiel 18 that we are not responsible for our own sins?

**James 1:13-14** — *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

But aren't there examples in the Bible where God overrode man's free will? Let's consider that question next by looking at two examples: Pharaoh and Peter.

One of the most commonly cited examples for that proposition is Pharaoh, and particularly the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

**Romans 9:17-18** — *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

In this quote from Exodus 9:16, God makes it clear that Pharaoh had served God's purpose in refusing to let the Israelites leave Egypt. What was that purpose? Pharaoh allowed God to demonstrate his power to the entire earth. God used a wicked man to manifest his power.

But why did God choose this particular Pharaoh and not his father or his son? Because God has the sovereign right to do whatever he wants to do! David in Psalm 115:3 reminds us that God does whatever he pleases.

Now we need to be careful here. In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul tells us that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” So if God wants all men to be saved and if God does whatever he pleases, then why aren’t all men saved?

The answer is that God does whatever he pleases, but what he pleases will never violate his nature. For example, God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). So, it will never please God to tell a lie.

God desires that all men be saved. Thus, it pleased him to provide a plan by which all men could be saved. But it could not please God to choose some people to be lost before they are even born. Why? Because that action by God would cause his statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 to be a lie.

What then does the Bible mean when it says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart?

First, let’s recall the setting for this event. Moses was not conducting a Bible study with Pharaoh when God suddenly rushed in and hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh had arrayed himself against God right from the start — in fact, he considered himself to be a god.

Nowhere in the Bible is there a single example of God hardening the heart of someone who is seeking him. To those people God says, “seek and ye shall find” (Matthew 7:7). God hardens only those who have actively chosen to reject him. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11, we read that God sent on some a strong delusion that they would believe a lie. To whom did he send this delusion? He sent it to those who had refused to believe the truth but instead had pleasure in unrighteousness. Pharaoh was not seeking the truth when God hardened his heart; Pharaoh was standing in opposition to the plan of God.



# LESSON 33

## **How Does Prophecy Work?**

Last week we began our special lesson on prophecy in the Bible as an interlude between Chapters 10 and 11. And we started by placing a tent peg firmly into the ground — God has given us free will.

We then considered whether God sometimes overrides that free will, and we began by looking at the most frequently cited evidence for the proposition that he does — the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Romans 9:18 tells us that God hardens whom he wills. Doesn't that mean that God overrides our free will whenever he wills? To answer that question, we need to dig down a bit more into the text.

## **How does God harden someone's heart?**

First, this hardening, when it occurs in the Bible, is part of God's judicial work — it is directed only at those who have refused to do God's will and are actively working against him.

The result of this hardening is that people become increasingly insensitive to God's word. The hardened person moves further and further away from God. How is this accomplished? God deliberately forces a person to repeatedly make choices even though he knows that the person will repeatedly make the wrong choices.

In Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17, God says that he hardened Pharaoh's heart. What does that mean?

First, was God the *only* cause of Pharaoh's hardened heart? No. In Exodus 8:32, 9:34, and 1 Samuel 6:6 we see that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Further, in Exodus

7:22, it is implied that Pharaoh's magicians also contributed to the hardness of his heart.

What did God do to harden Pharaoh's heart? God hardened his heart by making demands that Pharaoh rejected. We also contribute to the hardening of men's hearts when we teach people the gospel and they reject the message. Every choice we make either brings us closer to God or takes us further away from God. And our heart becomes increasingly hardened each time we make that latter choice.

This is not just an ancient phenomenon. Those who listen to gospel sermons each week yet reject the invitation become increasingly hardened. Who causes that hardening? It is a team effort. The person involved causes it, we cause it, and God causes it — just as with Pharaoh.

How did the magicians harden Pharaoh's heart? They imitated some of the plagues and made Pharaoh think that the plagues were not God's doing. Likewise the world contributes to the hardening that occurs today when the world denies that God exists or tells us that we do not need God.

**Matthew 13:22** — *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

Without God's demands we cannot harden our hearts against him. When God makes a demand he gives us a choice; we can accept his demand or harden our heart against his demand.

In either case, the choice is ours — but God's approach to us initiated the choice and hence it is right to say (if we reject him) that he hardened our heart. But we also hardened our heart, the world hardened our heart, and those who proclaimed the word to us also hardened our heart.

Does God harden the hearts of believers? Absolutely not! In 2 Corinthians 3:12-16, Paul says that the unbelieving Jews are hardened when they read the old law apart

from Christ, but when they turn to Christ the hardness is removed. In Hebrews 3:13, we read that we are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and in Hebrews 3:15 and 4:7, we are instructed not to harden our own hearts.

Is there something mysterious in God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Does God harden people today? Are the Jews being restrained from believing because God has hardened their hearts and will not let them believe? No, to all three questions.

We harden our hearts when we choose the world over God, and we become increasingly hardened every time we make that choice. God's only contribution to the hardness of our heart is the demands he makes upon us. Without his demands there would be no hardness of heart against him. When Pharaoh rejected God, God did not back off. Instead, God increased the demands that he was making on Pharaoh. In that sense, God hardened Pharaoh's heart even further. God's part in the hardening was to force Pharaoh to make a choice; Pharaoh's part was to make the wrong choice.

God knew that Pharaoh would rebel against his requests and, by God's continued asking, Pharaoh was driven deeper into rebellion. Yet the choice was his at each step, and at each step God demonstrated his power to the world.

Another example we should consider is that of Peter. Jesus told him shortly before the fact that he would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed — and he did. Did Peter have the free will to do otherwise? How was Peter's will free if what he was going to do had been determined before he was presented with the choice of whether to do it?

Perhaps the answer is just that Jesus knew Peter perfectly. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Peter. God has perfect knowledge of all things that are knowable, and that means God has perfect knowledge of us.

**Psalm 139:1-6** — *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou com-*

*passest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

So, yes, perhaps the answer is that Peter had free will, and yes, Jesus knew with certainty how Peter would act in a certain situation before Peter was ever placed in that situation. And notice I said that Jesus knew with *certainty* what Peter would do, not just with some high probability. I think we will all agree that divine prophecy can't come down to probabilities. There can be and is no margin for error in divine prophecy. Prophecy is not a weather report. ("There's a 90% chance of denial tomorrow.") We should think of this as another tent peg. Why? Because even one error would place the prophet under the condemnation of all false prophets:

**Deuteronomy 18:22** — *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

These are difficult questions, and we will not be able to answer them all because not all answers have been revealed to us. At some point, we will have to trust God, who loves us and who always does what is right and what is just. (Some more tent pegs!) But before reaching that point we should carefully study what has been revealed to us on this subject, and much has been revealed.

Here in a nutshell is our question when it comes to prophecy. God tells us that a certain event will occur at a certain time — how does God know that the event will occur? Does he know it because he can travel freely through time, and thus he can look forward at what we will do even before we do it, and, in a sense, God is just reporting the event to us? Or does God know that the event will occur because God is

going to cause it to occur? Either way we have a possible issue with free will — how do we have free will if what we will do and say and think is already known before we do or say or think it? And how do we have free will if God overrides that free will to cause certain events (such as Peter’s denial) to occur?

These are difficult questions, and we are not the only people grappling with them. The September 27, 2014, issue of *New Scientist* includes an article on page 11 entitled “A belief in free will is a tough one to shake.” It says that some believe that free will is incompatible with neuroscience. They argue that demonstrating the predictability of our brain should reveal the illusory nature of free will and lead people to reject it. That is, eventually science will be able to perfectly predict every action and every thought from a set of initial conditions — and then we will all know that free will is just an illusion. (This is all coming from the same scientists who can’t accurately predict whether it will rain tomorrow!)

Just from the Scriptures we have already looked at, we know that free will is no illusion. It is real, and we have it. But how can we reconcile our free will with the prophecy of God?

In Ecclesiastes 9:11, Solomon tells us that “time and chance happeneth to them all.” We know that Ecclesiastes was written from the perspective of one under the sun, and certainly from that perspective it does appear that time and chance happen to all. We move through time as we leave the past and enter the future. While we know partially what will happen in the future, most of it is unknown and unknowable to us. And as for chance, we live in a world dominated by possibilities rather than certainties. In fact, apart from death and taxes, cynics suggest there are no certainties.

In our study of prophecy, we need to explore the relation of time and chance, not to man, but to God. What is the relation of God to time? Does God experience anything by chance? As we think about this topic, we are quickly confronted with many questions.

**Proverbs 16:33** — *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

Does that verse mean that God knows the outcome of a coin flip before the flip? Or does it tell us that God determines the outcome of each coin flip so that it comes up a certain way? Does anything in the universe actually occur by chance, or is every event, no matter how seemingly minor, part of a preordained plan of God? Does God know our actions and thoughts before we do them or think them? If so, how long in advance does he know these things? Did he know them before we were even born? Did God know Adam and Eve would sin before he even created them? Was it a certainty or just a possibility? Is it even possible for God to experience a possibility rather than a certainty? Is it possible for God to create beings with free will and simultaneously know beforehand every action and every thought that those free will beings will ever experience?

And most importantly, what does the Bible tell us about free will and God's foreknowledge? Does the Bible ever depict God as changing his mind? Does God ever speak about the future in term of possibilities rather than certainties? Is God ever disappointed about how things turn out? Does God ever experience regret? Does God ever experience surprise? Does God ever have any new experiences? Does God ever risk anything? Can you even experience risk, regret, or surprise if you already know how everything will turn out?

As for Proverbs 16:33 ("The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD"), one commentator opens his discussion of that verse by flatly stating, "There is no such thing as chance." Really? Even though Ecclesiastes 9:11 tells us that time and chance happen to all? The lot that is referenced in Proverbs 16:33 was not part of a game of chance, but instead was used to predict the future. What that verse is telling us is that, although men may try to predict the future by casting lots, it is God who determines the future. They should look to God rather than to random chance. And that is a good message for us as we study these difficult issues.

How are we to go about answering these questions? To begin, we must confront the possibility that some of these questions may be unanswerable. If we have shown anything so far in this lesson, it is that coming up with difficult questions is easy. Coming up with answers takes more work! We dislike labeling any question unanswerable, but it may be that we are just not in a position to understand how God operates in relation to time.

A famous mathematics book is entitled *Flatland*, and it deals with creatures that inhabit a two-dimensional world having width and height, but no depth. In effect, they live on a sheet of paper. The book describes how such flat creatures would perceive creatures like ourselves who inhabit three spatial dimensions, and you quickly see how there would be some things about the three dimensional creatures that could never be explained to and understood by the two dimensional creatures.

Now, I am certainly not suggesting that God occupies extra spatial dimensions because we know that God is a spirit. But I am suggesting that we may be living in a *spiritual* flatland in which there are some things that can never be explained to us or understood by us, at least in this life. But not being able to understand *everything* does not mean we cannot understand *anything*. How can we attempt to answer these questions?

First, we could turn to **physics** to help us understand the relation between God and time.

Time, it has been said, is what keeps everything from happening at once. Is God wholly apart from time, or does God in some way experience time as he deals with mankind? We just studied about an angel who was delayed for three weeks. He experienced time, it would seem. We know from 2 Peter 3:8 that God does not experience time as we do, but does that mean God does not experience time at all? That verse suggests that God does experience time.

God reveals himself to us today in two ways — through his word and through his world. Our understanding of time and its relation to this physical universe has un-

dergone a revolution in the last century due to the work of Einstein and others. As they have investigated God's creation, they have helped us understand more about the nature of God. Isn't that exactly what Paul said would happen in Romans 1:20?

Second, we could turn to **philosophy**.

Many books have been written on the subject of time and its relation to God, and in fact I looked at several of them in preparing this lesson. This subject is deep, and there is no lack of material.

Finally, we could turn to the **Bible**, and (I hope, not surprisingly) that is the approach we will take here.

If we want to know more about God, then the first and best place to look for answers is in his word. And again, there is no lack of material. The Bible is full of descriptions about how God operates in this world. Whatever we conclude about the questions we listed earlier, if our conclusions about God do not match what we read about God in the Bible, then those conclusions are wrong — no matter how careful and logical we may think we have been.

A threshold question is whether any of this really matters, or is it merely of philosophical or academic interest? The short answer is that it matters very much. The issues we will consider in this lesson concern one of the most fundamental issues in all of religion — the question of God's relation to the world and the question of human freedom. If God knows all of our actions and thoughts in advance, then how can we be free? If God does not know all of our actions and thoughts in advance, then how can he be all-knowing? Our understanding of God has enormous practical significance. What we think of God and how we respond to him are closely related.

A wrong view on this issue can lead to fatalism and resignation. Why should we proclaim the gospel to people who are already predestined to be saved or lost? How can our actions have any effect on something that was predetermined long before any of us were born?



Christian fatalism is not merely an innocuous doctrinal interpretation. Fatalism is a paralyzing disease. It infects its victims with complacency and apathy that immobilize their will to resist evil while eroding their determination to accomplish the great work of Christ.

A wrong view on this issue can lead to Calvinism. Here are John Calvin's views on some of the issues we are considering:

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.

If ever there were an ungodly view of God, that is it — and yet that ungodly view is the predominate view in much of the denominational world.

But, wait, you say. What about Proverbs 16:4? “The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” Doesn't that verse tell us that God made evil people just to fuel the fires of hell? No, of course not. We know that can't be what that verse means because we know that it is not God's will that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). What Proverbs 16:4 means is what God tells us elsewhere (Romans 9-11 for example) — that God can use men's evil for his own good purposes. That is, even evil people can be useful to God in carrying out his plans to bless the world. And I think that verse is also a warning — for some of us, our only purpose in life may be to serve as a warning to others.

A wrong view on this issue can cause us (inadvertently for some but purposefully for others) to lay charges of evil against God. A classic argument goes like this: If God is willing to prevent evil but not able to do so then he is not all powerful. If God is not willing to prevent evil then he is not all good. Thus, God is either not all powerful or not all good. The classic response to that argument is the free will defense.

God's will is that his creatures have free will. God cannot create free will creatures who cannot choose to do evil because to do so would be to create free will creatures without free will — a logical impossibility. Thus, the choice is between having free will creatures along with the possibility of evil or not having free will creatures — and God chose the former.

The free will defense is, of course, rendered ineffective if we do not have free will. If our actions and thoughts were known by God long before we were even born — if in fact they were part of his eternal decree as Calvin describes it — then God is responsible for all the evil in this world.

When you read denominational commentaries, you often see the phrase “die-hard Calvinist.” These so-called die-hards are not afraid to walk down the road to which Calvinism logically leads. They are not afraid to affirm that evil is part of God's plan and part of his will. They are not afraid to affirm that God creates most people simply to fuel the fires of hell — and that he individually knows and individually wills that they fuel those fires long before they are born.

In truth, all Calvinism is die-hard Calvinism. Those Calvinists who criticize the die-hard group are simply seeking to avoid the logical conclusions to which all Calvinism leads. The die-hards despite their grave errors have at least the merit of logical consistency.

A wrong view on this issue can hinder our prayer life. If God does not change and indeed cannot change, then for what reason do we pray? Why ask God to move a mountain if that mountain was destined to remain or to move long before we were ever born? What good does it ask to pray that someone will hear and obey the gospel if that person was created simply to fuel the fires of hell?

What are these issues really all about? These issues are NOT about the omniscience of God. Everyone agrees on both sides of this argument that God is omniscient. We sometimes say that God knows everything, but what we should really say is that God knows everything that is knowable. If there are things that are not knowable,

then by definition God does not know them. Perhaps nothing is unknowable, but if anything is unknowable, then, by definition, God does not know that unknowable thing. So, if certain future events are not knowable prior to their occurrence, then it does not contradict the omniscience of God to say that God does not know those unknowable future events.

These issues really involve a debate about the nature of the future. Does the future consist only of settled events (called the closed view) or does the future include unsettled events (called the open view)?

We must in our study avoid two pitfalls. First, we must recognize the danger of presumption. We tend to exaggerate our ability to understand God. We often insist that God conform to our ideas about him and about his creation. The second pitfall is that we sometimes tend to exaggerate our *inability* to understand God. Some people would avoid this study altogether because they argue God is beyond all human thought. The first pitfall leads to anthropomorphism — the view that God is just a glorified human being. The second pitfall leads to agnosticism — the view that we cannot know anything at all about God with complete certainty.

One topic we will refer to several times is the concept of free will. We have already shown from the Bible that we have free will, but what is free will? How is it defined? At the very least, freedom involves the absence of external compulsion. But we cannot stop there. Freedom requires more than the absence of coercion. It also requires the presence of genuine alternatives. I am free to drive any car to work when I get up in the morning — but I have only one car! Thus, that choice has really already been made for me. But if I had two cars, then I would have freedom to choose which car to drive each morning. An act is free precisely to the extent that it renders definite something otherwise indefinite.

Do we have free will? We answered that question at the beginning of our study. Many verses throughout the Bible directly call for men to make personal decisions.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** — *I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

**Joshua 24:15** — *Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*

But do I have free will or do I just *think* I have free will? Did God creation humans with free will or did he create humans who think they have free will but who really do not? Is our free will just an illusion?

How can free will be an illusion when hell is not? We are help accountable for our decisions — how can that be the case if our free will is merely an illusion? Do we prosecute an actor for playing a criminal in a movie? How can God prosecute us if we are simply actors in a movie that he wrote long ago?

### **Two Viewpoints: The Closed View and the Open View**

The closed view of God or the closed view of the future says that the future consists exclusively of things that are settled. Under the closed view, the definiteness of every event — the fact that it will occur this way and not any other way — eternally precedes the actual occurrence of the event. The future contains no possibilities but rather only certainties. It may look to us like the future contains possibilities, but that is only because of our limited knowledge.

Under the closed view, God is unchanging in every respect. Not only his nature and his character, but also his will, his knowledge, and his experience are unchanging. They are what they are from all eternity, and thus God's knowledge of the future is unchanging — God can learn nothing new because to do so would mean that he had changed.

**Quick Question:** If God can never learn anything new, then why in Genesis 22:12 did the Angel of the Lord tell Abraham “for *now* I know that thou fearest God”? Did God know beforehand how Abraham would respond to that test? If so, why did his

Angel use the word “now”? (We will look at additional such examples later in this lesson.)

Under the closed view, whatever takes place in history, from events of great significance to the buzzing of a fly, must take place exactly as God eternally foreknew it would take place. Under this view, the reason we do not know the future is not that it cannot be known but rather because we are not in a position to witness it.

**Eugene Portalie:** In one unchangeable glance God contemplates every being, every truth, every possible real object. This knowledge is an eternal intuition before which the past and the future are as real as the present, but each for that portion of time in which it really exists. God encompasses all time and therefore can know the future as infallibly as he knows the present.

Our task is to determine whether that view of God coincides with how God is described in his word. I think what we will find is that the God of the Bible is not a being who experiences the whole of reality in the isolation of a single timeless perception. We will not find a God who is a detached observer. We will not find a God who is unmoved and unmovable by the course of human history. Instead, we will find a God who responds to events as they occur. We will find a God who sometimes rejoices, who sometimes sorrows, who is sometimes surprised, and who sometimes wishes things had turned out very differently from how they turned out.

Do any scriptures support the closed view of God? Many proponents point to the following passages:

**Isaiah 46:9-10** — *I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.*

**Isaiah 48:3-5** — *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass... I*

*have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee.*

**Psalms 139:16** — *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

They also point to the many examples of God's foreknowledge in the Bible.

- Josiah and Cyrus were described and even named prior to their births (1 Kings 13:2-3; 2 Kings 22:1; 23:15-16; Isaiah 44:28).
- Peter was told he would deny Christ three times, and was told how he would die (Matthew 26:34; John 21:18-19).
- Jesus knew from the first that Judas would betray him (John 6:64).
- Jeremiah and Paul were set apart prior to their births (Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15-16).

Daniel includes remarkable detailed prophecies in Daniel 11 about what would occur in the six hundred years between his time and the first century. And, of course, there are many other detailed prophecies in the Bible, including many about the life and death of Jesus and the establishment of his church.

But these verses are not sufficient to establish that the closed view is the correct view. If we reject the closed view that does not mean we believe that nothing in history is foreknown by God. The Bible very clearly teaches just the opposite — there are future events that we know with certainty will occur because God has told us so. The closed view, however, goes far beyond that. Under the closed view, not just *some* things but rather *everything* that happens is foreknown by God — and that proposition cannot be established by showing only that some things are foreknown by God.

The passage above from Isaiah 46 is a good example of the difference. Immediately after telling us in verse 10 that he declares the end from the beginning, God tells us that he will fulfill his intentions. God knows that certain things will occur because he knows his intention to bring those things about. Verse 11 is even more emphatic: “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.” What these verses tell us is something we already knew — the future is settled to whatever extent God decides to settle it.

# LESSON 34

Last week we continued our special lesson on prophecy, and specifically we considered the questions of how prophecy works and how prophecy is related to our free will. We discussed two views on the subject: the open view and the closed view.

Under the closed view, the future consists only of settled events as far as God is concerned. Everything, no matter how seemingly trivial, that has ever happened or will ever happen is part of an eternal decree by God that was made long before we were ever born. Every thought and every action that we will have during our life was known to God before we were born, and so God knew before we were born whether we would be saved or lost. Under this view, God is unchanging in every way — he cannot learn anything new, he cannot be surprised by anything, he cannot experience regret. The closed view is central to Calvinism.

Under the open view, the future consists of settled events and unsettled events. Future events are settled only to the extent that God has settled them. For example, Jesus will return someday to claim his own, and this world will end in a conflagration. Those future events are settled because God has settled them. God has told us they will occur, and God will cause them to occur. But that *some* future events are settled does not mean that *all* future events are settled. God has created us as free will creatures, and that means that many future events are unsettled. Many of our future free will decisions are, at present, unknowable, and thus God does not know them.

Why do I say that “many” of our future decisions are unknowable? Because we are very predictable, and especially to our Creator, who made us and knows us better than we know ourselves. Many future events are inevitable and certain effects of



preceding causes, and thus are predictable with absolute certainty. In such cases, God knows perfectly well what will happen, but God did not cause it and God is not directing it. For example, God can see a train that is going much too fast, and he can see the sharp turn in the track, so he knows with certainty that the train will come off the tracks — but that does not mean that God is driving that train. And yes, God could keep the train on the tracks — but not without violating the free will of the conductor. That the train will come off the tracks is an inevitable and certain effect of past causes.

God knows us much better than we know ourselves. We are constantly being told that much of what we do is controlled by our DNA — and God knows all there is to know about our DNA. God programmed our DNA. Human nature has not changed at all since the days of Adam. Can anyone read the Old Testament and then come away surprised when the first century Jews reject and kill Christ? Hadn't they done the same to the prophets? It was certain that Jesus would be crucified — that had been prophesied long ago. But those who crucified Jesus did so of their own free will (Acts 2:36 — “whom ye have crucified”).

There are actually two different closed views. Those who adopt the closed view disagree on how the future is eternally settled. Does God's foreknowledge determine the future, or does the future determine God's foreknowledge?

Augustine and Calvin argued that the future will occur in a certain way because God foreknows it that way. Under their view, history is a movie written and directed by God long ago — a movie that we are just now seeing even though it existed long before we were born.

Arminius argued that God foreknows the future a certain way because the future will simply be that way. Under this view, history is a movie directed by chance and God simply watched the movie before any of us did.

Both views are flawed, but the second option avoids the dreadful conclusion that God is responsible for every evil action that has ever occurred, and in fact that

those evil actions are part of his will and his plan for mankind. (And yes, there are many who teach and believe that!)

Fortunately, the open view avoids both of these extreme positions. Under the open view, God determines some but not all future events. If God foreknows a future event (and there are many such examples in the Bible), then it is either because he determined that he would cause that event to occur in a certain way or because that event is an inevitable and certain effect of past causes.

What is the origin of the closed view of the future? Those who adopt it would tell us it comes from the Bible, but I think a good argument can be made that it comes instead from Plato's idea of an unchanging, timeless reality — because it is that very concept that the closed view uses as its basis for understanding how God operates in this world. The closed view of God has far more in common with the “unmoved mover” of Aristotle than it does with the God of the Bible. An examination of its history uncovers roots in pagan Greek soil rather than in Hebrew soil.

The open view of God or the open view of the future says that the future consists of both unsettled possibilities and settled certainties. Under this view, if God does not know our future free actions, it is *not* because his knowledge of the future is in some way incomplete, but rather it is because there is nothing definite yet for God to know.

The central thesis of the open view is that God experiences the events of the world he created as they happen rather than all at once in some sort of timeless, eternal perception. Our future actions and thoughts are at present not knowable (albeit possibly very predictable). Otherwise, the idea of free will is meaningless. Otherwise, we are just acting out a script written long ago.

Under this open view, in Luke 5:22 (where we read, “but when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?”), Jesus knew their thoughts after they had them — but not before they had them (which, by the way, is what that verse says — he “perceived” them).

But what about prophecy? What about the plans of God foreordained before the world was established? One thing is clear, if God tells us that something will occur, then that thing will occur. All throughout the Bible, we see God working to accomplish his plans — and those plans will be accomplished perfectly.

A common view of prophecy is that God peers into the future from his exalted vantage point and provides us with a preview of coming events — but what that view neglects to notice is that, after the prophecy is made, God works to bring that prophecy about. God does not just sit back and watch it unfold — God unfolds it!

For example, you sometimes read commentaries that try to calculate the odds that someone would fulfill all of the prophecies about Jesus, and after calculating the astronomical odds, they conclude that Jesus must be the Messiah. How ridiculous! Jesus knew perfectly well the prophecies he was fulfilling. They were not just happening by chance. God was not just an observer watching the prophecies unfold, but rather God was actively involved in making them unfold.

The fundamental purpose of prophecy is to reveal the will of God as he declares his intentions to accomplish certain things and declares his intentions to act in a certain way.

**Isaiah 46:11** — *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

The Bible also contains many conditional prophecies that are designed to evoke a positive response in the present so that the undesired prophetic event may be avoided. Under the closed view there can never be a truly conditional prophecy because God must know at the time of the prophecy which path will be taken.

Under the closed view, for example, God knew that Ninevah would repent even before there was a Ninevah. But how then do we explain the final verse of Jonah where God says that he spared Ninevah — spared it from what? Under the closed view, Ninevah was never in any danger. Also, I agree with those who say that God knew Jonah would go to Ninevah — but God knew that because God was deter-

mined to make it happen, even if it meant having Jonah swallowed by a giant fish! Did Jonah have free will? Yes — how else can we explain his decision to go left when God told him to go right?

The difference between the past and the future is not that the past is wholly definite and the future is wholly indefinite. The difference is that whereas the past is entirely definite, the future is only partially definite. The future is to some extent open and to some extent closed. The closed part is definite and knowable; the open part is not. As for the closed part of the future, God, of course, knows all there is to know about it. He knows all that is knowable about the past and about the future.

As we proceed in our study, I believe we will find that God is repeatedly depicted in the Bible as facing a partially open future. What does the closed view have to say about such verses? It says that they are figurative and should not be taken as literal descriptions of God — and yet what is the basis for that conclusion? Where in the Bible do we get any indication that we cannot learn about the nature of God from reading about how God operates in this world? If we can learn about the nature of God from his creation, then wouldn't it follow that we can learn even more about his nature from his written word? Should we, as the closed view proponents seem to suggest, learn about God from Plato and Aristotle rather than from his word?

Finally, some have adopted a view under which God *could* know the future actions and thoughts of his free will creation, but instead chooses to remain ignorant of certain future events. This view must be rejected because it contradicts the omniscience of God. For God to be all-knowing, he must know all that is knowable, and any idea of selective divine ignorance would mean that God does not know all that is knowable, and thus that idea must be rejected.

What is our task? Our task is to determine which of these two views better agrees with what we read in the Bible about God and about the future. It will likely not come as a surprise that in my view the open view fits better with what we read in the Bible than does the closed view.

But how we can prove that the open view is the correct view? It is not that difficult. The closed view says that every future event is settled. The open view says that while some future events are settled, other are not. With the open view, the future consists of both settled events and unsettled events.

We know that some future events are settled. No one can believe the Bible and not agree that some future events are settled. The question is whether *all* future events are settled. If we can show that even one future event is not settled, then the open view is correct. To counter a view that says *all* future events are settled, all we need to do is show that at least one is not.

What does the Bible tell us about how God views and experiences the future?

**The Bible tells us that sometimes God regrets how things turn out.**

In Genesis 6:5-6, we see that God once regretted that he made man at all. Doesn't the fact that God regretted the way things turned out — to the point of starting over — suggest that it was not a foregone conclusion at the time of creation that man would fall into such a state of wickedness? And if so, then how could it have been a foregone conclusion that man would fall? Was the fall a certainty or a possibility or a likelihood? We know that God had a plan to deal with sin from before the foundation of the world, but does that mean the fall was certain to occur? if so, why the regret?

In 1 Samuel 13:13 and 1 Samuel 15:10-11, 35, we see where God regretted that he made Saul king. If God knew all that Saul would do and think long before Saul was born, then how could God experience regret over how Saul turned out? Common sense tells us that we can regret a decision we made only if the outcome of that decision was different from what we had expected or hoped it would be.

If God never wanted to experience regret and always wanted to have things turn out as he willed them, then he could have created programmed robots without free will, but that is not what God did. Instead, God created free will beings, and in doing so he necessarily gave up some control. How else can we explain the entry of

evil into the universe? We know that evil is not part of God's will — from whose will did it come?

If God experiences regret, then doesn't it follow that God sometimes takes a risk? Calvinists reject the notion that God ever takes a risk of any sort. After all, how could someone take a risk when all future events are determined and known to that person? And yet in our own experience doesn't risk often accompany love? We know from John 3:16 that God loves the entire world, but doesn't that love involve the risk that the world will not love him back? Don't we take risks, sometimes very great risks, for those we love?

Did God *risk* the moral harmony of the universe in creating man, or did he simply *sacrifice* it? In 2 Peter 3:9, we see that God does not want anyone to perish, but didn't his creation of free will human beings run the risk that many would perish? How can we read 2 Peter 3:9 and conclude that God always gets what he wants in dealing with mankind?

And isn't there another risk in John 3:16? Can we even imagine the risk that God took in sending his Son to die on our behalf — or was that act of love risk-free as the Calvinists must argue? We know that Jesus is God and that he did not sin, but he was tempted to sin. Were those *actual* temptations? How could they be otherwise if Jesus was tempted like as we? Was Jesus sinless because *he did not sin* or because *he could not sin*? If it was the latter, then we must conclude that the temptations were not actual temptations — and yet that is not at all what we see in the Gospel accounts of those temptations.

At the incarnation, God undertook the risk that his son would fail in his struggle with temptation. We can only speculate as to what the consequences of that possibility would have been. Perhaps they are literally unimaginable to us. But the genuineness of Christ's temptations strongly supports the reality of the risk of God.

**The Bible tells us that God sometimes asks questions about the future.**

In Numbers 14:11, God asks Moses, “how long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” In 1 Kings 22:20, God asks, “who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?” Some suggest that these questions are merely rhetorical, just as when God asked Adam and Eve where they were hiding in Genesis 3:8-9, and that is a possible interpretation but not a necessary interpretation. Under the open view, it is possible for God to genuinely wonder how things will turn out — as evidenced by numerous questions where he appears to do exactly that.

**The Bible tells us that God sometimes confronts the unexpected.**

In Isaiah 5:1-5, we read where God once planted a vineyard and was surprised to find that wild grapes had grown. In these verses God describes Israel as his vineyard. He explains in verse 2 that he expected his vineyard to yield grapes, but instead it yielded wild grapes. Because it did not turn out as God expected, verse 5 tells us that he decided to destroy the vineyard. Note that in verse 4 God asks “what more could I have been done?” and, in verse 2, God explicitly says that things did not turn out as he expected they would. Don’t those verses tell us that the sad state of Israel at that time was not a preordained certainty, but rather was a possibility that did not become a certainty until the free will decisions of Israel made it so?

And if the future is entirely in the mind of God in every respect, then wouldn’t it follow that God made a mistake if he expected things to occur other than how they did occur? If God knew the vineyard would yield wild grapes, then how could he expect it to do otherwise as he says in verse 2? How could he even hope it would do otherwise under those conditions?

The Bible tells us that men sometimes did things that had never even entered the mind of God.

**Jeremiah 19:5** — *They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto*

*Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind.*

**Jeremiah 7:31** — *And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.*

**Jeremiah 32:35** — *And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

How are we to interpret these verses? Are they simply idioms or did the depths of man's depravity in murdering their own children truly not even enter God's mind when he made mankind? Was infanticide a free will decision that God expected us to make? Don't we see shock and surprise here on the part of God at what men would do? Yes, they had free will, but not even God thought they would choose to murder their own children. (Perhaps that is why there are so few verses in the Bible dealing directly with abortion.)

Do we prefer a God who is shocked at evil or a God who ultimately wills that evil will occur as a necessary part of his plan? Which God do we see in the Bible?

**The Bible tells us that God sometimes gets angry and even seems to be frustrated.**

In Exodus 4:10-15, Moses tells God that he cannot go to Egypt and do what God wants because he is slow of speech. Finally, in verse 14, we see where the anger of God was kindled against Moses. Did God know beforehand how Moses would respond? If so, wouldn't the anger have also occurred beforehand?



In Ezekiel 22:30-31, we read where God sought for a man to stand in the gap, and yet he could find no such person. Could God have sincerely sought for someone to stand in the gap if he knew all along that none would be found?

**The Bible tells us that God sometimes speaks in terms of what may be or may not be.**

In Exodus 4:1-9, God told Moses that the Israelites *might* listen to him. Notice in verses 8 and 9 that God twice says “**IF** they will not believe.” Under the closed view of the future, shouldn’t God have said “**WHEN** they will not believe”?

Those verses show us exactly how God operates in determining the course of the future. God was perfectly certain in the final outcome (that the elders of Israel would listen to Moses) even though in achieving that outcome he was working with free agents who were to some extent unpredictable. The only uncertainty was what would be required to convince them; that they would ultimately be convinced was not uncertain at all. It was certain because God knew beforehand that he would accomplish it.

What we see here is a God who is as creative and resourceful as he is wise and powerful and loving. God’s plans are accomplished because God accomplishes them. God is active in this world, and he expects us to be active as well.

**The Bible sometimes shows God speaking of the future in conditional terms.**

In Exodus 13:17, God chose a certain route for the exodus because of what the Israelites might have done otherwise — “Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” Don’t we see there God considering the possibility — but not the certainty — that the Israelites would change their minds if they faced battle?

In Ezekiel 12:3, God tells Ezekiel, “it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house,” and in Jeremiah 26:3, God says, “if so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.” When God gave Jeremiah and

Ezekiel their assignments, doesn't it seem from these verses that there was at least a possibility that the people would heed their warnings? If not, then how do we explain these statements by God to the contrary?

**The Bible tells us that God does not want anyone to perish — and yet many will do just that.**

In 2 Peter 3:9 we see that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” In 1 Timothy 2:4 we see that God's will is that all men would be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Why does God continue to strive with people, trying to get them to believe, if their eternal fate has been known from before the dawn of time? Why, as Paul says in Romans 10:21, does God ever say “all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” Why is he stretching forth his hands to people he has predestined for hell?

The Bible also tells us in Exodus 32:33 and Revelation 3:5 that some will have their names blotted out of the book of life. How can the book of life ever be changed if the closed view of the future is the correct view. Under the Calvinists' view, the Book of Life is written in indelible ink — and the names were written in that book long before anyone was ever born!

**The Bible tells us that God sometimes changes his mind.**

Don't we see the possibility of God changing his mind in Genesis 18 as Abraham bargains with God over the people of Sodom? Yes, God already knew how many righteous people were living there, so God knew it would be destroyed even if only ten righteous people were enough for it to be spared — but how does Genesis 18 make any sense at all if God could never change his mind? Why didn't God just tell Abraham, “I change not, so don't ask me to change!”

But what, you ask, about those verses that say just that? What about those verses that say God does not or perhaps cannot change his mind?

**1 Samuel 15:29** — *For he is not a man, that he should repent.*

**Numbers 23:19** — *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good.*

**Malachi 3:6** — *For I am the LORD, I change not.*

And we could add:

**Hebrews 13:8** — *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

When read in context, these verses pose no problem for the open view. We already know that the character and nature of God are unchanging. But that does not mean that God is a like a photograph that will forever remain fixed in time and unchanged. That is not the description of God we see in his word.

As for that verse from 1 Samuel 15, the immediate context shows God regretting that he had ever made Saul king at all. Samuel had prayed all night trying to change God's mind about Saul's dethronement, which indicates that Samuel at least felt that God might change his mind. But when the morning came, Samuel came to the conclusion that God would not change his mind — not that God *could* not change his mind, but that he *would* not. Unlike men, God cannot be cajoled into changing his mind for any reasons other than those consistent with his unchanging character. God in Ezekiel 24:14 and Zechariah 8:14 says that he will not change his mind. Doesn't the need for God to make this statement suggest that he *could* change his mind? The verse from Numbers 23 regarding Balak and Balaam has a similar explanation. The point is not that God is unable to change his mind but rather that God is totally unlike man. Unlike men, God does not lie when it's profitable or change his mind for the sake of convenience — both of which were common for the false prophets who spoke on behalf of false gods.

Finally, Hebrews 13 does tell us that Jesus does not change — but how are we to understand that verse when we see Jesus changing throughout his life here on earth as he grew from a child to a man and as we read of his changing roles as he ascends back to heaven, now reigns over his kingdom, and one day will deliver that kingdom to God? What never changes about Jesus and what can never change about Jesus is his holy and divine character. We can trust him because we know that his word to us and his love for us are unchanging. We can rely on him because we know his character and his nature will never change.

Jeremiah 18:1-12 is a remarkable commentary on the issues we have been considering here today. In these verses we read where Israel had heard that God was planning on punishing them for their wickedness, and they had then wrongly assumed there was no hope (verse 12 — “there is no hope”). If God has said he would punish them, then they reasoned there was nothing they could do about it — so why not continue in their wickedness? To correct that false fatalistic thinking, God told Jeremiah to go to a potter’s house to watch a potter at work.

**Verse 4** — *And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.*

**Verse 6** — *O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*

**Verses 7-10** — *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not*

*my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

Paul picks up this same analogy in Romans:

**Romans 9:21-23** — *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.*

Calvinists read those verses to say that God exercises unilateral control over us, but that is exactly the *opposite* of what is being said in Jeremiah 18 and Romans 9. As the potter is willing to revise his plans once his first plan is spoiled, so God is willing to revise his plan when the circumstances call for it.

There are certainties in the future. It was certain that Christ would come and die; it was certain that his church would be established; it is certain that this world will someday end with judgment. But that there are certainties in the future about which God will never change his plans does not mean that every future event falls into that category. God is the potter; we are the clay. And God is willing to continue working with us until we become what he wants us to become.

In 2 Kings 20:1-6, God told Hezekiah that he would not recover from his illness but that he would instead die. Hezekiah pleaded with God, and God changed his mind and added fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. Jeremiah in Jeremiah 26:19 later encouraged the fatalistic Israelites by reminding them of this very event. If God cannot change his mind, then how do we explain this reversal? Was God not sincere when he told Hezekiah in verse 1 that he would die soon ("set thine house in order; for thou shalt die")? And if God always knew that Hezekiah would live another fifteen

years, then how could he tell Isaiah in verse 6 that he would **ADD** fifteen years to his life? There are many other examples:

**1 Chronicles 21:15** — *And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand.*

**Exodus 32:14** — *And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.*

**Deuteronomy 9:13-14** — *Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.*

**1 Samuel 2:30-31** — *Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.*

**Jeremiah 26:2-3** — *Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.*

**Jonah 3:10** — *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

And there are other examples. Ezekiel 4:9-15 shows God changing his mind with regard to a source of fuel in response to a request from Ezekiel. Amos 7:1-6 shows God changing his mind with regard to judgments against Israel in response to a request from Amos.

### **How do we explain prayer under the closed view of the future?**

If every outcome is already recorded somewhere, then what good does it do to pray for some specific outcome? If the outcome is known to God before we pray for it to occur otherwise, then how could God ever be said to answer our prayer one way or the other? How could our prayer change anything in such a situation?

Under the closed view, wouldn't our prayers be like someone watching a Shakespearean tragedy written four centuries ago and praying to God that it will have a happy ending even though that ending had already been determined long ago? Does it make any sense for us to pray that Hamlet will live? Is that how prayer is described in the Bible?

The Bible tells us that God sometimes reverses his planned course of action based on prayer. In Exodus 32:11-14, Moses besought the Lord regarding a planned punishment, and in verse 14 we read, "and the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

### **Conclusion**

We have looked at two views regarding God and his relation to the future — the closed view and the open view.

I have tried to make the case that the open view is more consistent with the descriptions of God we find in his word. In addition, the closed view has consequences regarding free will and predestination that are contrary to the word of

God. These are very difficult issues, and I encourage you not to stop here, but rather to search the Scriptures to see for yourself how God is described with regard to time and chance.



# LESSON 35

## Questions about Prophecy

**Question #1: Is there an example in the Bible where God made a conditional prophecy when God already knew the condition would not be fulfilled at the time of the promise?**

Yes, and it concerns an event we talked about last week. Samuel told Saul about what appears to have been an earlier promise to establish Saul's kingdom forever if Saul would keep the commandments of God.

**1 Samuel 13:13** — *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.*

And yet God must have known that Saul would not keep his commandments, and thus that his kingdom would not be established forever. How do we know that? Because Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and God had already told Jacob that the scepter would not depart from Judah.

**Genesis 49:10** — *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

Saul had to be removed so that King David, of the tribe of Judah, could become king.

**Question #2: What about Psalm 139:4?**

*For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.*

This verse supports rather than opposes the view that our free will decisions are unknowable in advance. This verse is similar to the one we studied last week in which Jesus perceived the thoughts of those around him (Luke 5:22). Words don't originate on our tongues; they originate in our heads. And God knows them as soon as they are knowable. He knows the word as soon as we think it, unlike humans, who know the word only after we speak it. Psalm 139 tells us that God knows everything that is knowable about us — from the thoughts we have at the moment we have them to the smallest details of our DNA — God knows it all.

**Question #3: What about Acts 17:26?**

*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*

This verse fits very well with Daniel 11. Three times in this one chapter we will read about a time appointed by God. The point in Daniel 11 and in Acts 17 is the same — the timing of God's actions is determined by God. He created man at a specific time, he caused events to occur at specific times as part of his plan to bless the world through Christ, and he brought Jesus into this world at a specific time.

**Galatians 4:4-5** — *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Daniel 11 is a great example of how God determined the times before appointed, as Acts 17:26 mentions. Does God do that with every event that ever has occurred or ever will occur? I think the verses we looked at last week show that he does not. Does God do that with those events he tells us will occur and those future events that are settled because God has settled them? Absolutely. When God tells us that

something will happen — that thing will happen, either because God makes it happen or because it is an inevitable and certain outcome of past causes.

## DANIEL 11 INTRODUCTION

As I have said several times, we have to admit right from the start that Daniel 11 is an unusual chapter, but we should not overstate the case on that point. Here is an example of one commentator who did just that:

If this chapter were indeed the utterance of a prophet in the Babylonian Exile, nearly four hundred years before the events—events of which many are of small comparative importance in the world’s history—which are here so enigmatically and yet so minutely depicted, the revelation would be the most unique and perplexing in the whole Scriptures. It would represent a sudden and total departure from every method of God’s providence and of God’s manifestation of His will to the mind of the prophets. It would stand absolutely and abnormally alone as an abandonment of the limitations of all else which has ever been foretold.

That view of Daniel 11 is completely wrong. Yes, Daniel 11 is unusual, but, no, Daniel 11 is not out of place. The first verse of Hebrews tells us that “God ... at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” So even if Daniel 11 were unique in Scripture, that would prove nothing. But Daniel 11 is not unique in the Bible — we see very detailed prophecies elsewhere in the Bible. Here is how one commentator described just one example:

The prophecy concerning the conquest of Babylon, Jeremiah 50 and 51, offers such exact details that history scarcely can present anything more minute—the city is to captured by the Medes and the

peoples allied with them—to be exact, by the strategy of laying bare of the bed of the Euphrates River (50:38; 51:32, 36)—during the course of a night where all within the city lie sodden with drink (51:39, 57)—the return of the Israelites to their fatherland shall come as a result of the conquest of the city—the conquest of this city marks the beginning of the utter desolation and the virtual disappearance of it.

We could also add Zechariah 9 about Alexander the Great, and Isaiah 13, Isaiah 14, and Isaiah 21.

The liberal critics' view of Daniel 11 is just another example of how you can't win with them no matter what you do. If Daniel 11 had been some general statement that wars would come somewhere sometime, then the liberals would have complained that such general language is not really a prophecy. But when Daniel 11 does just the opposite by providing very detailed descriptions of future events and wars, the liberals likewise complain that such detailed prophecies are not really prophecies. Apparently just like Goldilocks they are waiting for prophecies that are just right!

### **Why do we have Daniel 11?**

What is the point of Daniel 11? Why did God give us such a detailed glimpse of the history between Daniel's day and the first century? And why do those details include big events (such as a famous battle) as well as seemingly minor events by comparison (such as a divorce or a tax collector)?

To answer that question, all we need to do is ask another question — what is the theme of this book? What key theme have we seen chapter after chapter and event after event in this book? GOD IS IN CHARGE! Yes, we have free will, but we are not God. There is one God, and he is in charge. And nowhere was that more evident than when it came to God's eternal kingdom and the coming of his Son into this world to usher in that eternal kingdom. No detail was too small when it came to making sure that everything was perfect for Jesus' entrance into this world and for

the subsequent spread of the gospel by which God would bless the entire world. That is the message of Daniel 11. That is why we have Daniel 11.

So, yes, we need to work our way through Daniel 11 verse by verse, examining each and every detail. But we also need to make sure we stand back and get the big picture message of Daniel 11 because it is that big picture message that would have been important to Daniel, who received these remarkable prophecies before they were fulfilled, unlike those today who study them after their fulfillment.

But were all of these detailed events necessary for God to bring about his plans to bless the world through Christ in the first century? That we can't see why a particular detail was important or necessary does not mean that it was not important or necessary. I am reminded of all the intricate details given in the old law about the tabernacle and the priestly vestments and activities. For some of them, we might have trouble explaining why this detail or that detail was so important. The short answer, of course, is that it was important because God commanded it. But the book of Hebrews gives us a longer answer.

**Hebrews 8:5** — *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the pattern was a shadow of heavenly things; that is, Moses was copying a heavenly reality that he could not see. We have already seen in this book of Daniel a spiritual war that is related to the activities on earth. Perhaps these details are likewise related to a spiritual reality that we cannot see.

As one commentator noted, there may be another reason why we see so many details (some seemingly minor) in this prophecy:

There is another deeper reason why such details as these are worthy of the work of the Spirit of prophecy, and that is that what is foretold

here is in reality, with minor variations, the pattern into which all history falls. Is there not an appalling sameness about this business of leagues and pacts between rival nations, of disagreements, of wars, of alliances, of political marriages, of recriminations, of treachery, of temporary ascendancy, of defeat and utter downfall, of recovery through some aggressive leader; and then the same thing all over again with a slightly different sequence of events? From this point of view there is a drab sameness about history which allows us to say that, in addition to being a prophecy of a particular period of Syrian and Egyptian history, this may be regarded as a panoramic view of all history in a picture that is idealized, at least to some extent.

So were all of these events in Daniel 11 preordained before the creation of the world as part of an eternal decree of God so that God here is just reporting to us what will happen — or instead is God telling us what he is going to cause to happen as this history unfolds? For all of the reasons we just discussed in our special lesson on prophecy, I favor the latter view.

If God wants to show us that he is the one in charge, what makes more sense? That God will just report history to us from the vantage point of a passive observer who is just in a position to see more than we can — or that God will tell us what he will do before the fact and that we can then see God actively doing those things? Which of those two options better establishes that God is in charge? I think we have already shown which of those two options better fits with what we read about God in his word. Remember what we read in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 46:11** — *Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

That one verse may be the best description in the Bible about how prophecy works.

## CHAPTER 11

The focus of this vision is the history of the Jews in the latter days, where the latter days refers to the end of the Jewish age, which occurred with finality in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The focus in Daniel 11 is not the end of the world, and likewise the focus is not the many other nations that are mentioned. These other nations are important only with regard to how they are involved with the Jews.

Throughout Daniel 11 we will repeatedly see the king of the north and the king of the south. The names of the kings will differ, but for the most part north is Syria (and later, Rome) and south is Egypt — with the people of God sandwiched in between these two warring sides. The focus is not on the two sides of the vice but is rather on what is inside the vice, which in this case is Israel.

Finally, as we will see, the prophecies in this chapter are some of the most detailed found anywhere in the Bible. Further, they were given to Daniel hundreds of years before they came to pass. (The extreme level of detail, along with another issue we will discuss when we get to verse 36, is what has caused the liberals to conclude that this book must have been written after the fact.)

Today's handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) gives a very high level overview of the historical events we will discuss in Daniel 11. I prepared this handout about twenty years ago when I first taught Daniel, and it uses the RSV. I will instead be reading the KJV, as usual, but occasionally I will quote the ESV when it has a better translation. (If you think using three different translations is confusing, wait until you find out that most of the kings in this chapter have the same name — either Antiochus or Ptolemy!)

**Daniel 11:1**

**1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.**

This verse really belongs at the end of Chapter 10. The angel, still speaking, tells Daniel that he stood up and helped Michael in his struggle with Persia.

Chapter 10 tells us that Satan was actively seeking to destroy the Jews so that God's plan could not proceed. How can God succeed if Satan destroys the people of God or causes them to turn from God? Do we think Satan's game plan has changed? Do we think he is any less interested in destroying us than he was in destroying the Jews?

About 50 years after this vision, during the reign of Xerxes, Haman received permission to kill all of the Jews. As we recall, his plans were thwarted by Queen Esther. Much later, Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to exterminate the Jewish culture and religion. We looked earlier at the outcome of that attempt. In each case, we can only speculate about the spiritual battles that were occurring behind the scenes, as we saw in Daniel 10:13.

**Daniel 11:2**

**2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by**



**his strength through his riches he shall stir up all  
against the realm of Grecia.**

Cyrus was on the throne when this vision was received. The three kings that followed Cyrus were Cambyses (Cyrus' elder son, who began to reign in 529 BC), Gaumata or Pseudo-Smerdis (the impostor who passed himself off as Cyrus' younger son, Smerdis, and who came to the throne in 522 BC), and Darius I Hystaspis or Darius the Persian (the son of Hystaspes and cousin of Cyrus who killed the impostor and took the throne in 521 BC). The fourth king after Cyrus was Xerxes (Darius' son) who reigned from 485 to 464 BC. This king is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther, and Esther 1:4 talks about the "riches of his glorious kingdom."

Xerxes invaded Greece with a huge army that he spent four years gathering, and he was very successful until his navy was defeated by a united Greek fleet at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. He retreated to Asia, and his remaining forces in Greece were completely defeated the next year at the Battle of Plataea. One text has noted:

A number of historians believe that a Persian victory would have hamstrung the development of Ancient Greece, and by extension western civilization, and this has led them to claim that Salamis is one of the most significant battles in human history.

The mighty Persians were defeated by a much smaller Greek force. Who could have foreseen such a thing? God told Daniel about it long before it happened, and we know the importance of the Greek culture and language to the plan of God. All that remained was to add Roman peace to Greek culture — and we will see that happen before we get to the end of this chapter.

Nothing is said here about the outcome of the conflict with Greece, but verse 3 will start talking about the Greeks — so it is not hard to figure out that Xerxes would not do very well!

**Daniel 11:3**

**3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.**

In moving from verse 2 to verse 3, we skip over six Persian kings and 134 years. Note that this skip occurs without any warning. We will need to be very alert so that we will notice such jumps should they occur again. Notice also that the nation of interest has changed from Persia to Greece.

There wasn't much to say about Persia after the defeat of Xerxes, and on that point the book of Daniel and historians are in agreement. After Xerxes, "the Persian glory went on the decline so rapidly that hardly one of the remaining kings is worthy of notice." Persia was politically dead after Xerxes was defeated by the Greeks in the battle of Salamis.

This jump in time is a reminder to us that when God judges a nation, he moves on to other nations, and while that earlier nation may linger on for awhile, its future has been determined, and as far as God is concerned it has already come to an end. That fact should be a sobering reminder to all modern day nations, and particularly to one that has been greatly blessed by God but that has cast God's word away.

The mighty king in verse 3 is Alexander the Great who defeated the Persians in 331 BC. The Hebrew literally reads "a king, a hero." He died in 323 BC at the age of 33. The phrase "shall stand up" in verse 3 emphasizes the brevity of his reign. Alexander was known for not listening to the advice of others, but rather he did according to his own will as verse 3 tells us.

**Daniel 11:4**

**4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.**

Verse 4 literally begins, “while he is still rising.” That is, Alexander is just standing up when he is broken, again emphasizing his early death. And it also tells us that Alexander had not weakened or lost power when he died, but instead he died at the height of his power.

Alexander’s kingdom did not go to his posterity, which included his Persian princess wife Roxana and their son, Alexander IV who was murdered in 310 BC. Alexander IV’s illegitimate mentally challenged brother had already been killed in 317 BC. Thus (as Daniel prophesied), there were no blood descendants of Alexander.

Instead, Alexander’s kingdom was divided into four pieces among his four generals: Lysimachus, Antipater (and his son Cassander), Seleucus I Nicator, and Ptolemy I Soter. One commentary noted:

Even after the events have taken place, it is hardly possible to give a more accurate description of what actually happened to this greatest of all the empires up to that time.

**Daniel 11:5**

**5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.**

The king of the south is Ptolemy I Soter whose ambitions extended far beyond Egypt to include Palestine and the rest of Asia. For most of their history, however, the domain of the Ptolemies was restricted to Egypt and Cyprus.

The prince who would be stronger than the king was Seleucus I Nicator of the Seleucid Empire, who defected to Ptolemy after the Battle of Antigonus.

A better translation of verse 5 is: "Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he." But some then object to the identification of Seleucus (one of Alexander's generals) as one of the princes of Ptolemy. But that description is certainly correct from the Egyptian point of view after Seleucus had fled there for protection. He later returned to Babylon and became king under Ptolemy's sponsorship. His empire and authority stretched from India to Phoenicia, and thus his dominion was much greater than that of Ptolemy.

**Daniel 11:6**

**6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make**

**an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.**

In moving from verse 5 to verse 6, we skip over about 60 years. And while new kings come to the throne, they are still called the king of the north and the king of the south in this chapter. The phrase “in the end of the years” just means “at the end of some number of years” or “after some years.”

After the death of Ptolemy I in 285 BC, his son Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) continued the contest with the Seleucids until 252 BC when a peace treaty was made with Antiochus II Theos. This treaty is the joining together in verse 6. Under this treaty, Antiochus II was to marry Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II.

One slight problem with the plan was that Antiochus II was already married to a very influential woman named Laodice, so she was divorced and banished. When Ptolemy died two years later, Antiochus abandoned his Egyptian wife and took back Laodice. Not being one much inclined to forgive and forget, Laodice arranged to have the king assassinated. She also had Berenice and her infant son murdered. Afterward, Laodice took control as queen regent for her own young son, Seleucus II (Callinicus).

Some object to the inclusion of “he that begat her” (Berenice’s father, Ptolemy) in the list of those who are given up in verse 6. The phrase “given up” however does not necessarily mean killed (although that is what happened to most of the people given up in verse 6). Being given up can also include just being unsuccessful, which is certainly true of Ptolemy, who had died and whose plans for unity using his daughter had ended in a complete failure.

**Daniel 11:7-9**

**7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. 9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.**

After Ptolemy II, his son, Ptolemy III (Euergetes) came to power and marched off to avenge his sister's death. He is the "branch from her (Berenice's) roots" in verse 7.

The king of the north is Seleucus II Callinicus, the son of Laodice. Ptolemy III captured the capital city of Antioch and returned to Egypt laden with spoil. This spoil included long-lost idols that had been taken by Cambyses in 524 BC. Their return (along with vast wealth that he also brought back) made Ptolemy III very popular with the native Egyptian populace, who named him Euergetes meaning benefactor. (At the time, the Ptolemies were not yet numbered. The Greeks distinguished them by these nicknames.)

Verse 8 is unusual because it mentions Egypt by name rather than referring to Egypt as the king of the south. Why isn't Syria ever mentioned by name in Daniel 11? Because Syria had not yet been formed when Daniel was written.

Syria had suffered a defeat, but verse 9 lets us know it was not permanent. Verse 9 is better translated, "Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land." The "latter" refers to the king of the north mentioned at the end of verse 8.

This latter king in verse 9 is the Syrian king Seleucus II Callinicus who reigned from 247 to 226 BC. It is known that he did conduct an expedition against Egypt, though without much success. Ptolemy III made a peace treaty with Seleucus II in 240 BC.

# LESSON 36

The lower image on the handout for today's lesson (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)) shows a tomb that is presently being excavated in Greece. Just this week it was announced that bones have been found in the tomb. Whose bones are they? It may be Alexander the Great, or Roxana, or perhaps one of his generals. It is someone of great importance from that era, and almost certainly the bones of someone we are reading about in Daniel 11. Alexander died in Babylon, but no one knows where he was buried.

When we ended last week, Seleucus II Callinicus was the king of the north, and Ptolemy III Eurgetes was king of the south.

## **Daniel 11:10**

**10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.**

Seleucus II Callinicus (the "his" in verse 10) died in 226 BC and was succeeded by his son Seleucus III Soter, who reigned for only three years and was succeeded by his brother Antiochus III (the Great). Seleucus III and Antiochus III are the "sons" in verse 10, with Antiochus being the "one" who "shall certainly come."



Antiochus conquered the Egyptians at Sidon and swept down through Palestine. He penetrated far enough south to attack Gaza, which is the fortress mentioned at the end of verse 10.

### **Daniel 11:11-12**

**11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.**

The king of the south in verse 11 is Ptolemy IV Philopater, and the king of the north is still Antiochus the Great.

Ptolemy gathered a large force to defeat the even larger forces of Antiochus the Great at the Battle of Raphia in 217 BC. Ptolemy IV got back all of the territory of Phoenicia and Palestine, but his success did not last very long. After he died, his four year old son Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) came to power and Antiochus saw his chance to invade Egypt.

The Rosetta Stone, which finally allowed modern scholars to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics, was found in 1799 built into an old wall that was being demolished by the French near a village they called Rosetta. Located now in the British Muse-

um, it contains a decree given by Ptolemy V written in three languages: Greek, Egyptian Demotic, and Egyptian hieroglyphics.

### **Daniel 11:13**

**13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.**

In 202 BC, Antiochus the Great (the king of the north in verse 13) showed why he was called “great.” He raised another army and invaded Phoenicia and Palestine, marching all the way to Gaza, which fell in 201 BC.

### **Daniel 11:14**

**14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.**

The king of the south here is Ptolemy V. The ESV translation is better: “and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision.” That is, the robbers or the violent are from among Daniel’s own people rather than from Daniel’s people as the KJV states. These “robbers” are the pro-Seleucid Jews who rebelled against the Ptolemies. The vision they were establishing in verse 14 by

doing this was the very vision that Daniel was now receiving! They were led by Tobias.

We see from this one incident how intimately the fortunes of the Jews were intertwined with those of these two warring nations, and how soon the Jews could become deeply involved in trouble.

The Egyptians, led by General Scopas, punished the Jewish rebels severely until his own defeat by Antiochus the Great at the Battle of Panium in 200 BC. He then retreated to Sidon off the Phoenician coast.

### **Daniel 11:15-16**

**15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.**

The king of the north (still Antiochus the Great) moved against Sidon, and Scopas finally surrendered. At this time, Palestine (the glorious land) became a permanent part of Antiochus' domain.

When Antiochus entered Jerusalem in 198 BC he was welcomed as a deliverer and benefactor. "He released Jerusalem from all taxes for three years, and afterwards from one-third of the taxes. He also sent a large sum of money for the service of the

Temple, and released the elders, priests, scribes, and singing men from all taxes for the future.”

The final phrase in verse 16 (“by his hand shall be consumed”) is better translated “with destruction in his hand,” which is likely just an idiom for one who has complete control over something. That was certainly true of Antiochus when it came to Palestine — it was his to do with as he pleased. Initially, he treated them kindly, but that would change very soon with the kingdom of the north.

### **Daniel 11:17**

**17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.**

The beginning of verse 17 is better translated, “He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them.” That is, Antiochus had plans to once again invade Egypt, but the text does not say that he did that. Instead, he tried to get his way through an agreement, which in this case was a marriage agreement.

Antiochus the Great’s plan was to place the ten year old king Ptolemy V under the influence of Antiochus’ daughter Cleopatra I. (The “Elizabeth Taylor” Cleopatra from the movie was Cleopatra VII. We will meet her later.) He knew that their son would be legal heir to both thrones and would give him a good excuse to interfere in Egypt without having to invade it.

But when the marriage finally did take place a few years later, Cleopatra became completely sympathetic to Ptolemy V and his kingdom, which greatly disappointed her father. Thus, their son, Ptolemy VI Philometor, gave no advantage to Antiochus III. When Ptolemy V died, Cleopatra I became queen of Egypt. Her death years later put an end to any possibility of Seleucid influence in Egyptian affairs.

### **Daniel 11:18**

**18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.**

Soon after his victory over Scopas at Sidon, Antiochus the Great moved against a new front, Pergamum and the Aegean coastline island of Rhodes. The Rhodians appealed to Rome for help.

Meanwhile, Hannibal (who had been exiled by the Romans) joined forces with Antiochus III as a military advisor. The Romans were not happy that he had given asylum to their enemy and had invaded territory over which Rome exercised some control.

The Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus the Great in 190 BC at Magnesium. (This same general had defeated Hannibal in 202 BC.)

Verse 18 is better translated “but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him.” Antiochus was humiliated by the Romans. He lost most of his land and his army. His son Antiochus IV Epiphanes was taken back to Rome as a hostage. (This Antiochus is the one we studied about

earlier.) Antiochus was later exchanged for his nephew Demetrius I Soter (the son and heir of Seleucus), which in fact led to Antiochus coming to power when the heir was a hostage.

### **Daniel 11:19**

**19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.**

Antiochus the Great did not end in greatness. He died the next year while pillaging a temple of Bel in Elymais in an attempt to raise money to pay the Romans. The local inhabitants stormed his forces and managed to kill him and defend their temple.

### **Daniel 11:20**

**20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.**

Antiochus the Great was succeeded by his oldest son, Seleucus IV (Philopator). The “raiser of taxes” he sent out in verse 20 was Heliodorus.

Heliodorus was sent to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which a Jewish spy had said contained enough treasure to meet all of the Roman demands. Heliodorus did not

rob the temple, but instead went back and eventually poisoned the king, who thus did not die due to battle or mob action as his father had.

According to Second Maccabbes, the high priest Onias prayed to God, who then sent a horseman assisted by two young men to drive Heliodorus out of the temple. This scene is the subject of a famous fresco by Raphael in the Vatican, which I saw on my recent visit to Rome (but you had to be a bit of a “Daniel geek” to know what you were looking at!).

### **Daniel 11:21**

**21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.**

Verses 21–35 are devoted to the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whom we first met in Chapter 8. As we recall, he did his best to completely wipe out the Jewish religion and culture by persecuting the Jews and forcing them to adopt Greek culture. It may seem as if this chapter spends a disproportionate amount of time on him, but not when we recall what we have already learned about him. He is a focus of this book, as Domitian would later be a focus of Revelation. It is at least partially for the sake of this section that the preceding events of this chapter were revealed. They explain how we end up with Antiochus Epiphanes in verse 21.

He is the “vile person” in verse 21 to whom “the honor of the kingdom” has not been given. In fact, Demetrius I Soter, the son of Seleucus IV, was next in line for the crown. He, however, was being held hostage in Rome, so the crown went to his uncle, Antiochus IV Epiphanes instead. (Antiochus was able to set aside Demetrius’

claims to the throne, but Demetrius later led a Roman army against Antiochus' son, Antiochus V Eupator.)

“Epiphanes” mean illustrious, very evident, or manifest. On coins, he linked the name with “theos,” thus taking the title “God Manifest.” Many of his enemies sarcastically referred to him instead as “Epinanes,” which means “madman.”

### **Daniel 11:22-24**

**22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.**

Verses 22-24 bring us back to the continuing struggle between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. It was Epiphanes' standard ploy to first offer friendship and then wait for an opportunity to launch a surprise attack. That is what we see in verse 23: “and after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully.”



These verses are most likely describing Antiochus' Egyptian incursion. While he was in Egypt, he espoused the cause of Ptolemy Philometor, his nephew, over against that of Ptolemy Euergetes, his other nephew, all the while pretending that it was only his nephew's interests that he had at heart. Some historians are of the opinion that Antiochus even had himself crowned king of Egypt at Memphis on one of his expeditions.

Ptolemy VI Philometer launched an invasion against Antiochus, which at first was successful but eventually led to his capture. The Egyptians gave up on him and placed his brother Ptolemy Physcon on the throne. Antiochus placed Ptolemy VI back on the throne by force, this time as his ally backed up by a treaty of friendship and alliance.

Ptolemy Physcon is also known as Ptolemy VIII or Euergetes II. His nickname Physcon means "fat paunch." I am not sure which is worse: being deposed from the throne of Egypt by your brother or going through history with the nickname "fat paunch." Both of these things happened to Ptolemy VIII.

Eventually, Ptolemy VI made an alliance with his banished brother Physcon to get rid of Antiochus. Antiochus then marched against Egypt, but this time Rome intervened and told him to leave Egypt or face war with Rome.

The "small people" in verse 23 refer to the small invasion force Antiochus used in his initial invasion of Egypt. The "fattest places of the province" refer not only to Egypt but also to the eastern provinces he invaded. Another possible translation is that his nephews finally saw that their uncle was "practicing deceit," and that he was "becoming strong with but a few people by stealth."

The "prince of the covenant" in verse 22 is probably Onias III, the high priest. Antiochus had him replaced by his brother, Joshua (who went by his Greek name Jason), in exchange for a large bribe. Jason was later replaced by Menelaus who offered a larger bribe. Menelaus had Onias III, the legitimate high priest, killed.

**Daniel 11:25-26**

**25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.**

Verse 25 describes the attack by Antiochus against Ptolemy Physcon (the king of the south in verse 25) in the attempt to put Ptolemy VI back on the throne. Those Egyptians still loyal to Ptolemy VI plotted against Physcon. Verse 26 tells us that those plotting against Physcon were in his inner circle. These “devices” (as verse 25 calls them) could all be traced back to the treacherous schemes of Antiochus.

**Daniel 11:27**

**27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.**

The two kings, after the defeat of Ptolemy Physcon, were Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI. As this verse suggests, they sat down and made a treaty after the defeat of Physcon, but already they were plotting against each other. That they did this while “at one table” was to an oriental mind the worst sort of treachery. Verse 27 ends with a reminder that God is in control of these events. They are occurring at the appointed times.

### **Daniel 11:28**

**28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.**

Antiochus returned to his capital city of Antioch in Syria with a great deal of plundered wealth from Egypt. It is at this point that he set his mind against the “holy covenant.” That is, he began to persecute the Jews in earnest.

The deposed illegitimate high priest Jason had heard a rumor that Antiochus had died in Egypt. He thus took the city of Jerusalem and locked up the other illegitimate high priest Menelaus. Antiochus decided to get rid of the Jewish religion altogether. He took the city back, released Menelaus, killed 80,000 people, and eventually (after another foray into Egypt discussed next in verse 29) robbed and desecrated the temple in 168 BC.

### **Daniel 11:29-30**

**29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former,**

**or as the latter. 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.**

Again verse 29 reminds us that these events are not random events. They are occurring at appointed times. These verses predict Antiochus' humiliation by Rome after his fourth invasion of Egypt and his subsequent return to persecute the Jews and desecrate the temple in Jerusalem.

The ships of Chittim are Roman ships. Chittim refers to Cyprus, which was under Roman dominion, and all areas beyond. The Greek translators understood this so well that they rendered this verse to say “the *Romans* will come against him.”

The Roman Popilius drew a circle around Antiochus in the sand and told him to make up his mind before he left it — either he would leave Egypt immediately or he would face war with Rome. He left in humiliation — and most likely for that reason he then turned his wrath on the Jews after he returned (which means that Rome was at least indirectly and partially responsible for this desecration).

Those who “forsake the holy covenant” in verse 30 are the allies of Menelaus who did not protest as Antiochus pillaged the temple. Antiochus has “intelligence with them,” which means he determined who among the Jews would be on his side and who would not.

**Daniel 11:31**

**31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.**

This verse gives more details about the desecration of the temple that occurred in December 168 BC. The “abomination that maketh desolate” likely refers to a statue of Jupiter that was set up in the inner sanctuary. In fact, the temple was renamed the temple of Zeus Olympius. It may also refer to the desecration of the altar that occurred when a pig was sacrificed and the temple was sprinkled with pig broth. (Caligula later ordered that his own statue be placed in the Holy of Holies, but that order was never carried out due to the delays by the Roman governor and the intervention of Herod, who both knew what the result would have been. Keep this similarity in mind as we approach verse 36.)

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus speaks of the abomination of desolation of which Daniel the prophet spoke. However, Jesus made it very clear that the event he was referring to had not yet occurred, but would occur soon. (See Matthew 24:34.) Thus, Matthew 24:15 cannot be referring to Daniel 11:31 since the event prophesied by Daniel 11:31 came to pass before the birth of Christ. To what then was Jesus referring? We have already seen that in Daniel 9:27, and will see it again in Chapter 12.

This all seems a little confusing — two different events, both involving a desecration of the temple and both called an abomination of desolation. Shouldn't we expect some sort of warning to be extra careful in our interpretation of this particular language? Whether we should have expected such a warning is open to debate, but this is not — we are given such a warning, and by none other than Jesus him-

self. In reference to the other abomination (the one by the Romans mentioned in 9:27 and 12:11) to which Jesus referred in his warnings in Matthew 24, Jesus said:

**Matthew 24:15** — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (**whoso readeth, let him understand**).*

Whoso readeth, let him understand! Jesus warned us to be extra careful on this point, and I hope that we have been. The abomination here in verse 31 is the one perpetrated by the Greeks. It occurred nearly 200 years before the birth of Christ, and thus could not have been the one that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24, which occurred in AD 70.

### **Daniel 11:32**

**32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.**

Antiochus was a master at winning over people with flattery and empty promises. He convinced many of the influential Jews to adopt his pro-Hellenic policies. These are the ones who “do wickedly against the covenant.” That is, they violated their covenant with God by compromising with the world. One commentator notes:

In some ways this defection of the would-be progressives among the Jews themselves was an even more serious threat to the survival of Israel as a nation than the tyrannical measures of Antiochus. For it was the same kind of large-scale betrayal of their covenant obligations toward the Lord that had made inevitable the former destruc-

tion of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity in the days of Jeremiah.

Those who “shall be strong and do exploits” are the Maccabeans who stood up to Antiochus and started the revolt that eventually led to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity. Again, one commentator notes:

Their uncompromising commitment to faithful adherence to the Mosaic covenant and law resulted in the spiritual survival of the nation till the first coming of the Lord Jesus.

Just as they were called to be faithful and loyal in the years leading up to Jesus’ first appearance, so are we called to be faithful and loyal as we await the second appearance of Christ.

That is a wonderful phrase in verse 32 — “the people that do know their God.” We want to be that people. Why? Because they do great things for God.

### **Daniel 11:33-35**

**33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge,**

**and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.**

The Maccabean leaders went throughout the countryside and preached a message of repentance and a return to the law of Moses. These are “they that understand” and “instruct many” in verse 33.

But they suffered great hardship. Many lost their lives as Antiochus pursued them and burned their fields and cities. Many of the initial leaders, including Mattathias himself, died early during the struggle. Those who were left received a “little help” (verse 34) from early supporters of their cause. Some argue that Mattathias and his family provided much more than just a *little* help, but compared to the help that God was providing it was just a little help. And that phrase also confirms that Daniel was not written by a second century imposter — such a person would never have described this help as only a little help. That description could only have come straight from God.

When it began to look like they were going to win, many more joined their cause. Many of these latter converts were insincere and switched over only to save their own necks. They joined “with flatteries” as mentioned in verse 34.

Verse 35 gives us some understanding of the reasoning behind God’s activities here. The persecution was to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end. God wanted to know those who were on his side, and one way to do that is to bring about persecution. Would we all be here this morning if we faced persecution and possibly death by the authorities for assembling? There are places in this world today where such is the case. When did the great heresies begin? While the church was being persecuted by Rome, or after Rome embraced the church and it suddenly became fashionable to be a Christian?

The context of verse 35 suggests that the “time of the end” is the end of the Jewish struggle with the Seleucids, which came in 142 BC when Judea became politically



independent 25 years after the start of the rebellion. The Seleucids lasted a little longer but their power had been permanently broken. Or it may refer to the time of the end of the vision, which would take us to the struggle with Rome, which ended in AD 70.

# LESSON 37

## **Daniel 11:36**

**36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.**

Who is the king mentioned in verse 36? Verses 28–35 have been discussing the “king of the north” so it would seem that verse 36 is also discussing the “king of the north.” But who is this king of the north? (We have seen four different kings of the north so far.)

Some say that the king of the north in verse 36 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we have been reading about since verse 21. This view has at least one thing in its favor — it does not require a sudden and perhaps unexpected break in the narrative. When we read verse 36 after verse 35, we could very easily conclude that verse 36 is still talking about Antiochus.

Why should we even consider another view? First, we should at least consider the possibility of a break between verses 35 and 36 because we have seen such sudden breaks before, not just in this chapter but elsewhere in the book.

We saw such a break between verses 2 and 3. That break involved a skip over six Persian kings and 134 years to a king of another nation, Alexander the Great of Greece. So, if verse 36 also skips without warning to another nation, it would not be the first time that had happened in this chapter.

Also, back in Chapter 5, the narrative jumped from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the very end of the Babylonian empire. Abrupt changes are not uncommon at all in Daniel. Indeed, they seem to be the rule rather than the exception.

How did we know about the break between verses 2 and 3? Because we knew about Alexander the Great. There was no doubt at all about who verse 3 was talking about, so we knew a break must have occurred.

Likewise, here in verse 36 we need to apply the same methodology. If verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus but instead fits with someone else, then we need to consider the possibility of a break, just as we saw in verse 3.

Do verses 36-45 fit with Antiochus? In a word, no. In fact, liberals argue that Daniel was written between verses 35 and 36, and that Daniel knew the history of verses 1-35 because it had already happened, and verses 36-43 are wrong (they argue) because Daniel was just guessing.

*McGuiggan:* It is true that the thought processes of the Liberals are decidedly uncomplicated.

Before we deal with the (wrong) Liberal view, let's look at why verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus.

For starters, history tells us that Antiochus IV never fought a war against Egypt after 168 BC. Thus, verses 40-43 (which we will read in a moment) cannot apply to him. Verse 40, for example, will tell us that the king of the north will come against the king of the south like a whirlwind. Rome expelled him from Egypt with just a word in 168 BC, and he never went back. Egypt supplied Rome with its entire grain

supply for four months of each year, so it was imperative to Rome that Antiochus not be in charge of Egypt. Verse 40 cannot be describing Antiochus.

Antiochus IV never conquered Libya and Ethiopia as verse 43 suggests the king in verse 36 did.

Antiochus IV never had all the riches mentioned in verse 43. In fact, he robbed temples in his spare time to pay the heavy Roman taxes that were levied against him.

So where are we? Verses 21-35 are definitely talking about Antiochus Epiphanes, and verses 36-45 are definitely not talking about Antiochus Epiphanes. So what is the logical implication? There is a break between verse 35 and verses 36.

Some commentators try to make verses 36-43 fit with Antiochus, but not (in my opinion) with any success.

So who is the subject of verses 36-43? Some say verses 36-43 are describing Herod the Great, and some (but definitely not all) of the descriptions seem to fit. The most glaring problem is that Herod could never be accurately called the king of the north. Herod was an ally of Cleopatra and Marc Antony in their fight against Rome.

The most popular view today is that the king in verse 36 is the Antichrist, who premillennialists say will show up just before Christ returns to reign on earth for a thousand years. But this view cannot possibly be correct since the vision is explicitly said in Daniel 10:14 to deal with the history of the Jews in the latter days. (We know from Acts 2:16-17 that the latter days were already occurring in the first century.) In addition, this view has all of the problems associated with premillennialism, which as we have seen are legion.

Who then is this king in verse 36? Well, let's look at the problem in reverse. We have said that this vision deals with Jewish history up to the first century. Further, we have seen the Persians and the Greeks so far. Who haven't we seen yet? Rome!

How could a vision describe the history of the Jews up to the first century and not mention Rome? Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. A discussion of Rome is required by the declared scope of this vision. Also, as we will see, the description in verses 36–45 fits very well with what we know about Rome and the Roman rulers. (This will be made clear as we continue through the text.)

We first saw Rome in Chapter 11 in verse 18, and the focus switches to Rome without any additional warning here in verse 36. Likewise we first saw Greece in verse 2, and the focus switched to Greece without any additional warning in verse 3.

Which Roman king is being referred to in verse 36? We earlier studied about eleven Roman kings, from Augustus to Domitian — but I think these verses are treating Rome itself as the king of the north. I don't think these verses have any specific single king in mind but instead show us a composite description of many Roman rulers, and in fact a description of Rome itself.

I think verse 36 summarizes the Roman mindset from its emergence as a world power until its fall. This king does whatever he wants, he magnifies himself above every god, and sets himself against the true God. As we know, this fits very well with what we might call the “typical” Roman emperor.

For example, recall the following passage from 2 Thessalonians in which I think Paul is discussing the Roman emperor Domitian:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** — *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

And what is the indignation in verse 36? I think it is the final outpouring of God's wrath on Rome. Although the official fall of Rome occurred long after AD 70, Rome was judged by God and found wanting in the first century. Rome's judgment (and

ultimate fall) is mentioned in this vision as a side comment. In fact, each time Rome is referred to, we are given a side comment to the effect that “they are going to get it too one of these days!”

I think we see the same thing in Luke 21:24. There, Jesus is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Rome, and he makes the following comment:

**Luke 21:24** — *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

In that verse, Jesus says “Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Here in Daniel 11:36, the angel says “he shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished.” I think that both of these verses are saying that “yes, Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans, but the Romans are going to be destroyed as well.” But this is just a side comment. The fall of Rome is not part of the vision. Indeed, the vision ends at a time when Rome is still very much in power.

Finally, some might object that if verse 36 refers to another king of the north, then Daniel 11 seems to have just dropped the subject of Antiochus Epiphanes rather than to have concluded it. But we already know all about him from Daniel 8, so what more is there left to say here in Daniel 11? Rather than asking why Daniel 11 doesn't say more about Antiochus, the real question might be why Daniel 11 says as much as it does about him. But, of course, it does so because he was a major part of Jewish history, and a major threat to God's plan.

Why was verse 36 written this way? Why the lack of a clear transition in moving from Antiochus to Rome? I think it was to emphasize the link between the two, a link we have already seen. Both would try to destroy the Jewish nation, both would exalt themselves as god, and both would be filled with pride and earthly power. We look at them today and see two completely separate events, separated by many

years and involving different nations. God looks at them differently. He sees the same prideful arrogance of man that he has always seen, and perhaps he wants us to see it that way as well. There is nothing new under the sun.

### **Daniel 11:37**

**37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.**

Here we see even further the arrogance of Rome and of the Roman rulers. As the Roman emperors began to deify themselves, all other “gods” were pushed aside. The Roman rulers magnified themselves above all else.

The phrase “nor the desire of women” is difficult to interpret. It may simply be the counterpart to the gods of their fathers; that is, they would pay no heed to the gods of their fathers or of their mothers.

A literal translation of the passage points to another possibility. Literally, the phrase is “the love of women” — that is, these rulers would pay no heed to the love of women. As we know, homosexuality was rampant in Rome, and it is possible that this verse is referring to the moral collapse of Rome, which we know from secular historians contributed to Rome’s fall.

### **Daniel 11:38**

**38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall**

**he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.**

Rome only had one real god throughout its history. Rome worshiped power. Rome worshiped war. Rome's god was the "God of forces."

Rome did not care what type of religion you practiced as long as you recognized Rome's ultimate authority and you paid your taxes. Rome was not religiously zealous in the sense that they sought to convert those they conquered for religious reasons. Everything Rome did was for pragmatic reasons. They worshiped at the altar of perpetual power, and all of their resources were devoted to that god.

### **Daniel 11:39**

**39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.**

Rome used other nations and their "strange gods" to accomplish its goals. In fact, Rome used anything and everything necessary to accomplish its goals.

This verse suggests that Rome would magnify with honor those who helped it and would divide the land for a price. Did Rome do this? Yes. Rome set up a system of client kingdoms around its border and those same client kingdoms later contributed to its fall.



**Daniel 11:40**

**40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.**

The time of the end, as it did earlier, points to the time appointed by God for the events in the vision to come to pass. All it means here is that we are nearing the end of the vision.

The “king of the south” here refers to the Ptolemies of Egypt under Cleopatra VII aided by Marc Antony. (This is the “Elizabeth Taylor” Cleopatra.) Their push against Rome (the king of the north) led to Octavian’s declaration of war against Egypt.

Rome is pictured as rushing in like a whirlwind with ships and chariots. This began at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, which ended the Ptolemaic kingdom, which itself was the last vestige of the Greek kingdom. Egypt itself fell to Octavian in 30 BC. Cleopatra and Marc Antony committed suicide in Alexandria when the country fell to the Romans.

Verse 40 very clearly indicates that the kingdom of the north under consideration here is Rome. Who else was attacked by Egypt during this time period? Who else so thoroughly conquered Egypt during this time period?

**Daniel 11:41**

**41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.**

The glorious land is Palestine, and Rome took control of the holy land in 63 BC when Pompey marched into Jerusalem.

Herod's patron was Marc Antony. When Antony was defeated, Herod as you might suspect switched sides. Octavian realized the importance of Herod as a client king and thus confirmed his royal status.

A better translation for "many countries shall be overthrown" is "tens of thousands shall fall." The "tens of thousands" who fell are those who were on the losing end of Rome's continued expansion. But as this verse points out, Rome had its share of failures. Aelius Gallus' expedition into Arabia for Augustus in 26-25 BC, for example, was not successful. This failed Arabian campaign may be what is in view here in verse 41 with those who escaped out of their hands.

**Daniel 11:42-43**

**42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.**  
**43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things**

**of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall  
be at his steps.**

After the defeat of Cleopatra, Octavian confiscated the royal treasures of Egypt, just as verse 43 suggests. Michael Grant says that Octavian's "seizure of the Cleopatra's treasure made him wealthier than the Roman state itself."

As for the Libyans and the Ethiopians, they were also part of the triumphal procession into the city of Rome. (Antony and Cleopatra killed themselves to avoid appearing in just such a procession.)

Libya and Ethiopia, as with Egypt, were conquered by Rome. Ethiopia fell in 22 BC. Libya had long been under Roman domination, but was claimed by Cleopatra when she marched against Rome. Rome, of course, retained control.

**Daniel 11:44**

**44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north  
shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with  
great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away  
many.**

Again, we are reminded that all was not well with Rome. Rome's biggest threats came from the east and the north, just as this verse suggests. The Germanic hordes and the Gauls were north of Rome, and the Parthians were east of Rome.

Parthia was an Iranian feudal empire beyond the Euphrates that had broken away from the Seleucids in the third century BC. In the first century BC, they were the only substantial foreign power confronting Rome anywhere in the world.

Later in Rome's history, the threat shifted to the north. In fact, the city of Rome itself was sacked in AD 410 by Alaric, a (Germanic) Visigoth from the north. That event marked the first time in 800 years that the city had been taken by a foreign invader.

### **Daniel 11:45**

**45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.**

This verse shows that Rome would be firmly in control of Palestine, as in fact it was. The "seas" refer most likely to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. The glorious holy mountain is Jerusalem.

Again, we are given a side comment to the effect that Rome is not going to be around forever. He (Rome) shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

Notice the time frame of this verse. Rome is in control of Palestine, and Egypt has been defeated. The very next verse begins with the phrase "at that time." Which time? During the early period of Roman rule. This time frame will be crucial to understanding Daniel 12.

## CHAPTER 12

### **Daniel 12:1-4**

**1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.**

The most important words in understanding this section of the vision are the first four words in verse 1: “And at that time.” These four words provide the time frame for this part of the vision, which of course is crucial to understanding the vision.

What is the time frame? The items mentioned here in Daniel 12 will occur at the time when the events of Daniel 11 come to an end. What was happening when Daniel 11 came to an end? Rome had just established its authority in Palestine. The angel is telling Daniel (very plainly) that this part of the vision applies to the time when Rome would be in charge of the Holy Land.

But we do not have to rely on this clue alone to determine the time when this prophecy would occur. We can also look at what the angel said would happen, and then look elsewhere in the Bible to see when that happened. Let's consider these other clues.

**First Clue:** At this time, we are told that the angel Michael would arise. Here he is called "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." In Daniel 10:21, he is called "your prince." Just as Persia had a prince in Daniel 10, the Jews also had a prince — Michael. The fact that Michael is involved here indicates that this part of the vision is focused on the Jews.

This focus fits in well with what we were told at the beginning of this vision. Daniel 10:14 told us that this vision would tell us about the Jews in the latter days. ("Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.") This entire vision has been focused on the Jews, and the opening verses of Daniel 12 are no exception.

**Second Clue:** At this time there would be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" This language was a common way of describing a very terrible calamity. Did such a calamity befall the Jews at this time? Yes. Read the description of Jerusalem's destruction found in Matthew 24:21.

**Matthew 24:21** — *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

We can also compare Josephus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

It is impossible to give every instance of the iniquity of these men (the Romans). I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly: that never did any other city suffer such miseries.

**Third Clue:** Verse 1 tells us that:

*at that time thy people (the Jews) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

Did that happen in the first century? Absolutely.

**Jeremiah 33:14-16** — *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.*

**Luke 1:68-70** — *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.*

But, you say, how can we be in the first century when verse 2 talks about the final resurrection at the end of the world? Let's take a closer look at that verse.

For starters, if this is the final resurrection, then we must conclude that the vision includes the end of the world, and hence we must conclude that the Jews have a special role to play in the end of the world. Such a conclusion would be in clear

conflict with other scriptures that tell us there is no distinction between Jew and Greek in the church.

But, you say, verse 2 sure sounds like the final resurrection. **Does it really?** Let's take a closer look. How many people will be raised from the dead at the end of the world?

**2 Corinthians 5:10** — *For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one** may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Notice the word “all” and the phrase “every one” in that verse. If we will **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, doesn't that tell us that we will **all** be raised from the dead? If **every** knee shall bow to God and **every** tongue confess to God (Romans 14:11), then doesn't that tell us that **every** person will be raised?

**Acts 24:15** — *There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

What does Daniel 12:2 say? “And **all** who sleep in the dust of the earth shall be raised”? No. Daniel 12:2 says that “**many of them** that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

**Many of them?** Doesn't that language suggest that some will continue sleeping in the dust? Maybe this verse doesn't sound as much like the final resurrection as we first thought.

Even the text itself suggests that the final resurrection is not in view here. But we have more than just the *text* of this verse — we also have the *context* of this verse. And the context confirms that this resurrection in verse 2 is *not* the final resurrection at the end of the world.



To which resurrection does it apply then? It is the figurative resurrection of many from the Jewish nation that occurred when their promised Messiah came to bring blessings to the entire world.

What happened to the Jews at this time? Those Jews who followed Christ were saved. Here they are pictured as awakening to everlasting life. Verse 3 shows them being turned to righteousness by those who were wise and shining as the brightness of the firmament. This awakening is the spiritual resurrection of the faithful Jewish remnant who entered into the kingdom of God under the rule of their Messiah.

They had long been under foreign domination — they were under the Persians when this vision was received. They would be under the Greeks and under the Romans before the vision ended. But the day was coming when they would once again be ruled by a son of David, and that rule would last forever.

Listen as an angel of God tells us all about it — not the angel here, but the angel that appeared to Mary 500 years later.

**Luke 1:32-33** — *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Those Jews who rejected Christ were lost. Here they are pictured as awakening to shame and everlasting contempt.

All of the Jews were asleep in the dust of the earth as they awaited the Messiah. Jesus came to bring them life. Those who awakened are those who heard the gospel. Those who awoke to everlasting life are those who heard and obeyed. Those who awoke to shame and contempt are those who rejected the gospel. Many of the Jews fell into those two categories. But some never awoke at all, because they did not hear the gospel call.

And so, just as verse 2 describes, many of them that slept in the dust of the earth awoke, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Is this resurrection spoken of elsewhere in the Bible? Definitely.

**Ezekiel 37:12-14** — *Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.*

**John 5:24-25** — *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*

**Ephesians 5:14** — *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

**Luke 2:34** — *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.*

Isaiah wrote about nations that would not experience such a figurative resurrection.

**Isaiah 26:14** — *They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*

This figurative resurrection in verse 2 may also refer to baptism (either that of John or that under Christ), which we know depicts a resurrection.

**Luke 3:3** — *And he [John] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*

**Romans 6:4** — *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

This language may also help explain a very puzzling event that occurred at the death of Christ. Recall:

**Matthew 27:52-53** — *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

I think that this actual *physical* resurrection of faithful Jews in Jerusalem was a sign of the *spiritual* resurrection that was occurring for the faithful Jews at that time.

Many use Daniel 12:2 to apply to the end of the world. I think they are taking it out of context. If we want to apply Daniel 12:2 to the end of the world, then we should be aware of the logical consequence that the Jews must then have some special future role to play in God's plan.

So is this figurative resurrection in the first century the *only* resurrection? Of course not, but some have also made that mistake, such as Max King, who has followed the way of Hymenaeus and Philetus.

**2 Timothy 2:17-18** — *And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*

And if you don't know about Max King ... be thankful!

As there was a *spiritual* resurrection at Christ's first appearance, so will there be a *physical* resurrection at Christ's second appearance.

**1 Corinthians 15:52-53** — *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Finally, Daniel is again told to seal up the vision, which means that it pertains to a future time and a future people. (Recall that John was told just the opposite in the book of Revelation 22:10!)

# LESSON 38

## **Daniel 12:5-7**

**5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.**

Daniel asked how long it would be until the end of the events in the vision. He is told that it would be “a time, times, and an half,” or better translated “a time, two times, and half a time” and that everything in the vision would be accomplished when the power of the holy people is scattered or shattered.

Notice that verse 7 gives us the termination point of the vision — “all these things shall be finished.” This is the end of the vision. If we can determine what verse 7 is talking about then once again we have an all-important time frame to help us understand the prophecy.

So what is verse 7 talking about? Nowhere is there a clearer statement than in verse 7 that the vision ends in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. That was the shattering of the power of the holy people. This vision ends with the Romans, and the Romans are the ones who shattered the power of the holy people. They shattered it to the point that it has never recovered. The priestly records were destroyed, and so the Jewish priesthood came to a permanent end. Animals sacrifices ceased and to this day have never returned. Verse 7 happened in AD 70.

Notice that if we take Daniel 12:2 to apply to the final resurrection, then we must conclude that this shattering is still future as well, but we know it is not.

The “time, two times, and half a time” is a broken seven, and we have seen this symbol before. The angel is telling Daniel that while the Jews will be oppressed, it will not be a permanent oppression. The power of Rome would end one day, and the faithful remnant of true Jews (as Paul defined that term in Romans 2:28-29) would be victorious in Christ.

Rome had control, but not perfect control; Rome had power, but not perfect power. Rome had a delegated control and a delegated power. We have already seen that Rome was acting as the servant of God in fulfilling the prophecies of this book. Rome would not last forever. It would be destroyed once it had served its purpose. A son of David would rule from the throne of David, and his kingdom would outlast and destroy Rome and all other worldly kingdoms.

**Daniel 12:8-12**

**8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.**

Daniel 10:1 tells us that Daniel had understanding of the vision, yet verse 8 tells us that he did **not** understand the vision. How do we explain that?

First, Daniel 10:14 tells us that the angel came to bring understanding of the vision to Daniel, and the angel is still speaking.

But second, I think by verse 8 Daniel understood the vision with his head, but perhaps was still having trouble understanding the vision with his heart. How could everything end with the people of God being shattered? How could God's plan for

the Jews end with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? Daniel is asking the angel for an explanation.

How does the angel respond? First, the angel reminds Daniel that the end of the vision would not occur for some time. He would not be personally affected by these events. Many good things and many bad things would happen before it came to pass. Those who were wicked would not understand; that is, they would not know that they were playing a part in the plan of God. Those who were wise, however, would know that they were playing a part in the plan of God. They would know that the events that were occurring had been spoken of long before in Daniel 11 and 12.

Second, in verse 10, the angel assures Daniel that God will bless those who are good and the wicked will perish. This is just what Daniel needed to hear after seeing the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It must have appeared to Daniel that at the end of this vision the wicked were blessed and the good perished. The angel assures Daniel that just the opposite is true. (And here we are reminded once again of a key theme in this book — things are not what they seem! We must learn to see things, including ourselves, as God sees them. We must learn to use our spiritual eyesight.)

Third, the angel then gives us what may be the most difficult two verses in the Bible to understand: “*And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a **thousand two hundred and ninety days**. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the **thousand three hundred and five and thirty days**.*” (The book of Daniel remains challenging all the way to the end!) The angel says that from the time that the burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1290 days. Further, he says that those who wait for 1335 days (45 days longer than the 1290 days) will be blessed. **Why 1290? Why 1335? Why 45 more days? What do they mean?**



First, note that the 1290 days occur after **both** the removal of the burnt offering and the abomination that makes desolate. That is, the 1290 days do **not** separate these two events, as some suggest.

Second, are this removal of the daily sacrifice and this abomination of desolation the same ones that we read about in Daniel 11:31? **They cannot be.** Jesus pointed to a prophecy of Daniel in Matthew 24:15 regarding the abomination of desolation and said that it had not happened yet, but that it would occur in the first century (Matthew 24:34). The abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31 occurred nearly 200 years before the birth of Christ. There are two such abominations in the book of Daniel — one perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes and another perpetrated over two centuries later by the Romans. The earlier one is spoken about in Daniel 8:13 and Daniel 11:31. The latter one is spoken about in Daniel 9:27 and here in Daniel 12:11.

We may have another clue that this is the fact. Recall Matthew 24:15.

**Matthew 24:15** — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.)*

Do you see the phrase “whoso readeth, let him understand”? Almost the same phrase is found in Daniel 12:10 where we read “but the wise shall understand.” (Yes, a similar phrase also appears in 11:33, but there it is referring to the Macabees.)

Which abomination is this then? We have already answered that question. It is the desecration of the temple by the Romans in AD 70. The vision ends with the Romans. Jesus was talking about the Romans in Matthew 24. In Matthew 24:15 and 24:34, Jesus said that the abomination he spoke of would occur in the first century. It did, and this verse in Daniel is telling us about it.

Back to our earlier question: What about the 1290 days and the 1335 days? What do they denote? Let's turn that question around: What would we **expect** them to denote?

Daniel doesn't understand how God's plan for the Jews could end with the destruction of the Jews. But after he hears this final message from the angel, he understands God's plan (as we were told in Daniel 10:1). **What must God have told him?** God must have told Daniel that God's plan for the Jews did **not** end with the destruction of their city and their temple, but for those Jews who were faithful to God, they would enter an eternal kingdom ruled by a son of David. God must also have told Daniel that those who destroyed the city and the temple would themselves be destroyed, and thus would **not** ultimately be victorious.

How do these two symbols depict that? Revelation 13:5 uses 1260 days to describe the temporary power of Rome. Because 1260 days is 42 months (thirty days each), we have three and a half years. Thus, 1260 days points to a broken seven. But here we have **1290** days. Why the extra month? I think that God is telling Daniel that while the Roman persecution will be temporary, it will be longer and worse than other persecutions. It will be a broken seven plus a little bit more.

Another possible explanation is that thirty days would be added to the lunar calendar every three years to bring it in line with the solar calendar, which may explain why we have 1290 instead of 1260 (but again, we have 1260 in Revelation 13, so I prefer to assign a figurative meaning to this extra thirty days rather than just explain it away as an intercalary month).

What about the extra 45 days between the 1290 days and the 1335 days? Again, what would we *expect* it to denote? The context suggests that it denotes the time after Rome during which God's followers must continue to persevere. Those who wait and come to the end of the 1335 days will be blessed.

For those that have been wanting to find the end of the world in Daniel, I think we have finally found it! I think these 45 days denote the time between the judgment of

Rome and the final judgment. Those who wait and are faithful during this period will be blessed at the end of it. I think we are living in that figurative 45 day period.

But why 45? The short answer is that I don't know for sure, and no commentary I have looked at seems to know for sure either. If, as seems likely, the number 45 had some special figurative meaning to the Jews of Daniel's day, then that understanding may have been lost. But we can speculate.

The number five is said by some to symbolize the grace of God. (The number five and multiples of five occur all throughout the descriptions of the tabernacle.) The number nine is said by some to denote finality and judgment. (The nine judgments of Haggai 1:11, for example, and the number nine being the final digit.)

Thus, 45 being five times nine may denote the grace of God leading to the final judgment of the world. In my opinion, that is the most likely explanation for the extra 45 days.

It is possible that the number 45 denotes a **countdown** to the end of the world. Why, you ask, would 45 be used to denote a countdown? Because 45 is equal to  $9 + 8 + 7 + 6 + 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1$ .

One other possibility is that the 45 days (a month and a half) is simply God's way of telling Daniel that after Rome, God's people will need to persevere a little longer. This understanding would fit in well with our explanation of the extra thirty days in the 1290 days.

### **Daniel 12:13**

**13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.**

Finally, Daniel is assured that although he will not live to see these events (“for thou shalt rest”), he will be present at “the end of the days.”

And the “end of the days”? What does that refer to? As I said, I think that we have at last come to the end of the world! The vision is over. The Romans are gone. God’s grace has been extended to the final judgment. Daniel is again present and standing in his allotted place. I think that this is the final judgment of the world.

Recall that the vision dealing with the end of the Jewish age ended in verse 4 of this chapter. Thus, it does not violate the time frame of that vision to say that Daniel is now hearing about the end of the world at the end of Daniel 12.

What we are studying now is the answer to Daniel’s question in verse 8: “O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” This question parallels the question in Matthew 24:3— “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” In response to that question, Jesus first told them in verses 4-34 about the destruction of the city, which was coming in their generation, and then Jesus told them in verses 35-51 about the end of the world, which would not come with any signs. Here, I think we also see an answer that jumps from the destruction of Jerusalem to the final judgment of the world.

Thus, while Daniel 12:2 does **not** refer to the final resurrection, I think that Daniel 12:13 does. Daniel goes to his rest in verse 13, but then we see him standing again. How could that occur absent a resurrection?

So, for those who ask you to show evidence of the final resurrection in the Old Testament, you should **not** point them to Daniel 12:2 (as many mistakenly do), but you should instead point them to Daniel 12:13.

The book ends with a complete confirmation of one of the book’s main themes: the absolute and total sovereignty of God. God is in control of this world and this universe, and he has a plan to bless the entire world through his son Jesus Christ. This book has given us a glimpse of just what was involved in bringing that plan about.

We are looking back over 2500 years of history, and during that time we have seen virtually everything in this book come to pass. But there is one thing that we have not yet seen. We, as Daniel, are waiting for that day when we will stand up and take our allotted place among the people of God.

What a beautiful book! What a beautiful promise! The faithful people of God, as did Daniel, will go to their rest, but they will one day take their place with Daniel when the King comes to claim his own.

### **The Seven Main Themes in Daniel**

#### **Theme Number 1: The absolute sovereignty of God.**

This theme may be the central theme of the book. We saw it in every event and in every chapter in this book.

**Psalm 47:2** — *For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.*

**Psalm 103:19** — *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

**Psalm 145:13** — *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

**Psalm 29:10** — *The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.*

God is king over the universe and everyone in it. Many are in rebellion against God, but that does mean that they are in anyway not subject to God as their king. In 1 Timothy 6:15, Paul tells us that Jesus is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” That means that Jesus is everyone’s King and everyone’s Lord.

You mean that God was king over the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar? Absolutely, as Nebuchadnezzar himself found out when God sent him out into the field to munch grass like an ox.

God is king over all, and that includes all of the nations and earthly rulers of this world, no matter how high and mighty they are or how high and mighty they may think they are.

**Isaiah 46:11** — *Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

That is the king speaking!

### **Theme Number 2: God loves and cares for his people.**

Yes, John 3:16 tells us that God loves the entire world, but God has a special love for his people.

**Exodus 19:5-6** — *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

**Ephesians 5:25** — *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*

The faithful remnant, despised by the world, has always been and is today a peculiar treasure to God.

In Daniel's day, that faithful remnant had been carried off into foreign captivity, but the message that shines through in Daniel is that God still loved and cared for his people even in their exile, and God was still working to carry out his plans for his covenant people. Yes, there were dark days ahead, but the book of Daniel was a book of hope and comfort for the Jews. Their Messiah was coming, and he would

establish an eternal kingdom that would last forever and sweep away all of the kingdoms of this world.

The coming of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of Christ would require meticulous planning, and this book lifts the curtain to show us that planning. Visions received under Chaldean and Persian kings showed us Greek and Roman kings not yet born and showed us how the Greeks and Romans would together create the perfect cradle for Jesus and his church. That did not happen by chance. Daniel was told all about it centuries before God made it happen.

### **Theme Number 3: Things are not what they seem.**

We are constantly being called upon in Daniel to see events through God's eyes. The world saw Daniel and his friends one way; God saw them another way. The world saw Nebuchadnezzar one way; God saw him another way. The world saw Babylon one way; God saw it another way. The world saw Jerusalem and the Jews one way; God saw them another way. The world saw Persia, and then Greece, and then Rome one way; God saw them another way. Over 2500 years after it was written, this book is still calling us to see things differently than the world does.

Yes, the situation looked bleak. Yes, Jerusalem had been destroyed. Yes, the Jews had been carried off into foreign captivity by a nation that sought to absorb them and assimilate them into its own pagan culture.

The Jews appeared powerless in the face of the great nations that surrounded them. But was that the reality of the situation? No. Things were not what they seemed.

Daniel lifts the curtain and shows us the great spiritual events that were occurring behind the scenes as powerful angels acted on behalf of God's people to thwart the plans of Satan.

**Psalm 123:1** — *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*

Likewise today we must constantly strive to lift up our eyes and see with spiritual eyes. If we are ever tempted to think that the church is insignificant in the rush of current events, that it is because we have failed to see the church as God sees it — as it really is. In Revelation 21, John sees “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” What follows in that chapter is a beautiful description of the church, the bride of Christ. If you are ever tempted to see the church as just a footnote of history, read Revelation 21 to see how God views his church.

**Theme Number 4: God’s eternal kingdom was established in the first century.**

No one can study Daniel honestly and come away with any other understanding than that the eternal kingdom of God was established during the days of the fourth kingdom — the Roman empire.

**Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

**Hebrews 12:28-29** — *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.*

The church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16:18 and that was established in Acts 2 is the eternal kingdom that was promised in Daniel 2. Few books in the Bible, and certainly few books in the Old Testament, tell us more about the church of Christ than does the book of Daniel.

That beautiful church of Revelation 21 is the same church that was established in Acts 2, it is the same church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16, it is the



same eternal kingdom that Daniel told us about nearly 600 years before it was established, and it is the same church to which God has added us. There is one church, and you can draw a straight line from the church of Christ today all the way back to the church of Christ in Daniel 2:44.

### **Theme Number 5: God is faithful to his covenants.**

The people who receive those covenants are not always faithful, but that is not true of God. God is faithful to his covenants.

**2 Timothy 2:13** — *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

Why was it so important that the Jewish people survive and not just be absorbed by and become a part of the pagan nations that surrounded them? Because God had made a covenant with Abraham and with David.

God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham to bless the entire world through his seed. And God made an unconditional covenant with David that a son of David would rule eternally from the throne of David. For those covenants to be fulfilled, the Jewish people had to survive, which was why Satan was so intent on destroying them.

### **Theme Number 6: The danger of compromise.**

Daniel is one of the most wonderful examples in the Bible of how a child of God should live in an evil and pagan society. And the key danger that such a person faces is the danger of compromise.

We first saw Daniel's refusal to compromise when he was just a teenager, and we continued to see that throughout his life. Daniel was faithful and loyal to God no matter what was happening around him or to him, and for that reason Daniel is three times said to be greatly beloved by God. In fact, the Bible has not a single bad

thing to say about Daniel, which is not true for very many of the major characters in Scripture.

We, too, constantly face the temptation to compromise with this world, and we should remember the example of Daniel when those temptations come.

### **Theme Number 7: The power of prayer.**

Daniel was a man of prayer. How powerful is prayer? Prayer can do anything that God can do, and Daniel knew that.

How did Daniel remain faithful in such a godless society? That is no secret. He devoted himself to a study of God's word and to prayer (Daniel 9:2-3). Do we think the answer is any different for us? Do we think we are more spiritual than Daniel? Do we really think that Daniel needed to study and pray, but we do not? If so, then perhaps we need to review how God responded to the arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar, who saw himself as a god and boasted about all of the wonderful things he had done all by himself.

Daniel prayed. Daniel studied God's word. Daniel remained faithful and steadfast. Those things are not unrelated. It took great strength for Daniel to stand alone, as he so often did. Where did he get that strength? Through prayer and Bible study. Let's follow his example!

Eric Hall (2019)