

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

* * * **PROPHETIC PANORAMA OF THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES** * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

AUTHOR: Daniel (c. 536 BC)

DANIEL THE MAN. Daniel is a unique individual in Scripture in that he is the only major Biblical character (excepting the Lord Jesus Christ) about whom *nothing negative is recorded*. This does not mean that Daniel was without sin, but that he was an exceptionally righteous man (Ezek14:14,20; 28:3), as is repeatedly demonstrated throughout the Book of Daniel. Daniel was likely born in Jerusalem during the revival that took place under King Josiah. As a teenager he was deported to Babylon, where he rose to the position of Prime Minister in 2 of the 4 Gentile world empires, Babylon (Dan2:48) and Medo-Persia (Dan6:1-2). He was also made chief over the "wise men" of Babylon (i.e., the Magi; Dan2:48), which is the link to the visit of the Magi from the East at the birth of Christ (Matt2:1-2).

Daniel is the OT saint of whom it was said, "thou art greatly beloved" of God (Dan9:23), and it was he who received the greatest prophetic revelation given in the OT; by analogy, the Apostle John is the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn20:2; 21:7,20), and it was he who received the greatest prophetic revelation given in the NT. God seems to link his giving of prophetic revelation with intimate fellowship with Himself (Cp., Gen18:17; Isa41:8/Jas2:23; Jn15:14-15).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF WRITING. The Book of Daniel presents itself in a straightforward way as having been written by Daniel, a Jew from the royal family of Judah who was deported from Jerusalem to Babylon. Daniel lived in Babylon beginning with the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC) and extending to at least the 3rd year of Cyrus the Persian (536 BC). The latest historical reference in the book is to the 3rd year of Cyrus (Dan10:1), so it is assumed that Daniel completed the writing of the book at that time or shortly after. Ezekiel, a Jewish prophet who also lived and wrote from Babylon during the captivity, makes reference to Daniel as a man of exceptional righteousness and wisdom (Ezek14:14,20; 28:3). Finally, the Lord Jesus cites Daniel 9:27 and attributes it to "Daniel the prophet" (Matt24:15).

In opposition to this clear Biblical testimony, liberal critics have long alleged that the historical figure Daniel could not have written the book in the 6th century BC; they counter that the book as it presents itself is a forgery, written much later (c. 165 BC) than it purports by someone other than Daniel. This attempt to late date the Book of Daniel is due to the detailed historical information, especially that given in Daniel 11; so detailed and accurate is this record, that if it were actually written in the 6th century BC, it would be an amazing and indisputable example of fulfilled prophecy! It is, of course, which is why liberals desire to date the book so late, turning the "prophecies" of Daniel into a simple record of history written after the fact. However, all of the technical arguments* put forward for a late dating of Daniel have been effectively refuted by conservative scholars. The real driving force behind this liberal

criticism has been shown to be nothing more than an unbelieving, anti-Biblical, anti-supernatural agenda.

*The technical arguments put forward by critics for late-dating the Book of Daniel fall into two main thrusts: 1) the occurrence of a few Greek "loan" words in the Aramaic portion of the book (Dan3:5, all related to musical instruments), which they assert would not be possible until after Alexander had spread the Greek language into the Ancient Near East (c. 323 BC), and 2) the Hebrew placement of the book in the third division of the TNK, the Writings, rather in the division of the Prophets (alleging that the division of the Writings was closed much later than that of the Prophets).

HISTORICAL SETTING OF DANIEL. In the centuries preceding Daniel, the Assyrian empire had been the dominant power of the ancient near east. During the days of King Hezekiah, the Assyrians conquered and dispersed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC (1Kgs17:6,23-24; 18:1); although the southern kingdom was repeatedly threatened, God divinely protected Judah from Assyrian conquests (1Kgs18-19).

The Assyrian empire was pagan, ruthless, cruel, and evil. Under the preaching of coming judgment from the LORD by Jonah during the 8th century BC, Nineveh repented (Jon3:4-10); her judgment was delayed, but within a hundred years Assyria had returned to her wicked ways. Nahum prophesied the certain destruction of Nineveh and the fall of Assyria as the final judgment determined by the LORD (Nah1-3). First, the Medes revolted against Assyria (c. 650 BC), then the Babylonians (c. 625), both gaining independence. Kyaxares of Media and Nabopolassar of Babylon formed an alliance (sealed by Kyaxares' daughter Amytis given in marriage to Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar), attacked Nineveh, and utterly destroyed the city in 612 BC in fulfillment of the prophecies of both Nahum (Nah2:1-13) and Zephaniah (Zeph2:13). The remnant of the Assyrian army fled westward and regrouped at Haran. At this time, fearing the rising power of Babylon, Pharaoh Necho led the Egyptian army north to aid the Assyrians at Haran. As the Egyptian army marched through the land of Israel on their way to Haran, for reasons that are not entirely clear, king Josiah attacked the forces of Pharaoh Necho in the valley of Megiddo; the army of Judah was defeated and the godly king Josiah was slain in battle (2Kgs23:29; 2Chr35:20-24). Despite Necho's support, the Assyrians fell at Haran to the Babylonian army of Nabopolassar.

Nabopolassar was replaced by his son Nebuchadnezzar as military commander, who led the Babylonian army against the last of the Assyrian forces. Again Egypt came to the defense of the Assyrians, but the Egyptians and Assyrians were decisively defeated at the well-known battle of Carchemish on the Euphrates river in 605 BC. This victory established Babylon as the new empire controlling the ancient near east (Jer27:4-11). To solidify his power, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt. Almost incidentally, he also besieged Jerusalem at this time, probably because of his knowledge of the great wealth associated with the Temple (2Kgs20:12-13). During these conquests, Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father had died, so he had to hurriedly return to Babylon to ensure his ascension to the throne of his father. In his hasty departure, he took with him some of the treasures from the Temple as well as a good number of princes and youths from the royal and noble families as captives to Babylon (Dan1:1-3; prophesied in 2Kgs20:17-18). One of these youths deported to Babylon in 605 BC was **Daniel**. This was

the first of 3 conquests of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, each including a deportation of Jews to Babylon. The first was in 605 BC, during which Daniel was deported. The second occurred in 597 BC, at which time Ezekiel was deported. The third and final siege of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC, at which time the city and the Temple were destroyed.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S 3 CONQUESTS OF JUDAH			
Year	605 BC	597 BC	586 BC
References	2Kgs24:1 Dan1:1	2Kgs24:10-16 Ezek1:1-2	2Kgs25:1-2 Ezek33:21
Judah's King	Jehoiakim	Jehoiachin (a.k.a. Jeconiah)	Zedekiah
Consequences	Daniel & noble youths deported; some Temple treasures looted	Ezekiel & 10,000 Jews deported; remaining Temple treasures taken to Babylon	Remnant deported; Jerusalem and Temple destroyed. Jeremiah /refugees flee to Egypt.

The attached chart, Daniel and His Contemporaries (from Whitcomb), shows the chronological relationship between the kings and prophets of Judah and the kings of Babylon and Persia.

NATIONAL DISCIPLINE UNDER THE MOSAIC COVENANT.

In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 the "blessings" (Lev26:1-13; Deut28:1-14) and "curses" (Lev26:14-39; Deut28:15-68) of the Mosaic covenant are outlined in detail. The "curses" are increasing levels of divine discipline that the LORD decrees He will impose on the nation of Israel for disobedience to their obligations under the Mosaic covenant (i.e., the Law of Moses)—obligations which the nation voluntarily and willingly accepted (Ex19:5-8). The ultimate level of divine discipline was the dispersion of the nation (i.e., the Jews) out of the Promised Land (Lev26:32-39; Deut28:63-68). Of note is that the two national sins specifically identified as that which would lead to the dispersion of the nation are 1) idolatry (Lev26:1), and 2) failure to keep the LORD's sabbaths, especially the sabbath of the Land (Lev26:2,34-35; cf. Lev25:1-7). Israel's keeping of the sabbaths was the "sign" of the Mosaic covenant (Ex31:12-17); it was the greatest expression of national faith, showing absolute dependence on the LORD for His provision for the needs of His people.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the deportation of the Jews to Babylon was the execution of this final phase of divine discipline for the nation of Judah. The reason given for the captivity of the nation in Babylon is the sin of idolatry, especially during the reign of King Manasseh (2Kgs21:10-15; 24:1-3), who even introduced idolatry into the very Temple of the LORD (2Kgs21:1-5), and the 70 year duration of the captivity is said to be calculated according to the period of time the nation had failed to keep the sabbath of the Land (2Chr36:21).

MESSAGE OF DANIEL. The Book of Daniel has distinct messages to its two audiences, the Jews and the Gentiles.

(1) **To the Jews** who at the time of Daniel were captive in Babylon, with Jerusalem and the Temple having been destroyed, God's message is one of comfort and hope. God is not through with His chosen, covenant people. Their bondage in Babylon will come to an end, and they will return to

the land of Israel. While Israel is at present being disciplined for their failure to keep the Mosaic covenant, which was a conditional covenant, this in no way annuls the unconditional promises God has made to them in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen13:14-17; 15:18-21; cf. Lev26:40-46; Deut30:1-6). God's purpose for history remains the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Dan2:44-45), with Israel as head of the nations (Deut28:13), through whom all nations will be blessed (Gen12:3; Rom11:11-16); although 4 Gentile empires will successively rise to dominate the world, the Kingdom of God will come at its appointed time and subjugate them all.

(2) **To the Gentiles** who at the time of Daniel rule the world and have made Israel their subjects, God's message is one of rebuke for their pride and unbelief. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the true and living God who is in sovereign control of all things; this He demonstrates by laying out in advance the entire course of world history from Daniel's day to the very end when God will establish His Kingdom. The Gentile nations have the power they do only because the God of Israel has ordained it, even appointing their wicked kings to serve His purposes. God's purposes include the use of the Gentile nations as His instrument to discipline the Jews, but they must not think that this has ended His covenant relationship with Israel. The so-called "gods" of the Gentile nations are not gods at all, but demons who constantly work to deceive them; they must repent and believe in the only true God, the God of Israel.

The two-fold message of the Book of Daniel is not an archaic or outdated message, but in fact has direct applications that endure to the present day. (1) For nearly the past two millennia the Jewish people have been in a second dispersion from the Promised Land, brought about by God at the hands of the Roman empire as discipline for Israel's rejection of her Messiah at His 1st coming (Luk19:43-44; 21:20-24). The message of hope and assurance God gave the Jews in their Babylonian captivity remains the same for those today that find themselves in the Roman *diaspora*, since that message was based on the unconditional promises of the Abrahamic covenant which is still in force. Israel as a nation will yet be regathered to inherit all that God has promised her when the Kingdom of God is established on earth by Messiah at His return. (2) Similarly, God's warning to the Gentile nations in Daniel's day to acknowledge Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true God who is absolutely sovereign over them as well as Israel, still applies. God will hold the present Gentile nations accountable for their treatment of Israel (Gen12:3). This warning applies to the United States of America today just as surely as it did to the Babylon of Daniel's day.

OUTLINE OF DANIEL. The Book of Daniel is ordered thematically, not chronologically; a simple outline of the book would be:

- I. Personal History of Daniel (Dan1)
- II. Prophetic History of the Gentile Nations (Dan2-7)
- III. Prophetic History of Israel (Dan8-12)

Daniel can be outlined in other ways. It is true that Daniel 1-6 is historical narrative, whereas Daniel 7-12 is merely a record of the visions seen by Daniel. However, recognition of the thematic order seems to be more central in Daniel's presentation.

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF DANIEL 2-7. Daniel 2:4-7:28 is written in Aramaic, the language of Babylon, not Hebrew. It is as if it were a message especially for the Gentiles, written in the predominant Gentile language of that time. Furthermore, Daniel 2-7 has an obvious chiastic structure.

- A **Dan2**-Times of the Gentiles (Neb's dream of the polymetallic image)
- B **Dan3**-Supernatural preservation of the Jews (fiery furnace)
- C **Dan4**-Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar's pride
- C' **Dan5**-Humbling of Belshazzar's pride
- B' **Dan6**-Supernatural preservation of the Jews (lion's den)
- A' **Dan7**-Times of the Gentiles (Daniel's vision of the 4 beasts)

The chiastic structure of the Aramaic portion of Daniel reinforces the prophetic truths: 1) during the long period of "the times of the Gentiles", when the Gentile nations will dominate, oppress, persecute, and even attempt to exterminate the Jewish people, God will supernaturally preserve them; and 2) God will carry out a program to humble the arrogant and unbelieving Gentile nations, resulting in either their willing submission to Him (as Nebuchadnezzar) or their judgment for persistent rebellion (as Belshazzar).

CHRONOLOGY OF DANIEL'S CHAPTERS. The chronological arrangement of the chapters in the Book of Daniel would be:

- Dan1** - 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar, 605 BC
- Dan2** - 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar, 604 BC (Dan2:1)
- Dan3** - 4th year of Zedekiah?, c. 593 BC (Jer51:59)
- Dan4** - Nebuchadnezzar's reign
- Dan7** - 1st year of Belshazzar, c. 542 BC (Dan7:1)
- Dan8** - 3rd year of Belshazzar, c. 540 BC (Dan8:1)
- Dan5** - Death of Belshazzar, 539 BC
- Dan9** - 1st year of Darius the Mede, 538 BC (Dan9:1)
- Dan6** - Darius' reign, 537 BC
- Dan10** - 3rd year of Cyrus, 536 BC (Dan10:1)
- Dan11** - " " " " , 536 BC
- Dan12** - " " " " , 536 BC

CHAPTER 1

DANIEL'S DEPORTATION TO BABYLON

- [1] Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for the first of three times "in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim", king of Judah. This year is firmly established as **605 BC**. Some have alleged that this statement of Daniel is in conflict with Jeremiah's reckoning that the siege of Jerusalem occurred "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim" (Jer25:1). However, there is no contradiction. Jeremiah, writing from Judah, reckons the reign of the king in a Jewish manner, while Daniel, writing from Babylon, reckons it in a Babylonian manner. Babylonians denoted the first year of a king's reign as his "year of ascension", and his "first year" would be what Jewish reckoning considered the second year.

Daniel refers to Nebuchadnezzar as "king of Babylon", but this is a proleptic usage. At the time of the siege, Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar is king, and Nebuchadnezzar is commander of the army. Nabopolassar dies in Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem, necessitating Nebuchadnezzar's need to cut short his conquest of Judah and hasten back to Babylon to secure the throne.

Babylon's conquest of Judah ended the sovereign rule of Jewish kings in Jerusalem, and no descendant of David has sat on his throne since then (i.e., now over 2,500 years). With the setting aside of the Davidic dynasty began an important prophetic period of time, "**the times of the Gentiles**" (Luk21:24); this period of time will continue to the second coming of Christ, when the Davidic throne is reestablished with Jesus Christ, the Seed of David, ruling on it (Luk1:31-33).

- [2] At this first siege, Nebuchadnezzar looted the Temple of the LORD, taking "part" of its treasures back to "Shinar" (i.e., ancient Hebrew name for the land of Babylon, equivalent to the Akkadian *Sumer*; Cp., Gen10:10) with him. That he only took part of the treasures of Judah is indicative of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar is not at this time intending to completely overthrow Judah, but merely put it under tribute; consistent with this, Jehoiakim is not deposed, but becomes a vassal king to Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar places the looted treasure from the Temple in "the treasure house of his god", which is Marduk (also called Bel, the patron deity of the city of Babylon). Doing this was a symbolic gesture meant to imply that the gods of Babylon were greater than the God of Israel, which was the reason for Babylon's military victory over Judah. The truth of the matter is, however, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, the only true God, is absolutely sovereign and is providentially directing all of human history; accordingly, He has delivered the Jewish people into the hands of the Babylonians as an instrument of His judgment for their sins (cf. Hab1:1-11).

- [3] Also at this time, the first of three deportations of Jews from Judah to Babylon takes place. In this deportation, "children" were taken, both those "of the king's seed" (i.e., from the immediate royal family) and "of the princes" (i.e., nobility of

Judah). They were put into the charge of "Ashpenaz", the master of Nebuchadnezzar's "eunuchs"; eunuchs were court officials, who were generally emasculated so that their loyalties would not be divided. Thus, the deported noble children of Judah were to become eunuchs in Babylon, which was prophesied by Isaiah to king Hezekiah (2Kgs20:17-18).

The deported children of the nobles of Judah were to be: 1) hostages, ensuring the vassal king in Jerusalem would not rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, and 2) candidates for official positions in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, such that he would have intimate knowledge of Hebrew language, religion and culture to aid in his rule over Judah.

- [4] The Hebrew word translated "children" is *yeled*, which has a range of meaning that includes very young children, adolescents, and even young adults; here, it is probably best to understand the deported "children" as youths (i.e., teenagers).

Nebuchadnezzar deported the best youths from the noble families of Judah. Thus, these were Jews who had already received the best education that Judah could provide. Subsequently, they would receive the best education available in Babylon. When their training was complete, they would be fluent in both Hebrew and Aramaic, with comprehensive understanding of both cultures. These individuals would become a pool of candidates for service in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

- [5] Their Chaldean indoctrination took 3 years, during which time they were extremely well-treated as future officials in the government of Babylon; this was a time of luxurious living, not deprivation.
- [6] Included in this deportation of children was Daniel; thus, Daniel was from a noble family of Judah, and may even have been from the royal family.
- [7] Daniel and his friends had names that honored the God of Israel, so Ashpenaz gives each of them new names that are appropriate for future officials of Babylon.

HEBREW NAME	BABYLONIAN NAME
DANIEL, means "God is Judge/Sovereign"	BELTESHAZZAR, means "Bel's prince"
HANANIAH, means "Grace of Yahweh"	SHADRACH, means "Command of Aku"
MISHAEL, means "Who is what God is?"	MESHACH, means "Who is like Aku"
AZARIAH, means "Whom Yahweh helps"	ABED-NEGO, means "Servant of Nebo"

It should not be overlooked that the giving of names to individuals was a sign of one's sovereignty/authority over them (Cp, Gen2:19-20, 23; 5:2). In each case, the names which honor the God of Israel (Yahweh) are changed to names that exalt the Babylonian gods (Bel/Marduk, the patron god of the city of Babylon; Aku, the moon god of Babylon; and Nebo/Nabo, the Babylonian god of knowledge).

DANIEL'S CHALLENGE TO GODLY LIVING IN A PAGAN CULTURE

- [8] If Daniel was a teenager at the time he was deported, he would have been born in Jerusalem during the reign of king Josiah, a time of spiritual revival in Judah (2Chr34-35). Apparently Daniel had been raised in a godly and devout home where he was taught the Scriptures, and he had already "purposed in his heart" that he would keep God's Law. Exile in a pagan land would make the keeping of the Law extremely difficult, but difficulty would not result in compromise for Daniel.

The requirements of the Law of Moses precluded a Jew from eating the food Nebuchadnezzar provided for several reasons: 1) Gentile preparation of meat would not conform to the requirements of the Law regarding the draining of blood (Lev17:10-14); 2) Gentiles would eat animals the Law declared unclean for the Jew (Lev11:1-47); 3) the Law forbid the Jew to eat flesh or drink wine sacrificed to pagan gods (Ex34:15; 1Cor10:19-21); and 4) to keep the prohibition against "strong drink", Jews diluted wine with water (Prov20:1; Isa5:11), a practice Gentiles did not observe.

Though Daniel had in advance "purposed in his heart" that he would keep the Law, he did not instigate a confrontation by a direct refusal to eat. Rather, he requested permission to abstain from "the prince of the eunuchs", the official charged with his care.

- [9] Daniel had already developed a friendly relationship with "the prince of the eunuchs", much as Joseph in prison had with his keeper (Gen39:21). In both instances, it was "the LORD" who "gave favor in the sight of the keeper"; thus, God provided "a way of escape" (1Cor10:13), that Daniel might not sin.
- [10] Because of their friendship, the prince of the eunuchs considers Daniel's request, but he is concerned with his personal accountability to the king. He has been charged with developing these youths both physically and intellectually to be prepared to serve in court, and he fears he will be held responsible if Daniel and his friends appear malnourished.

Note the use of plurals by the prince in responding to Daniel; though Daniel is the spokesman, his request apparently includes his three friends (v11). Presumably there were more Jewish youths in the training program besides Daniel and his three friends, but since the issue of diet only arises relative to Daniel, the implication is that the other Jewish youths were willing to compromise on the requirements of the Law and eat the king's food.

- [11] Since the prince of the eunuchs is hesitant, Daniel turns to the lower-level guard ("Melzar" is probably a Babylonian title rather than a proper name) who actually delivers his food.
- [12] To Melzar, Daniel proposes a test. Allow Daniel and his three friends to eat only vegetables and drink only water for 10 days, then determine by inspection if their health has suffered because of the alternate diet. By eating only vegetables and drinking only water, all of the concerns relative to the requirements of the Law disappear (see discussion at v8).

- [13] Daniel's proposal is the first of many demonstrations of his extraordinary faith in God (cf. Heb11:33) that will be evident throughout the book. There is no indication that God had directed him to make this proposal, nor is there any promise of Scripture that God will honor such a test. However, God had given the general promise that, "them who honor Me, I will honor" (1Sam2:30). Thus, Daniel chose a path that honored God, placing his destiny in God's hands, and is determined to accept whatever comes to pass as God's will.
- [14] Melzar consents to Daniel's proposed test.
- [15] At the end of the 10-day test, Daniel and his three friends appear "fairer and fatter" (i.e., healthier) than those eating the king's food. Since this goes against our understanding of nutrition, especially for growing youths, we must regard the preserved health of Daniel as a miracle of God.
- [16] Daniel's nourishment and health having been demonstrated by the test, Melzar permanently implements the alternate diet for Daniel and his three friends.
- [17] God not only granted that Daniel and his three friends excel physically (even on a substandard diet), but He also granted that they excel in their intellectual training as well. Individually, God granted Daniel mastery in oneiromancy (i.e., dream interpretation), again analogous to the gift of Joseph (Gen41:12).
- [18] At the end of their 3-year training program (v5), Nebuchadnezzar personally evaluated the youths.
- [19] Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to be the best and the brightest of all the graduates of the program, and he selected them (perhaps alone) to serve in his court.
- [20] In their service in advising the king, Daniel and his three friends proved to be "ten times better" than Nebuchadnezzar's other advisors, designated here as "magicians" and "astrologers".

Actually, the word translated "magicians" (KJV) is a Hebrew word for an occult practitioner, especially one who engages in astrology (i.e., an attempt to divine the future from the positions of heavenly bodies); the word translated "astrologers" is an Akkadian loan word meaning an occult practitioner in necromancy (i.e., an attempt to divine the future by consulting the spirits of the dead). Though Nebuchadnezzar's other advisors were involved in pagan and occult practices, there is no indication that Daniel and his three friends engaged in such practices, which God labels "an abomination", and which are expressly forbidden by the Law (Deut18:10-12).

- [21] Here the duration of Daniel's public service is said to have continued until "the first year of king Cyrus". If Daniel was deported to Babylon in 605 BC, then underwent a 3-year training program before being selected to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's court, his service began c. 602 BC. Cyrus' first year was c. 538 BC. Thus, Daniel served in the courts of both Babylon and Persia for

~65 years, probably into his early to mid-80's, with only a brief interruption during the days of king Belshazzar of Babylon (Dan5:10-12). Daniel lived even longer than this, since he received the vision of Daniel 10 in "the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia" (Dan10:1), which is the latest date mentioned in the book of Daniel.

CHAPTER 2

NEBUCHADNEZZAR DEMANDS THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DREAM

The Times of the Gentiles. Nebuchadnezzar's dream (and its interpretation by Daniel) is especially important as it is God's first revelation of "the times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24); a similar high-level overview of this period of time is also given in Daniel 7. The "times of the Gentiles" is that period of history during which the Davidic dynasty has been deposed and Gentiles have dominance over the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem. It began with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian conquest of Judah and will continue until the coming of Christ to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, over which He will rule from Jerusalem as the re-established Davidic monarch (Zech14:9-21; Luk1:31-33) with Israel as the "head" of the nations (Deut28:13). From Daniel's point of view, "the times of the Gentiles" is a very long period, as four Gentile world empires will each rise to power and then fall before the Kingdom of God is finally established.

- [1] The events of Daniel 2 take place "in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar". As discussed relative to Daniel 1:1, the Babylonian manner of reckoning a king's reign is used by Daniel; thus, Nebuchadnezzar's first year as king is reckoned as his 'ascension year', the second as his 'first year', the third as his 'second year', and so forth. Nebuchadnezzar subjugated Jerusalem and ascended to his father's throne in 605 BC, so the second year of his reign would be 603 BC. This is consistent with Daniel's 3-year training program, after which he was selected to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Dan1:18-20). If Daniel was 15 years old at the time of his deportation, he would be 17-18 years old at this time.

In the early years of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar is plagued by "dreams", so much so that he has difficulty getting adequate sleep. Since the king will subsequently demand that his wise men interpret a single "dream" (v3), the use of the plural "dreams" here must mean that Nebuchadnezzar was experiencing the same dream recurring repeatedly; indeed, the fact that he was having the same dream over and over again would have been part of what greatly "troubled" his spirit.

- [2] Nebuchadnezzar summons his court advisors to provide the interpretation of the "dreams". The classes of advisors in Nebuchadnezzar's court are in 4 categories: 1) "magicians", 2) "astrologers", 3) "sorcerers", and 4) "Chaldeans". The magicians, astrologers and sorcerers all used occult practices in the attempt to divine the future (including especially astrology and necromancy). The "Chaldeans" is not an ethnic designation, but a collective term for a distinct caste of wise men/advisors

(reputedly the wisest men of the ancient world). They too practiced the occult arts in their work for the king, so that all of Nebuchadnezzar's advisors (excepting Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) must be assumed to have been deeply demonized.

- [3] Here Nebuchadnezzar refers to the dream in the singular; the implication is that the same dream was repeatedly recurring.
- [4] The Chaldeans were the *de facto* leaders of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, particularly adept at dream interpretation, so they speak on behalf of all the king's advisors. They are confident of being able to provide the "interpretation" of the dream. With the words, "O King", the text of Daniel changes to **Aramaic**, which continues to Daniel 7:28. This is fitting since Aramaic was the language of Babylon, and became the *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East for centuries to come (even to the time of Christ), and the revelation given in Daniel 2-7 concerns the "times of the Gentiles"; in effect, God gives a special message to the Gentiles in their own language.
- [5] For both logical and linguistic reasons, "the thing is gone from me" is not an indication that Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten his dream. Here, "thing" is the same Aramaic word as "decree" (v9), so that what Nebuchadnezzar is saying is that 'the decree has gone out from me' in the sense that his command to interpret his dream has been issued and will not be altered. Nebuchadnezzar's decree is a test for his wise men; if they truly have the supernatural/occultic/spiritual power to interpret dreams, and by doing so discern the future, the king reasons that they ought also be able to use that same power to reconstruct the past. Thus, if they can accurately discern the content of his dream, he will have reason to believe their "interpretation" (v9).
- God's providential guiding of Nebuchadnezzar to make such a demand of his wise men sets up a public stage on which the sovereignty of Jehovah over/against the demon 'gods' of Babylon can be displayed, and Daniel can be exalted over the pagan advisors in the king's court.
- [6] A great reward is promised should they successfully give and interpret the dream, but failure to do so will result in their execution (v5).
- [8] Nebuchadnezzar rightly recognizes that the protestations of the wise men (v7) are merely an attempt to buy time and delay their response.
- [9] Nebuchadnezzar makes clear there will not be another "decree" that will change or remove their obligation to give the dream and its interpretation. His command is firm and will not be changed. It is clear that the king suspects his wise men to be charlatans (at best) whose counsel is nothing more than "lying and [the offering of] corrupt words". Recall that Nebuchadnezzar is a young man, having taken the throne following his father's untimely death only 3 years before; these wise men are undoubtedly older than he, and inherited from his father's court. The new king doesn't trust his father's advisors, and he has seized upon his recurring dream as a way of exposing them to be frauds.

- [10] Apparently a request to interpret a dream of the king's was not uncommon, but to make such a demand without providing the description of the dream was unprecedented.
- [11] Even these pagan wise men, with long experience in the practice of occultic arts, recognize the king's request is impossible. Not even their demons will be able to provide such information. By their own testimony, only "the gods" can do such a thing. It is fascinating that the Aramaic word here translated "gods" is the equivalent of the Hebrew *Elohim*, which although properly plural, is used of the triune God of the Bible; this Aramaic word is used by Daniel of Jehovah (v18). Thus, though probably not intentional, the lips of these pagans have confessed that only the LORD God can do what the king has commanded!
- [12] With the admission from his wise men that they cannot do as the king has demanded, Nebuchadnezzar commands that "all the wise men of Babylon" be executed.
- [13] Apparently, "Daniel and his fellows" have not been present in court to hear this decree from the king to interpret his dream. Nevertheless, they are caught up in this execution order simply by virtue of the fact that their positions in the king's court fall into this job category.

DANIEL LEARNS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

- [14] Daniel learns of the execution order only when "Arioch, the captain of the king's guard" arrives to take him into custody.
- [15] He also learns the reason for the execution order (i.e., failure of the wise men to tell and interpret the king's dream).
- [16] That Daniel has personal access to the king even after the execution order has been issued says a lot about Nebuchadnezzar's respect for the young boy. In addition, though the king had not accommodated the attempts from the wise men in court to buy time (v8), Nebuchadnezzar grants additional time to Daniel. For some reason, Nebuchadnezzar views Daniel differently; it is possible that Daniel had previously interpreted dreams (cf. Dan1:17), either for the king or for others of which the king had knowledge.
- [18] Daniel recruits his three faithful friends, "Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" to petition in prayer "the God of heaven" for mercy, that He would reveal the "secret" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that they "should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon". That Daniel prays for 'mercy' indicates that he recognizes God is not obligated to save him (Cp., Dan3:17-18).
- [19] God reveals the "secret" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in a "night vision"; apparently, in response to Daniel's request, the king had granted a stay of the execution order until the next day. A "vision" differs from a dream in that the recipient of a vision is awake. Notice Daniel's favorite designation for the LORD, "the God of heaven" (used 6 times in Daniel), which emphasizes the

sovereignty of the God [who is in heaven] over the affairs of man [on earth].

[20] Daniel acknowledges that "wisdom" (i.e., understanding) comes from God alone—would that believers today confess the same (Prov1:7; 9:10; Col2:2-3).

[21] Daniel professes his understanding of the absolute sovereignty of God, which manifests itself in His providential directing of the affairs of history; the events of history, even in pagan and Gentile lands, are not random or coincidental, but occur precisely in accordance with the decree and providence of God (Isa46:9-11). Nebuchadnezzar is on his throne and is exercising power over the Jewish people and the nation of Israel only because God has ordained it (Rom13:1). In Daniel 4, king Nebuchadnezzar will be brought to understand and confess this truth (Dan4:4-37).

Daniel's allusion to his recognition that God "changeth the times and the seasons" sets the context for his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is a revelation of the "times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24); during this period of time, four Gentile empires will rise and fall, all according to the decree of God.

[22] God alone has absolute knowledge of all things, and man can have certain understanding only of those things which God reveals.

[23] So God revealed to Daniel (note use of singular "me") and his three friends (note plural pronoun "us") both the king's dream and its interpretation. Apparently the vision was given directly to Daniel, who shared it with his three friends.

[24] Having understood the king's dream and its interpretation by revelation from God, Daniel petitions Arioch to stay the executions of "the wise men of Babylon" and to take him before Nebuchadnezzar, declaring that he will reveal to the king the interpretation of his dream.

[25] Arioch quickly rushes Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar. A classic bureaucrat, Arioch attempts to take credit before the king for his extraordinary skill at 'finding' the one who is able to interpret the king's dream, no doubt hoping for a reward from the king (for a 'feat' in which he played absolutely no part, for Daniel had come to him; v24).

[26] Nebuchadnezzar addresses Daniel using his Babylonian name, a name that honors Bel/Marduk (the patron 'god' of the city of Babylon). The king's question is, "Art thou [Daniel] able..." Daniel will be careful to assign credit where credit is due (v28).

[27] Daniel responds first by calling attention to the fact that the king's pagan advisors, relying upon their demon 'gods', could not do that which the king demanded. No doubt the king's court is filled with all of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, so that what Daniel will reveal will be a testimony to them as well as to the king.

[28] In contrast, only "the God of heaven" can do what the king has demanded. Through Daniel, God will make known to Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of his dream, which is indicated to be

prophetic and which is a revelation of what will take place "in the latter days". Daniel takes no personal credit for what he is about to do, but ascribes all glory to God.

- [29] Daniel makes clear that in his recurring dream God has revealed to Nebuchadnezzar "what shall come to pass" (i.e., the prophetic future).
- [30] Though God is using Daniel as His instrument to provide the interpretation of the king's dream, Daniel confesses there is no merit in himself deserving such an honor. He emphasizes to Nebuchadnezzar that his understanding of the dream did not come about by means of his personal "wisdom".

DANIEL REVEALS/INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

- [31] Daniel first describes the dream. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was that of a "great image" (i.e., statue or colossus). Its size was enormous, its appearance was brilliant, and its effect on the king was "terrible" (i.e., struck fear into the heart of the king).
- [32] The image was that of an enormous man, having a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze...
- [33] Legs of iron, and feet made partly of iron and partly of clay.
- [34] While the king was beholding the great image, a "stone [which was] cut without hands" smote the image on its feet, destroying the entire image.
- [35] The great image shattering into such small pieces that they were utterly carried away by the wind, disappearing completely, with nothing of them remaining. Then, in the place of the image, the stone which had destroyed it grew into a "great mountain" the filled the entire earth.

Observations on the Poly-metallic Image. It has been observed that the metals which comprise the image, considered in the order given (from top to bottom—gold, silver, bronze, iron, iron+clay), decrease in value, but increase in strength. The significance of these trends seems to be: 1) The character of the quality of rule decreases with each subsequent kingdom. Babylon was a hereditary dynasty where the monarch was absolutely sovereign, a law unto himself (Dan5:18-19). Persia was a hereditary dynasty, but the monarch himself was subject to the law (Est1:19; Dan6:8). Greece had no hereditary dynasty, with each subsequent king taking the throne by force. Finally, Rome was a republic. 2) Though the power of the monarch decreases with each subsequent kingdom, its size and strength increases. Finally, the "stone cut without hands" is indicative of a supernatural, divine work; the coming of the Kingdom of God will not be through gradual human effort, but will come suddenly from heaven to be established over the whole earth.

- [36] Thus, Daniel has recounted for Nebuchadnezzar and all the wise men the king's dream, and he now proceeds to its interpretation.
- [37] From the human perspective, Nebuchadnezzar was a "king of kings", an absolute despot who was above the law, even a law unto himself (Cp., Jer27:6-8; Dan5:18-19). He had been given this position of absolute power by "the God of heaven" (cf. Rom13:1).
- [38] The potential earthly sovereignty God had granted to Nebuchadnezzar was essentially unlimited. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire is the "head of gold" seen in the image; that is, the first Gentile world empire to rule during "the times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24).
- [39] But Babylon will not endure indefinitely; it will wane in power and be replaced by another kingdom "inferior" to it, seen as the breast and arms of silver in the image (i.e., Medo-Persia; named in Dan8:20). The second kingdom will be replaced by a third, seen as the belly and thighs of bronze in the image (i.e., Greece; named in Dan8:21). This third kingdom will "rule over all the earth", indicating its geographical extent will greatly surpass that of the two preceding kingdoms.
- [40] Finally, the third kingdom will be replaced by a fourth, seen as the legs of iron in the image. This fourth kingdom is Rome. Though not specifically named in Daniel, Daniel does reveal it will be the kingdom that destroys the Temple following the coming of Messiah (Dan9:26), which we know to have been the Roman Empire; it is from this kingdom that Antichrist will come (Dan9:27), which is why he is often characterized as the coming ruler of the Revived Roman Empire. As iron was the strongest of all metals in Daniel's day, the fourth kingdom will be the strongest of all. Historically, Rome conquered and assimilated all the peoples and lands of the three previous kingdoms. Daniel's fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, is prophetically the most important, as Daniel speaks more of it than the other three combined.
- [41] In the image, the feet made partly of iron and partly of clay are not a fifth kingdom, but a chronologically 2nd phase of the fourth kingdom (often referred to as the Revived Roman Empire). Being comprised partly of "iron", it will retain some of the strength and characteristics of its former phase, but the introduction of "clay" indicates there will be a new characteristic that weakens the kingdom relative to its former character.
- [42] While two metals mixed together can produce an alloy that is stronger than either individual metal, iron and clay cannot be so mixed; they are immiscible. Thus, a characteristic of the final phase of the Roman Empire will be one that is weak and prone to fracture due to the mixing of incompatible components. The detail of the "toes of the feet", namely that there are ten, is significant and will be developed in later prophecies of Daniel as well as Revelation (Dan7:7, 24; Cp., Rev13:1-6; 17:12-13).
- [43] Here Daniel gives the source of the weakness of the final phase of the Roman Empire. Its attempt to "mingle themselves with the seed of men", that is assimilate peoples of diverse and incompatible cultures, ethnicities, and religions, perhaps under a democratic

form of government (which is inherently unstable), will result in an empire that is only weakly consolidated and subject to fragmentation along cultural and ethnic lines.

The Two Phases of the Roman Empire. There has been much confusion and misunderstanding regarding the two phases of the fourth kingdom, even by premillennial and dispensational theologians. The legs of iron are the **historical Roman Empire** which was in full power when Messiah came (i.e., the first advent). With Israel's rejection of Messiah, a 'parenthesis' (or gap) in God's program with national Israel (which is the major subject of OT prophecy) was inserted (Cp., Dan9:26), during which time the birth, growth and completion of the Church occurs. Since the NT teaches that the Church was a "mystery" (Eph3:2-10), no prophecy in the OT foresees the Church Age. Thus, nothing in Nebuchadnezzar's image portrays the Roman Empire during the Church Age (i.e., from 32 AD to the present time).

The feet made of iron mixed with clay is the **prophetic** (or Revived) **Roman Empire**. This is the form of the Roman Empire that will be in place when the Church is completed and raptured, and God resumes His program with national Israel. For this reason, Nebuchadnezzar's image includes the two related but distinct phases of the fourth kingdom, but with no gap between them; the 'gap' of the Church Age is always hidden in OT prophecies.

Context of the 4 Gentile Kingdoms. It is important to remember that the context and perspective of OT prophecy is always the nation and Land of Israel. While there certainly have been other great Gentile empires (besides Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) that have risen to power since this prophecy was given, they have not controlled the people and Land of Israel. From the perspective of Israel, they will be oppressed by these 4 Gentile kingdoms, in this precise order, before the Kingdom of God comes.

- [44] Once the 4 Gentile kingdoms have run their appointed course, "the God of heaven" will establish His Kingdom (i.e., the Kingdom of God), that will "stand forever". This will take place "in the days of these kings"; "these kings" is a reference to the 10 kings represented by the 10 toes of the image, who rule during the Revived Roman Empire (recall in the dream, the stone smashes the image by impacting its feet; v34).
- [45] When used symbolically, the "stone" almost always refers to Christ (e.g., Gen 49:24; Ps118:22; Isa8:14; 28:16; Matt21:42; Eph2:20; 1Pet2:6-8). In the dream it was said to be "cut out without hands" (v34), emphasizing its supernatural character. Thus, the "stone" that smashes the final Gentile empire is Christ at His second coming. It is sudden and supernatural. The Kingdom of God is not the Church, nor will it be brought in through gradual human (even Christian) effort, but it will be set up personally by the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. In bringing in His Kingdom, He will destroy the Gentile kingdoms in rebellion against God (Rev19:11-21).

The symbol of the "mountain" refers to kingdom or government (Isa2:2-4). The Kingdom of God will have dominion over the entire earth, with Christ as King (Zech14:9), just as in the dream the mountain "filled the whole earth" (v35). There is nothing more "certain" or "sure" than the coming of the Kingdom of God, and Jesus Christ its King (Rev19:15-16), to this earth.

DANIEL REWARDED

- [46] Nebuchadnezzar attempts to worship Daniel the man, ordering offerings to be made to him that even in the Babylonian pagan religion were offered only to 'gods'.
- [47] Presumably Daniel is protesting the king's attempt to worship him personally (Cp., Act14:1-15; Rev22:8-9), so that the king offers an explanation for his actions. Nebuchadnezzar confesses that the God of Daniel has done what none of his pagan (demon) gods can do: 1) discern his innermost thoughts/dreams, and 2) reveal the future (Isa41:21-23).

Zoroastrianism. It is interesting that secular history (Herodotus, writing c. 440 BC) records that Zoroastrianism, a *monotheistic* religion, began in the ancient near east during the 5th century BC. It is quite likely that it did so as a result of Daniel's Biblical influence from his high positions within both the Babylonian and Persian empires, and especially as "chief... over all the wise men of Babylon" (v48).

- [48] Nebuchadnezzar rewards Daniel with both gifts and by elevating him to be "ruler over the whole province of Babylon", in effect prime minister under the king. Possibly even more important, however, is Daniel's promotion to "chief" over "all the wise men of Babylon".

Daniel's Connection to the Magi. Daniel's promotion, early in his career, to the position as chief of the wise men of Babylon is the likely explanation for the visit of the Magi to Jerusalem at the time of Christ's birth (Matt2:1). Daniel no doubt shared his prophetic visions, and his understanding of them in light of the other OT Scriptures, with the wise men over which he presided. With Daniel 9:25 they were in possession of a precise numerical prediction of the time of Messiah's coming, and apparently linked that time with the appearance of the "star out of Jacob" prophesied by Balaam (recorded in Num24:17), Balaam being a Gentile prophet from Mesopotamia (Deut23:4) who himself may have been a member of, or even the founder of, this group of "wise men" from the east".

Sadly, these Babylonian wise men, influenced by Daniel their chief, took the Hebrew Scripture in their possession more seriously than did the "chief priests and scribes" (Matt2:4) of Israel, such that the arrival of Messiah was not a surprise to them as it was to most of the Jewish nation.

[49] Daniel did not forget his friends. At his request, they also were elevated to high government positions (recall that the king was already greatly impressed with them; Dan1:20), apparently with responsibilities in the field, while Daniel remained "in the gate" (lit., court) of the king as Nebuchadnezzar's most trusted personal advisor. With Daniel and his three friends in senior positions within the Babylonian government, God has providentially provided an environment (from a human perspective) that will ensure the preservation of the Jewish people during their exile in Babylon.

CHAPTER 3

NEBUCHADNEZZAR DEMANDS WORSHIP OF HIS GOLDEN IMAGE

It is not indicated how much time has passed between the events of Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation by Daniel) and that of Daniel 3. It is likely that not a great deal of time has passed. Nebuchadnezzar has not yet been humbled (Dan4), and his pride motivates him to pervert divinely revealed truth (the colossus of his dream and its interpretation) into his own image; as the Bible asserts, unregenerate man ALWAYS acts to pervert his knowledge of God into apparent agreement with his own system of unbelief (Rom1:18-23). Furthermore, still smarting from the exaltation of Daniel and his friends into positions of authority over them, the upstaged wise men of Babylon likely see this as an opportunity to exact revenge on the Jewish youths.

An obvious question that comes to mind relative to the events recorded in this chapter is, "Where is Daniel?" Had Daniel been present he undoubtedly would have been accused by the Chaldeans with "the Jews" who refused to bow before the image (Dan3:8). The conclusion is that Daniel was not present; perhaps he was away on business related to his official position, and whose absence may have emboldened the Chaldeans to act against his junior associates.

[1] Nebuchadnezzar constructs an image, but unlike the image in his dream, this image is made entirely of gold. Since Daniel's interpretation of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream indicated that the image prophetically represented the future course of history from Nebuchadnezzar to the coming Kingdom of God, Nebuchadnezzar's action implies he has rejected God's revelation that his kingdom will eventually be replaced by another. Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold is an assertion, in absolute contradiction with the Word of God, that his kingdom will never end!

The dimensions of the image are 60 cubits high by 6 cubits wide (approximately 90-ft high by 9-ft wide). The 10-to-1 ratio of these dimensions would result in a human figure that is unnaturally narrow, which may indicate that a platform to elevate the image is included in these dimensions. Indeed, a large platform measuring 45-ft by 45-ft by 18-ft high has been uncovered 6 miles from the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon, which may well have been the base of this image. This is a colossal construction to be made of gold, which even if only gold-plated would represent an unimaginable fortune. Being made of gold,

which symbolized Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's interpretation of the dream (Dan2:37-38), the image represents Nebuchadnezzar himself, and it would likely have been fashioned in his own likeness; thus, to bow down to the image was to express worship of Nebuchadnezzar the man (i.e., a creature), which is unequivocally forbidden in Scripture (Ex20:4-5).

This rebellion of Nebuchadnezzar "in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon", is reminiscent of Nimrod's previous rebellion against God's clearly revealed will at this same location (Gen10:8-10; 11:1-9).

- [2] With the construction of his image complete, Nebuchadnezzar calls all of his government officials, from all of the provinces, to Babylon for the "dedication of the image".

King Zedekiah of Judah in Attendance? Jeremiah notes that Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, traveled to Babylon in the 4th year of his reign (Jer51:59). It is quite possible that as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal king in Jerusalem his presence in Babylon was required along with the many officials listed in this verse on the occasion of the dedication of the image. If true, that would put the events of Daniel 3 in the 12th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (c. 593 BC) and make Daniel about 27 years old.

- [3] All of Babylon's officials are assembled before the image. Admittedly, Daniel's absence is puzzling; we must ascribe it to a providential purpose of God.
- [4] Note that Babylon at this time is a "world" empire, having assimilated many diverse "people, nations, and languages".
- [5] Apparently the officials summoned were unaware of the reason for their assembly, but Nebuchadnezzar's intentions are now made clear. Having constructed an image of gold, after his likeness, and which is an implicit assertion that his kingdom will never end, he commands all his subjects to "worship the golden image" at the appointed time.

Critical Note on Greek Loan Words. The presence of three Greek words in the Aramaic text of this verse has been the subject of considerable attack by modern higher critics. The "harp", "psaltery", and "dulcimer" are Greek instruments, and their Greek names (so-called Greek loan words) are used by Daniel. Critics have long argued that the knowledge and use of these Greek words as far away as Babylon was not plausible until after Alexander had exported the Greek language throughout his empire, which did not occur until centuries after the time of Daniel. From this assertion they conclude that the Book of Daniel could not have been written in the 6th century BC, as it purports to have been. It has subsequently been demonstrated, however, that considerable interaction occurred between the Babylonian empire and eastern Europe, including Greece, and that the army of Nebuchadnezzar even employed Greek mercenaries. Thus, it is not unexpected that 3 technical Greek words for musical instrument should be found in an Aramaic text written in the 6th century; conversely, had the Book of Daniel actually been written in the 2nd century BC (as the unbelieving critics wish to establish), at a time when the Greek

language was in widespread use throughout the Ancient Near East, it would be amazing (actually, inconceivable) that only 3 Greek words find their way into the Aramaic text of Daniel.

- [6] Refusal to worship the golden image carries the death penalty (Cp., Rev13:15), in this case by means of being burned alive in a "fiery furnace". According to the Code of Hammurabi, an ancient Babylonian text, this was a common form of capital punishment (Cp., Jer29:22).
- [7] At the appointed time corresponding to the playing of the music, all of the pagan Gentile peoples obeyed and worshipped the image of Nebuchadnezzar.

JEWISH REFUSAL TO WORSHIP THE IMAGE

- [8] The pagan Gentiles have no problem worshipping the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Since their pagan worldview includes belief in a pantheon of 'gods', not all of which are known to them at any given time, it's no problem for them to incorporate a new 'god' into their system. However, the Jewish worldview based on the revelation of God as given in Scripture is incompatible with this demand. The Jews believe in One God, Jehovah (Deut6:5), who has commanded that they worship no other 'god', nor bow down to any image (Ex20:1-5). In fact, it was Jewish worship of idols, especially under king Manasseh, that God gives as His reason for dispersing the nation out of the Promised Land (2Kgs21:1-15; 24:1-3, cf. Deut4:23-27)—the Jews are in captivity in Babylon for the sin of worshipping idols!

Thus, there is refusal by "the Jews" (at least 3 of them) to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. The "Chaldeans", the *de facto* leaders of the wise men of Babylon, seize on this opportunity to accuse "the Jews" who have been put in authority over them.

- [11] The Chaldeans remind Nebuchadnezzar of his command and his prescribed penalty for disobedience; they want to make sure the king has publicly bought into his own program (putting him into a box) before their revelation of the offenders. The undercurrent here is that the Chaldeans understand that the Jewish advisors have found special favor with Nebuchadnezzar, and the king might be inclined to grant them a special dispensation relative to worship of the image.
- [12] The Chaldeans point out that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, "whom [Nebuchadnezzar] has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon", refuse to honor the king by worshipping his image. It is not indicated whether the Jewish refusal is limited only to these three, or whether it was more widespread; in either case, it is Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who occupy positions of authority over the Chaldeans, whom they accuse. It is inconceivable that a similar accusation against Daniel would not have also been put forward, had he been present.
- [13] Embarrassed that this act of disrespect by his closest advisors has been publicly revealed, Nebuchadnezzar is furious.

- [14] Can it be true that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, the objects of Nebuchadnezzar's special favor, have dishonored him by publicly refusing to worship his image?
- [15] Nebuchadnezzar's special favor of these Jews is evident in his granting them a 'second chance' (or an opportunity to prove the Chaldeans' charge to be false). If they will now obey and worship his image, all will be "well". If not, however, the command to cast them into the "fiery furnace" will be carried out immediately. By refusing to worship his image, the Jews affirm that Nebuchadnezzar is not a 'god'; Nebuchadnezzar's question to them is, if they do not honor him as a 'god', what "God" will be able to deliver them out of his hand? Nebuchadnezzar has cast the conflict in terms of a confrontation between the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Jehovah, the God of Israel) and the 'gods' of Babylon (or Nebuchadnezzar himself as a 'god').
- [16] The Jewish response to Nebuchadnezzar reveals a bold faith (commended by allusion in Heb11:34). They are not "careful" or anxious in any way by the position they must take on this issue with the king, but are rather at perfect peace in the knowledge that they are walking in the revealed will of God (Cp., Philip4:6-7).
- [17] Their confession (which is the source of their comfort and confidence) is that their God, the true and living Jehovah God, "is able to deliver" them. God is omnipotent, and He has the power to save them out of the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian 'gods'. Note that although these Jews are high government officials in the Babylonian empire, they "serve" God.
- [18] However, along with their confession that God has the power to save them is also their understanding that delivering them in this particular circumstance may not be God's purpose or will. Countless numbers of saints throughout the ages have brought glory to God by dying for their faith; Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego recognize that this may be God's will for them. Regardless of which path God has chosen for them, however, their trust in Him will not fail, and they will not compromise their obedience to Him; even if they die as a consequence, they will not worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. To obey God was more important than life to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Spiritual Principle. The faith demonstrated by Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego is a pattern for all believers. We serve a God we know to be all powerful. But while God is always able to deliver us from any temporal circumstance of persecution, suffering, disease, or even death, it is not always His will to do so. We confess with the Apostle Paul, "And we know that [God works] **all things** together for good to them that love [Him], to them who are the called **according to His purpose**" (Rom8:28), and this includes even the persecution, suffering and death of His saints; recall when the Lord called Paul, He informed him "how great things he must suffer *for my name's sake*" (Act9:16), and no one suffered like Paul (e.g., 2Cor11:23-27). Our profession and belief that what God has revealed must be true is faith, even though we often do not see in the present life how this truth is manifested—thus, "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2Cor5:7). Our faith must

never be constrained by our circumstances; rather, our circumstances are to be understood through the lens of our faith (Rom4:19-21). Modern proponents of the so-called 'prosperity gospel', who allege that any suffering or want in the life of a believer is due to a lack of faith on the believer's part, are false prophets who teach lies and "doctrines of demons" (1Tim4:1-2).

SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABED-NEGO CAST INTO A FIERY FURNACE

- [19] Nebuchadnezzar commands that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego be cast into a furnace of fire heated to seven times its normal condition; presumably this is figurative language meaning the furnace was heated as hot as possible. Being burned to death is a terrible way to die, and Satan has long motivated his followers to kill the saints of God in this way.
- [20] The need for "the most mighty men" of Nebuchadnezzar's army to cast the 3 Jews into the furnace is not because of any resistance on the part of the Jews (indeed, they are bound), but as will be seen (v22) the overheating of the furnace has made approaching it unusually difficult.
- [21] Being cast into the furnace heavily laden with all their clothing will serve to delay death and increase suffering.
- [22] The fire in the furnace was stoked to such an unusually high intensity that the men responsible for casting the Jews into it were themselves killed (perhaps by an unexpected backdraft when a door was opened to cast in the Jews).
- [23] Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego survive the backdraft that kills their captors and fall into the furnace still bound.
- [24] Notice the use of the plural pronoun "did not we cast..."; is Nebuchadnezzar attempting to include others in the blame for his actions?
- [25] The king sees the three Jews who were cast into the furnace bound to be both freed of their bonds and walking alive "in the midst of the fire". Furthermore, he sees a fourth man in the fire with them, who he describes as having the appearance "like the Son of God". Modern translations render Nebuchadnezzar's description as 'son of the gods', but the Aramaic word is identical to that used by Daniel of the LORD (e.g., Dan2:19). The reasonable inference is that the fourth Person in the fire is a theophany (or Christophany), a physical manifestation of the Second Person of the Godhead. Though Nebuchadnezzar would have no idea who this Person was, he obviously recognized him to be of a supernatural character distinct from the 3 Jews.

Spiritual Principle. When the Lord in His sovereignty and providence determines not to deliver us from a circumstance of suffering, He has not abandoned us. Indeed, **He is** always **with us** in our trials (Matt28:20; cf. Act9:4).

- [26] In the presence of an obvious miraculous deliverance, Nebuchadnezzar summons Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to come out of the furnace. He recognizes that the Jews serve "the Most High God", which is something still short of acknowledging Jehovah to be the only true God (it's merely acknowledging the God of Israel to be more powerful than the gods of Babylon). Nothing is said about the fourth man being called out of the fire.
- [27] This clearly miraculous deliverance (i.e., hair not singed, not even a smell of smoke) of the Jews was witnessed not only by Nebuchadnezzar, but by all the officials of the Babylonian empire. Such a deliverance during the coming captivity of Judah had been prophesied by Isaiah (Isa43:2) to be a clear testimony to the Gentiles of the sovereignty of Jehovah, the only true God, over against their demon 'gods' (Isa43:10-15).

Tribulation Typology in Daniel 3. The historical scenario recorded in Daniel 3 is laden with typology related to the future 7-year Tribulation period (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week). Nebuchadnezzar is a *type* of the Antichrist, the Gentile ruler of the dominant world empire, who demands that all worship his image under penalty of death (2Thess2:3-4; Rev13:15); note the predominance of the number "6" associated with both Nebuchadnezzar (Dan3:1) and the Antichrist (Rev13:18). Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego are a *type* of the believing remnant of the nation of Israel who refuse to worship the image, become a special object of persecution (Rev12:13), but are supernaturally preserved alive to the end of the Tribulation by the Son of God/Messiah (Isa63:1-9; Rev12:14-17).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR PROMOTES SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABED-NEGO

- [28] The faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to their God, and His supernatural deliverance of them out of the furnace by what he describes as an "angel" (but which may well have been the Angel of the LORD), makes a significant impression on Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar 'blesses' their "God", and even acknowledges the power of their God over him. And yet, Nebuchadnezzar stops short of acknowledging Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true God. Nebuchadnezzar is not yet converted, he merely realizes (and confesses) that the Hebrew God has power over him (i.e., the God of Israel is more powerful than his 'gods').
- [29] Nebuchadnezzar decrees that all in his kingdom will honor "the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego", not because He is the only God, but because "no other god can deliver after this sort". This is a standard pagan accommodation technique when faced with clear testimony to the existence of the true God—add Jehovah to their already-existing pagan pantheon of 'gods' (Cp., Act14:8-11).
- [30] Nebuchadnezzar had previously put Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego "over the affairs of the province of Babylon" (Dan2:49), which had outraged the Chaldeans, but now he promotes them to even higher positions.

CHAPTER 4

THE HUMBLING OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Considerable time has passed since the events of Daniel 3, which likely occurred in 593 BC (Jer51:59). Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605-562 BC. His extensive construction projects were completed prior to his period of insanity (Dan4:30). His period of insanity lasted for 7 years (Dan4:16), after which he was restored to his throne for a brief period before his death. Though it cannot be dated exactly, it is reasonable to conclude that the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation by Daniel recorded in Daniel 4 took place in the 575-570 BC timeframe, approximately 25 years after the fiery furnace experience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in Daniel 3, when Daniel was 45-50 years old. Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and public testimony, which occur at the end of the 7-year period of insanity, would have occurred c. 565 BC, when Daniel was in his mid-50s.

- [1] The text of Daniel 4 is written in the first person from the perspective of Nebuchadnezzar. Verses 1-3 introduce the entire chapter as an official communication from king Nebuchadnezzar to all the subjects in his empire. Undoubtedly this text was circulated widely throughout the Babylonian empire and read by countless government officials (among others) before God led Daniel to incorporate it into his own inspired writings. God used this decree of Nebuchadnezzar to evangelize the entire Babylonian empire with knowledge of the one true God.

God's Witness to the Gentiles. Scripture testifies that the creation itself (i.e., general revelation) is a universal, non-verbal witness to the existence and power of God, such that all men everywhere are without excuse for their rebellion against Him (Ps19:1-6; Rom1:18-20). God's witness to the Gentiles, however, was never confined to general revelation alone. Through the channel of His covenant people Israel, God witnessed directly and verbally to all the great Gentile kings and kingdoms.

- 1) EGYPT: Joseph and Moses to Pharaoh (Gen41-50; Exod5-14)
- 2) ASSYRIA: Jonah to Nineveh (Jon3:5-6)
Isaiah/Hezekiah to Sennacherib (Isa37:36-37)
- 3) BABYLON: Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan4) and Belshazzar (Dan5)
- 4) PERSIA: Daniel to Darius (Dan6:25-27)
Esther/Mordecai to Xerxes (Est10:1-3)
- 5) GREECE: Jaddua the High Priest to Alexander (Josephus)
- 6) ROME: Christ to Pilate (Mk15:2); Paul to Nero (Act9:15)

- [2] This communication of Nebuchadnezzar is introduced as his praise of the supernatural, miraculous works of "the High God". The implication is that he has recognized that the works of the God of Daniel are unique and utterly distinct from the works of the so-called Babylonian gods.
- [3] Nebuchadnezzar includes a quote from David's Psalm 145:13 in his public proclamation, surprising coming from a Babylonian king. We must recall, however, that by this time Nebuchadnezzar has been under the daily, intimate influence of Daniel for 3 decades. The

importance of the quote is that Nebuchadnezzar has (finally) correctly perceived the sovereignty of God (Cp., v30).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM OF THE GREAT TREE

- [4] This dream of Nebuchadnezzar comes when he is "at rest" and "flourishing". That is, near the end of his long 40+ year reign, after his wars and great construction projects are over. As will be seen, Nebuchadnezzar is at this time at the zenith of his power and personal pride (v30).
- [5] The LORD gives Nebuchadnezzar a second prophetic dream, the first being that of the poly-metallic image some 30 years previous. As before, this dream is recognized as something extraordinary, such that it greatly "troubled" the king (Cp., Dan2:1).
- [6] Following the previous (customary) pattern, Nebuchadnezzar summons the "wise men of Babylon" to interpret his dream (Cp., Dan2:2). Though Daniel was long ago made "master" over these wise men (Dan2:48), a position he has retained to this time (v9), he is not initially included in the summons. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar realizes this dream, as before, is from the God of Daniel, and he suspects/fears an ominous interpretation. Recall, he already understands from the previous dream that his kingdom will come to an end (Dan2:39). It may be that Nebuchadnezzar, still in his unregenerate state, much like king Ahab seeks out 'prophets' who will deliver a pleasant message rather than the truth (1Kgs22:5-8; Cp., 2Tim4:1-4).
- [7] The pagan wise men are not able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream; that they do not even try may mean they were restrained by the LORD from doing so, much as the pagan prophet Balaam was restrained from prophesying falsely (Num22:12).
- [8] Unable to obtain counsel from the pagan wise men, Nebuchadnezzar "at the last" resorts to Daniel. Daniel is still known in the court of Babylon as "Belteshazzar", where *Bel* is the Aramaic for 'Lord' (cognate with the Hebrew *Baal*), and when used by Nebuchadnezzar is a reference to Marduk, chief of the gods in the Babylonian pantheon and patron of the city of Babylon.
- [9] Note that Nebuchadnezzar characterizes Daniel as one in whom is "the spirit of the holy gods". It is possible for the Aramaic phrase to be rendered "the Spirit of the Holy God", referring to Jehovah the God of Daniel, although in Nebuchadnezzar's unregenerate state this is probably unlikely. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar clearly recognizes that the spirit that empowers Daniel is different than the spirits that empower his pagan counselors. This distinction is also supported by Nebuchadnezzar's use of the adjective "holy" as applied to the spirit behind Daniel, which would not have been used as a description of the Babylonian demon-gods (even by the Babylonians who worshipped them!).

Nebuchadnezzar's characterization of Daniel as one who "no secret troubleth" is also used by the prophet Ezekiel to describe Daniel

(Ezek28:3). Nebuchadnezzar expects Daniel to be able to interpret his dream, which is likely why he did not initially summon him!

- [10] Nebuchadnezzar's dream was that of a tree. It's location "in the midst of the earth" seems to emphasize its central importance.
- [11] The outstanding characteristics of the tree were: 1) the tree grew rapidly until the height of it was great, reaching all the way to heaven (Cp., Gen11:4); 2) it was strong; 3) it was outwardly beautiful; 4) its shade provided shelter, and its fruit provided nourishment for "all flesh".
- [12] Ezekiel also used trees as symbols for great Gentile kings (Ezek31:1-14). The dream to this point probably didn't trouble Nebuchadnezzar; in fact, if he discerned himself to be the great tree providing for the whole earth, it was probably a source of pride for him.
- [13] Much (far too much) has been made by some of Nebuchadnezzar's use of the term "watcher" for "an holy one" he sees descend from heaven in his dream. This creature is obviously an angelic herald sent by the LORD to earth with a divine decree, as occurs often in Scripture (Ps103:20). Daniel 4, from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar, is the only place in Scripture where an angel is called a "watcher", which translates an Aramaic word associated with Babylonian political/military bureaucracy, and which is never used by any prophet of God. Remember, this portion of Daniel 4 was written by the newly converted king Nebuchadnezzar (a lifelong pagan) and may be spiritually immature and theologically imprecise language rather than a new, previously unrevealed rank within the angelic host. Scripture does teach that angels watch intently events transpiring on earth (cf. Zech1:9-11; 1Cor4:9; Eph3:10; 1Pet1:12), so such a description of angels in general is not unreasonable.
- [14] The angel's proclamation, which comes with the authority of heaven, is to hew down the great tree, such that the shelter and nourishment it provided ceases.

The Providence of God and the Agency of Angels. The greatest kingdom the world had experienced up to that time, the Babylonian empire, was ended by the decree of God delivered by an angel; a world dictator is going to be afflicted with a mental illness by the word of an angel. In Daniel 10 it will be revealed that an unseen angelic conflict is also behind the historical courses of both the Persian and Greek empires (Dan10:13,20), and by implication behind all of world history. God controls history (Prov21:1; Isa46:9-10; Rom13:1), and He does so through the agency of angels. For this reason, world history cannot be understood apart from a recognition of the providence and sovereignty of God. To seek a naturalistic explanation for the events of history apart from a recognition of the revealed plan and purpose of God and His providential control of history is unbiblical. Unbelieving historians who exclude *a priori* the providence of God from their attempts to construct a philosophy of history necessarily reach incorrect conclusions.

- [15] However, the tree is not to be utterly destroyed (an act of grace), as the command is to allow the "stump" of it to remain, although that stump is to be bound in "iron and bronze". Notice that here the proclamation changes from use of the impersonal pronoun "it" to the personal pronoun "him", with the additional revelation that the subject of the decree will dwell outside with the "beasts", eating "grass" for nourishment. Presumably this portion of the dream was the part that troubled Nebuchadnezzar.
- [16] The prophesied judgment is a dementia that reduces a man to the behavior of a beast for a period of "seven times"; here, "times" should be understood to be 'years' as this is how the expression is used throughout the Book of Daniel (e.g., Dan7:25; 12:7; cf. Rev12:14).
- [17] The purpose for the coming judgment is that Nebuchadnezzar (both personally, and by his public profession his entire kingdom) would "know" that "the Most High [God]" is sovereign over all affairs of history, including the rising and falling of Gentile kings and their kingdoms; the LORD even puts wicked men (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) into positions of power to fulfill His purposes (Cp., Isa45:1-4). Note that "the Most High God" is the identity by which Jehovah reveals Himself to Gentiles throughout the OT; "the Most High God" is "the possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen14:22), a designation that emphasizes His absolute sovereignty.
- [18] Nebuchadnezzar's pagan "wise men" having failed to interpret the dream, the king resorts to Daniel confident that he will be able to provide the interpretation. As in v9, it is possible for the Aramaic phrase to be rendered "the Spirit of the Holy God" as an explicit reference to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

DANIEL INTERPRETS THE DREAM OF THE GREAT TREE

- [19] Whereas Daniel had had no hesitation in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's previous dream in Daniel 3, he is reluctant to provide the interpretation of this dream. His hesitation could have been a reluctance to be the bearer of bad news to a pagan despot (fearing for his personal security), but knowing the character of Daniel this is not likely the reason. Rather, after having been an intimate advisor to the king for more than 3 decades, Daniel had apparently developed a genuine love for Nebuchadnezzar.
- [22] Daniel reveals that the great tree in the dream represents Nebuchadnezzar, an interpretation the king probably expected. As the tree sheltered and nourished all the beasts of the earth, so Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom had dominion over the whole earth.
- [24] Now Daniel moves to the second phase of the interpretation. In doing so, he indicates that "the decree of the watchers" (v17) is "the decree of the Most High [God]".
- [25] Daniel's continuing interpretation reveals that Nebuchadnezzar will suffer an affliction that will result in his living as a

beast in the field and eating grass as they do. This is a mental disorder known today as **boanthropy** which, although extremely uncommon, has been clinically observed. Daniel confirms that Nebuchadnezzar will live in this demented condition for "seven times" (i.e., 7 years). This mental disorder is a judgment of the LORD on Nebuchadnezzar for the purpose of humbling him, such that he will acknowledge the sovereignty and providence of "the Most High [God]" (Cp., Rom13:1).

- [26] But there is a message of grace included in the interpretation. The fact that the great tree is not totally destroyed, and a stump of it is to remain, indicates that Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom will be preserved and restored "after" he has acknowledged the sovereignty of God. This is a remarkable work of God in history, as the preservation for 7 years of a demented despot's kingdom from rivals for his throne is unprecedented.
- [27] Having faithfully provided the interpretation of the dream, Daniel immediately counsel's Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins. The implication is that personal repentance on the part of Nebuchadnezzar could even now avert the pronounced judgment of God, just as the repentance of the king of Assyria and the people of Nineveh resulted in God showing them mercy (Jon3:4-10; cf. Jer18:7-8).

THE DREAM FULFILLED IN HISTORY

- [28] God's Word is sure and will certainly come to pass (Num23:19).
- [29] The LORD gave Nebuchadnezzar "twelve months" (one full year) to repent following the dream.
- [30] Apparently the dream and its divine warning was quickly forgotten, or simply disregarded. Nebuchadnezzar did not repent of his sin of personal pride; if anything, it increased. Note the repetition of "I", "my", "my".

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. Ancient Babylon was indeed magnificent. The excavations of Babylon by archeologist Robert Koldewey (1899-1917) revealed the following characteristics. Babylon was protected by double walls, 25-ft. thick with 40-ft. between, enclosing a city of 10 miles in circumference. The walls included 260 towers spaced every 160-ft. The most prominent feature inside the city was the Tower of Babylon, a 7-story ziggurat, on top of which was the Temple of Marduk housing a solid gold statue of the city's patron deity which according to Herodotus weighed 26 tons. Adjacent to Nebuchadnezzar's royal palace were terraced gardens, built by the king for his Median wife Amytis as a reminder of her homeland. The gardens were constructed atop stone arches and equipped with draw wells and chain pumps. The so-called "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" were regarded by Greek historians as one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World. Six massive columns recovered contain inscriptions that extol the architectural genius of King Nebuchadnezzar [taken primarily from **Whitcomb, Daniel**]

Nebuchadnezzar's sin was his attributing of the greatness of Babylon to himself, even after the LORD had revealed to him that it was "the Most High [God]" that had granted him the dominion he enjoyed (vv17,25).

- [31] The LORD visits judgment on King Nebuchadnezzar for his pride, coinciding with the very moment he was speaking blasphemously by crediting to himself what he knew to be the work of God (Cp., Act12:23).
- [32] Nebuchadnezzar's discipline will continue "until" the king acknowledges the sovereignty and providence of "the Most High [God]" in granting the kingdoms of this world to the men He wills.
- [33] Nebuchadnezzar's affliction would today be called boanthropy (Lit., 'ox-man'), a form of mental derangement in which an individual believes himself to be (and acts) like a beast. The time required for his hair and nails to grow to the extent described in this verse would be years.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONVERSION

- [34] At the end of the prophesied 7-year period of discipline, Nebuchadnezzar's sanity returned to him, at which time he looked "unto heaven" to "bless...praise...and honor" the LORD. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar had previously professed that he would live forever, and that his kingdom would be one of everlasting dominion (i.e., in his construction of the golden image), now he confesses this to be true only of "the Most High [God]" and "His kingdom"; Nebuchadnezzar now submits to the truth of Daniel 2:44.
- [35] Nebuchadnezzar now acknowledges the Creator-creature distinction: in comparison to God, "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. God is absolutely sovereign in performing His will, and no creature can thwart that will in any way; no creature even has the right to question or challenge the actions of the Creator (Cp., Rom9:20).
- [36] It is a marvelous work of God's grace toward Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom is preserved for 7 years during which time the king was totally incapacitated. Jewish tradition records that it was Daniel who cared for the king during this period. From the human perspective, it was undoubtedly the case that Daniel as Prime Minister of the entire Babylonian Empire and chief of all its wise men (Dan2:48), and his three Jewish friends as the chief princes over the province of Babylon proper (Dan2:49; 3:30), who were God's principal agents in preserving the kingdom.

The abundant blessing of God, once rightly acknowledged by Nebuchadnezzar, returns to the king and his kingdom.

- [37] Nebuchadnezzar's public testimony is concluded. He acknowledges that "the works [of the LORD] are truth", meaning that they are not only true, but the standard of truth by which all else is to be judged (Isa8:20; Jn17:17). This is a monumental shift from his previous attitude toward the God of Israel in which he confessed Him to be a "god of gods" and a "revealer of secrets" (Dan2:47).

I believe Nebuchadnezzar's profession reflects a genuine conversion to faith in Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true, utterly unique, and absolutely sovereign God (cf. Dan7:4).

CHAPTER 5

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Daniel 5 records the fall of Babylon to an alliance of Medes and Persians led by Cyrus the Great (known as "the Mule", the son of a Persian father and a Median mother), who had been identified by name in the prophecy of Isaiah two centuries prior to the event (Isa44:28-45:4). This event is known to have occurred on **October 12, 539 BC**, making Daniel ~81 years old at the time. The events of Daniel 5 take place approximately 25 years after those of Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar's long reign of 44 years ended in 562 BC. The Babylonian kings that reigned after Nebuchadnezzar to the fall of Babylon are briefly summarized in the chart below.

BABYLONIAN KING	BIBLICAL REFERENCE	NOTES
Evil-Merodach (562-560 BC)	2Kgs25:27 Jer52:31	Nebuchadnezzar succeeded by his son. Exalted Jehoiachin (a.k.a., Jeconiah) above all other kings in Babylon (2Kgs25:28; Jer52:32). Assassinated after reigning 2 years.
Neriglassar (560-556 BC)	Jer39:3,13	Married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Assumed the throne after he assassinated Evil-Merodach (likely due to jealousy over the exaltation of Jehoiachin); ruled for 4 years and was succeeded by his son.
Labasi-Marduk (556 BC)	n/a	Neriglassar's son by a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Mentally incompetent, neurotic. Assassinated after reigning 9 months.
Nabonidus (556-539 BC)	n/a	Married to another daughter of Nebuchadnezzar (Nitocris). Had been Nebuchadnezzar's foreign minister, so accustomed to extensive travel abroad, which continued during his reign.
Belshazzar (?-539 BC)	Dan5,7,8	Son of Nabonidus by Nebuchadnezzar's daughter (Nitocris), representing 3rd generation from Nebuchadnezzar (Jer27:7). Made co-regent with Nabonidus due to father's extended absences from Babylon.

The historical existence of Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon was denied (mocked) by unbelieving critics for centuries, since extant non-biblical records made no mention of any Belshazzar, identifying Nabonidus as Babylon's final king. Discovery of the so-called Nabonidus Cylinder in 1929, and subsequent translation of its inscriptions, revealed that King Nabonidus spent extended periods of time away from Babylon (mostly in Arabia); because of this, he had

anointed his son Belshazzar co-regent. Again the mouths of the critics were stopped as archeological discoveries confirmed the testimony of the Bible. God's Word is truth (Jn17:17). Never doubt the history recorded in the Bible; it is inspired (2Tim3:16) and infallible. If there is a discrepancy between the history recorded in the Bible and the understanding of secular historians, then the understanding of the secular historians is WRONG!

The pride of Belshazzar and the Babylonians led them to a false confidence that Babylon was invincible. The city had massive double walls with a moat in between fed by the Euphrates river, which also provided a supply of fresh water to the city allowing crops to be grown inside the walls; for this reason it could withstand a siege for years. On the night recorded in Daniel 5, Cyrus had sent a detachment of his troops upriver to divert the Euphrates into an elaborate canal system used for irrigation. Herodotus records that the level of the moat at Babylon dropped to the middle of a man's thigh, allowing the Persian army to march through the riverbed and under the city's walls. Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian army in a night, virtually without a fight, with much of the city unaware that it had been infiltrated by the Persians.

BELSHAZZAR MOCKS THE GOD OF ISRAEL

- [1] Belshazzar knows the Persian army is encamped outside of Babylon, but he believes he is in no danger since his great city is invincible. Incidentally, Belshazzar's name means 'Bel [Marduk] protects the king'. In his arrogance, he throws a party for his lords. Archeologists excavating Babylon have found the remains of a large palace hall 56-ft wide by 173-ft long, with plastered walls (v5), that was undoubtedly the exact location of this event.
- [2] Most of our English translations have significantly sanitized this verse. The Aramaic word translated "wives" actually refers to women from the royal harem, and "concubines" is the word for prostitutes. There were no wives present. This party was a drunken sex orgy with the royal harem, but since there were so many lords present additional prostitutes had to be imported.
- [3] The wine at this "feast" was served in the sacred golden and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem when he destroyed the city in 586 BC (Jer52:19).
- [4] The Persian army's incursion into Babylonia had been going on for months. City after city and village after village had fallen to the Persians as they made their way toward Babylon. Ahead of the advancing Persian army, all the idols from the local temples had been removed and taken to the city of Babylon for safety, and may well have been lining the walls in this great hall at the time of the feast. Idols for every imaginable 'god' were present, from every nation Babylon had subjugated. The sole exception was Judah, since these odd Jews had no idols. This may be the reason Belshazzar decided to drink from the sacred vessels from the Jewish Temple. With this blasphemous act of defiance of Jehovah, Belshazzar's 'cup of iniquity' is full and divine judgment is immediate.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

- [5] Belshazzar sees "part" (Aramaic, meaning 'palm') of a hand writing in the plaster of one of the banquet hall's walls. It is possible that the "lampstand" mentioned here may have been the Golden Lampstand from the Jewish Temple (2Chr36:18).
- [6] The king is utterly terrified at the supernatural intrusion into his revelry, so much so that he cannot control his own bowels; ironically, this very detail had been prophesied by Isaiah (Isa45:1).
- [7] Belshazzar follows the custom of summoning his wise men to interpret the writing. Daniel is not among them; apparently, at some time following the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel lost his position as a royal counselor.

Belshazzar promises to reward whoever can interpret the handwriting by elevating them to the position of "third ruler in the kingdom". With his father Nabonidus as king, and Belshazzar acting as his co-regent, "third" in the kingdom was the highest position that could be offered.

- [8] For reasons discussed later (v25), the pagan wise men cannot understand the handwriting.
- [9] The inability to understand the supernatural writing greatly added to the fear and dread of the king and his lords.

DANIEL INTERPRETS THE HANDWRITING

- [10] This "queen" is not Belshazzar's wife, but his mother (i.e., Nabonidus' wife). Her name is Nitocris and is quite famous in her own right, being a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who was something of a hydraulic engineering genius responsible for designing the canal system used to divert water from the Euphrates river for irrigating crops as well as the moat and canal system inside the city of Babylon.
- [11] Having been raised in her father Nebuchadnezzar's court, Nitocris remembers well the fantastic feats wisdom of Daniel. She describes Daniel in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar had (Cp., Dan4:9). She notes that her father had made Daniel "master of the magicians", a position he has apparently lost by this time; her implication may be that her father was wise to trust Daniel, while her son has been foolish in relegating him to obscurity.

The Queen refers to Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's "father" in the sense of ancestor; Belshazzar is actually the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, thus representing the third generation (Jer27:7).

- [12] The Queen counsels Belshazzar to summon Daniel, confident in his ability to reveal "hard sentences". It is interesting that although she well knows her father called him "Belteshazzar", she refers to him as "Daniel". REMEMBER, Belshazzar means 'Bel [Marduk] protects the king', whereas Daniel means 'God [Jehovah] judges'. On this very night, God [Jehovah] is going to judge

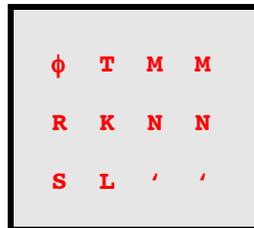
Belshazzar, demonstrating His sovereignty over Bel [Marduk] and all the gods of Babylon.

- [13] Belshazzar is apparently not personally acquainted with Daniel. He asks Daniel if he is a Jew his "father" [Nebuchadnezzar] deported from Judah, whose God [Jehovah] Belshazzar has been mocking!
- [14] It is unclear whether Belshazzar's knowledge of Daniel has come from Nitocris on this night only, or whether he had previous knowledge of the exploits of Daniel.
- [15] This is a familiar setting for Daniel. God has given special revelation to a Gentile king of Babylon, which neither the king nor all his pagan wise men can interpret.
- [16] The writing on the wall is completely cryptic to Belshazzar. Neither the words, nor their interpretation, can be understood. Belshazzar offers Daniel the same reward as the wise men, the position of "third ruler in the kingdom". This offer was a source of great confusion to skeptics of the Bible, who denied the very existence of Belshazzar, prior to the discovery by archeologists of Belshazzar's co-regency with his father Nabonidus. Thus, Belshazzar's offer is to make Daniel prime minister of the empire, second only to the 2 kings; this had been the very position he enjoyed under Nebuchadnezzar (Dan2:48).
- [17] Daniel has no interest in the proffered reward of Belshazzar; he does not serve God for "filthy lucre" (Cp., 1Pet5:2). Furthermore, having already understood from the writing that God would visit judgment on Belshazzar this very night, bringing an end to the Babylonian Empire, the king's reward was worthless.
- [18] Daniel begins by declaring the absolute sovereignty of "the Most High God"; it was Jehovah, not the gods of Babylon, who had granted an kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar.
- [19] The earthly sovereignty God had granted to Nebuchadnezzar was unparalleled in world history. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute despot, not restrained by either his lords nor any law, but by God alone.
- [20] But, as the saying goes, absolute power corrupts absolutely. And so Nebuchadnezzar, in his unregenerate state, was overcome by his own pride.
- [21] This brought on him the discipline of God in the form of his mental collapse (i.e., the malady of boanthropy for 7 years). The discipline of God was removed from Nebuchadnezzar only after he acknowledged the absolute sovereignty and providence of "the Most High God", the God of Israel, in history (Dan4:34-37).
- [22] Daniel reveals that Belshazzar "knewest all this", so that his paganism is willful rebellion against Jehovah; Belshazzar has "suppressed the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18).
- [23] Principle of Divine Accountability. God showed grace to Nebuchadnezzar which he does not show to Belshazzar. When

confronted with the reality of the one true God, Nebuchadnezzar repented and humbled himself; Belshazzar did not. God holds individuals **and nations** who have been given great light (i.e., knowledge of God) to a greater standard of accountability and responsibility to Him (cf. Matt11:20-24; 12:41-42; Luk12:47-48). The application of this principle to the United States of America should be both obvious and ominous.

[24] It is in response to Belshazzar's open rebellion against the Most High God, sinning against Him willfully after He has graciously revealed Himself to this Gentile kingdom in an unprecedented way, that God visits Belshazzar and Babylon with judgment on this night. Five centuries later, this will be true for the nation of Israel (Matt23:37-39; Luk19:41-44; 21:20-24).

[25] According to the Talmud, the words were written vertically rather than horizontally.



[26] The Aramaic word "MENE" means 'numbered'. The interpretation is that the number of the days of the kingdom of Babylon have been sovereignly appointed by Jehovah (Dan2:39), and in His providence they have reached their fore-ordained limit on this night. The repetition of MENE emphasizes its certainty.

[27] The Aramaic word "TEKEL" means 'weighed'. The interpretation is that God has evaluated the Babylonian empire and found it deserving of judgment.

[28] The Aramaic word "PERES" means 'divided' (or 'broken'; see Gen38:29). The interpretation is that the kingdom of Babylon is to be broken, conquered by the "Medes and the Persians". Both Aramaic and Hebrew were at this time written without vowels (not that vowels were not used, but they were inferred), so that the word written on the wall was PRS. Inferring one set of vowels results in PERES, which is 'divided', but another equally valid set of vowels results in PARAS, which is the word for 'Persia'. This explains why Daniel reads the inscription as "UPHARSIN" (v25), but interprets it as "PERES" (v28); he recognizes this sequence of consonants embodies two words by the application of different vowels, both 'divided' and 'Persians'.

[29] Belshazzar rewards Daniel as promised, though the position as "third ruler in the kingdom" is worthless as the kingdom of Babylon ends on this night.

MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE BEGINS

[30] On this very night, October 12, 539 BC, Babylon is captured by Cyrus the Great who has unified the Medes and the Persians against the Babylonians (who is himself the son of a Persian father and a Median mother), and Belshazzar is killed. As prophesied, Nebuchadnezzar's Gentile kingdom of Babylon is replaced by the Medo-Persian empire in the third generation (Isa13:17; 44:28-45:4; Jer27:7; Dan2:39; 8:20). Jehovah has fore-ordained the course of history, and He is bringing it to pass just as He has purposed (Isa46:9-11).

[31] Though Cyrus is king of Persia, and it is he that both the Bible and history clearly record as the one who conquered Babylon, it is here said to be "Darius, the Mede" who received (not "took") the kingdom of Babylon. Considerable confusion has ensued among scholars over the identification of this Darius. One of the problems is that "Darius" is not a personal name, but a title (meaning, in effect, 'Lord') traditionally used by Median rulers.

Identification of Darius the Mede. Two primary positions are held today. 1) Whitcomb argues that Darius the Mede is in fact one known in extra-biblical literature as Gubaru the Governor of Babylon. In this case, after Cyrus conquers Babylon, he grants it to Darius/Gubaru to be ruled as a vassal kingdom under his Persian empire. 2) Darius the Mede is a title used of Cyrus himself. Having a Median mother, Cyrus could legitimately be called a Mede. Though the date of his birth is not known with precision, it was about 600 BC, which would make 62 roughly the right age for Cyrus at this time.

CHAPTER 6

DANIEL IN THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

As revealed in the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon comes to an end and is replaced by the kingdom of the Medes and Persians (Dan2:39; 8:20). Daniel is very old (80's), but in the LORD's providence this godly Jew is exalted to a position of unique power and influence in the second great Gentile world empire (Persia), just as he was in the first (Babylon). Among other things, this is meant to demonstrate that God does not merely have knowledge of the future, He is in control of it (Isa46:9-11).

DARIUS EXALTS DANIEL

[1] At this time the Persian empire is organized under 120 "princes" (i.e., governors over satrapies or provinces), including those assimilated from the Babylonian empire. Later, in the Book of Esther, it is said to have 127 provinces (Est1:1), reflecting the continuing expansion of the empire with time. Note that the prerogative of reorganizing the entire empire is that of "Darius", giving weight to the identification of Darius as Cyrus, rather than merely a local governor over the province of Babylon.

[2] Daniel had declined Belshazzar's proffered position of "third ruler in the kingdom" of Babylon (Dan5:16). Nevertheless, in the providence of the Most High God, Daniel is selected as one of

"three presidents" Darius sets over the entire Persian empire, and among these three Daniel was "first"; this is an illustration of humbling oneself and allowing God to exalt in His time and for His purpose, which is a spiritual principle for all believers (1Pet5:6).

- [3] Daniel's performance as a Persian administrator was so exceptional that Darius was considering promoting him to Prime Minister of the Persian empire, a position second only to the king. Darius' intentions were apparently public knowledge.

PERSIAN PLOT TO DESTROY DANIEL

- [4] Much as the wise men of Babylon had chaffed at the exaltation of Daniel and his friends over them (Dan3:8), so too the Persian nobles resent the promotion of this Jew from Babylon over them. They desired to find some flaw in Daniel's performance over which they could discredit him before the king, but were unable to find any. In all his official duties Daniel was found to be "faithful", which is the pre-eminent attribute expected of a steward (1Cor4:2).

- [5] They determine to accuse Daniel regarding his religion. Would that the only charge the enemy could bring against any believer regarded his devotion to God (i.e., Job; cf. Matt5:10-12; 2Tim3:12).

- [7] The conspiracy of the Persian nobles begins with a lie. They claim that "all the presidents of the kingdom" have been consulted and agree with the proposal for a new law; Daniel was the "first" president (v2), but he had not been consulted, nor would he ever have agreed.

In order for the nobles to believe their new law would entrap Daniel, they must believe that Daniel would never consent to pray to Darius; obviously, Daniel's exclusive devotion to Jehovah was well known throughout the kingdom. The great cry today in American politics is that one's 'religion' is a private matter that should not influence one's public service; Daniel is an illustration of why that can never be true for a spirit-filled believer.

- [8] Whereas the king of Babylon was a law unto himself, and could do whatever he wished (cf. Dan5:19), the kings of Persia were themselves subject to the law of the kingdom. Furthermore, once a Persian law was enacted, it could not be rescinded (cf. Est1:19).
- [9] Darius is flattered (cf. Prov26:28) by the proposal and issues the decree, unwittingly setting up Daniel, his most favored administrator, to be entrapped.
- [10] Despite the new law, Daniel's devotion to God is unchanged. It was his previous custom to pray toward Jerusalem three times a day (1Kgs8:48; 2Chron6:20; Ps5:7; 55:17), and this continues. He refuses even to take the precaution of closing his window.

God's Law Supercedes Human Law. This event in Daniel illustrates the supremacy of God's commandments over the laws of human government. On the one hand, human government is a divine institution, and God commands all men (including believers) to obey these governments and their rulers (Matt22:21; Rom13:1-7; Tit3:1). On the other hand, even legitimate human governments have no authority to legislate against the requirements of God in His Word; when they do so, man's obligation is "to obey God rather than men" (Act5:29).

- [11] Knowing exactly when, where, and how Daniel prayed, and confident that he would not alter his worship because of the decree, the conspirators "found" praying illegally.
- [13] The nobles accuse Daniel before Darius, calling attention to the fact that he is a **Jew**; persecution of the Jews is always Satanically motivated (Rev12:10).
- [14] The king now understands he has been duped into participating in a plot to destroy Daniel. He does not want to throw Daniel to the lions, but he is bound by his own law; try as he might, he cannot find a loophole in the decree.
- [15] The Medes and the Persians regarded their king as the representative of Mazda, the god Zoroaster identified as the one, uncreated god; as the representative of Mazda, the king's decrees were infallible, and therefore irrevocable.

God's Dilemma. The dilemma of Darius regarding Daniel is analogous to that of God with respect to fallen man. Man has broken God's Law. Satan continually accuses man before God (1Pet5:8; Rev12:10). God loves man and wants to save him, but He cannot break, negate or disregard His own Law to do so. God's solution is to become a Man, submit perfectly to the demands of His own Law as a Man, then offer Himself in the place of the sinner, so that "He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom3:26). In this way, God can forgive the sinner on the condition of faith without compromising His righteous Law.

DANIEL IN THE LOIN'S DEN

- [16] His hands being tied by the demands of his own decree, Darius orders Daniel thrown into the "den of lions". It is unknown whether Darius knew of the miraculous deliverance of Daniel's 3 friends by the God of Israel when they were cast into a fiery furnace, but it is clear that Darius wants Daniel to be saved and appeals to his (Daniel's) God for deliverance.
- [17] The royal "seal" upon the den was visible evidence that the divine decree could not be altered. **APPLICATION:** the divine "seal" of the Holy Spirit on the Christian today testifies that God's decree that the believing sinner is justified cannot be altered (i.e., the believer is eternally secure; Eph1:13-14).

- [18] The king spent the night in prayer and fasting for Daniel's deliverance. Was he praying to Mazda, or Jehovah?
- [19] Note, the king goes "very early in the morning" to the lion's den.
- [20] Is this tentative faith, or merely hope, that the God of Daniel has delivered His servant?
- [21] Daniel is alive!, and he addresses the king with customary respect.
- [22] Daniel takes the opportunity to testify that His God, Jehovah the God of Israel, is to be credited with his deliverance. God saved Daniel by sending "His angel" (i.e., the angel of the LORD); thus, the pre-incarnate Christ was present with Daniel in the den of lions, just as He was with Daniel's 3 friends in the fiery furnace (Dan3:25).
- [23] Darius is overjoyed that Daniel has lived, and when he is brought out of the den of lions it is apparent that he was completely unharmed (i.e., truly a divine miracle). Note that Daniel was saved "because he **believed** in his God", thus being a type of all who are saved by faith (Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5).
- [24] As punishment for falsely accusing Daniel, Darius orders his accusers, along with their families, thrown into the lion's den; the fact that the lions immediately devour the Persia nobles reinforces the miracle of Daniel's survival. Such cruelty, punishing entire families for the sins of the father, was customary in Persia (Cp., Est9:13-14). That the conspirators suffered the same fate they sought to inflict on Daniel also appears to be an ironic pattern (Cp., Est9:25), perhaps more divine than Persian (Ex21:23-25). In any event, the faithfulness of the LORD to keep His covenantal promise to Abraham to "curse him that curseth thee" (Gen12:3) is very publicly displayed, and ought to serve as a warning to all Gentile nations during the providentially appointed times in which they enjoy dominion: do not persecute the Jews!

DARIUS HONORS THE GOD OF DANIEL

- [25] Analogous to Nebuchadnezzar's testimony written and published throughout the Babylonian empire (Dan4:1-37), Darius also publishes his own testimony regarding Daniel's God throughout the Medo-Persian empire.
- [26] Darius decrees that "the God of Daniel" is "the living God", and it is His kingdom (not the kingdoms of Babylon or Persia) that will not be destroyed. The inference is that Daniel has shared with Darius the revelation of God regarding the course of Gentile kingdoms throughout history (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar's dream), and Darius is publicly confessing that God's Word is true.
- [27] Darius confesses the providence of Jehovah supernaturally working in history to bring His plans and purposes to pass (Isa46:9-11). Though perhaps not as clear and crisp as Nebuchadnezzar's

(Dan4:34-37), Darius' public profession of faith in the God of Israel may represent a genuine conversion.

[28] With this decree of Darius, in effect an edict of toleration for the worship of Jehovah, Daniel is not again challenged regarding his religion. Though the Aramaic construction here does not demand an exegetical understanding of "Darius" and "Cyrus, the Persian", it allows for it. Thus, this verse does not rule out the possibility that Darius in the Book of Daniel is a title used for Cyrus the Great.

The Decree of Cyrus. Another decree was issued by Cyrus, allowing the Jewish captives in Babylon to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple (2Chron36:22-23), even returning to them all the Temple treasures Nebuchadnezzar had stolen (Ezr1:7-11). Cyrus boasts about this very decree on the [so-called] Cyrus Cylinder, discovered during modern excavations of Babylon. Ezra explicitly notes that this return authorized by Cyrus completed the 70 year Babylonian exile that had been prophesied by Jeremiah (Ezr1:1; Jer25:11; 29:10). The first Jewish refugees (approx. 50,000) returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, reestablishing Temple worship c. 536 BC (Ezr3:1-13).

CHAPTER 7

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

Daniel 1-6 has been an historical narrative of the career of Daniel and his Jewish friends in Babylon given in a straightforward chronological sequence. Daniel 7-12 are the record of several prophetic visions seen by Daniel at various times in his life (i.e., not in chronological order). Whereas the prophetic dreams given to Nebuchadnezzar had revealed in broad scope the course of Gentile world history from the time of Babylon to the coming Kingdom of God, the visions Daniel personally received reveal much more prophetic detail about this coming history, especially as it intersects with the nation of Israel. Daniel's vision in Daniel 7 parallels Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, with the scope of Gentile history in view. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the "times of the Gentiles" were presented as a magnificent, beautiful and costly metallic image (i.e., Gentile world dominance as man perceives it); in Daniel's vision, it is seen as a series of monstrous and ravenous beasts, undoubtedly God's perspective of it.

[**CHART** provided correlates Nebuchadnezzar's dream & Daniel's visions.]

THE COURSE OF GENTILE WORLD HISTORY (REVISITED)

[1] Daniel received this vision (which he also calls a dream) "in the first year of Belshazzar". The reign of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, began in 556 BC. Belshazzar's co-regency with Nabonidus began c. 553 BC. Thus, this vision was received between the historical events recorded in Daniel 4 and 5, putting Daniel in his mid-60's. With the rapid succession of Babylonian kings following Nebuchadnezzar's death, Daniel apparently no longer

serves in court and has faded into obscurity (from man's perspective). God used this 'quiet' time in Daniel's life to instruct him in the Scriptures (cf. Dan9:2) and reveal to him intimate details of the prophetic future. Daniel recorded a "sum" (i.e., summary) of what he saw.

- [2] Daniel sees "the great sea" being stirred up by "the four winds of the heaven". The "sea" is often used as a symbol for a multitude of peoples, specifically Gentiles, without reference to their organization into nations (Isa60:5; Matt13:47; Luk21:25). The "great sea" as used in Scripture generally refers to the Mediterranean Sea (e.g., Josh1:4). In "the four winds of the heaven", the Aramaic word translated "wind" is equivalent to the Hebrew *ruach*, also the world for 'spirit'. Prophetic Scripture often speaks of God acting providentially in world affairs via the agency of spirits/angels (cf. Zech6:1-6; Rev7:1-3). Thus, Daniel's introduction to his coming visions speak of God in providential control of Gentile world affairs (specifically, the peoples of the Mediterranean world), directing them as He wills and has fore-ordained (Isa46:9-11; Dan4:17,25,32,35).
- [3] Daniel sees the four Gentile world empires as "beasts" (v17), the character of each being distinctly different from the one preceding it. Apparently the prophet Hosea also received a glimpse of this same vision, although in a different context, two centuries earlier (Hos13:7-8).
- [4] The first Gentile world empire appears as a "lion" with "eagle's wings". This is the Babylonian empire; as the lion is regarded as the king of all beasts, and the eagle as the king of all birds, so Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was the greatest of the Gentile empires. Excavations of ancient Babylon have revealed that the 'winged lion' was in effect the state symbol of Babylon (see below).



Procession Street of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon
(Istanbul Archaeological Museum)

Remember that in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there was no distinction made between the king and his empire (Dan2:38). That Daniel sees this "beast" transformed into a "man" and given a new "heart", which is the O.T. picture of regeneration (Deut30:6; Ezek36:26), confirms that Nebuchadnezzar was genuinely converted to faith in the Most High God (Dan4:34-37).

- [5] The second Gentile world empire appears as a "bear". This is the Medo-Persian empire (Dan8:20). As the Persians dominated the Medes in this alliance, one side of the bear is seen raised above

the other. The three ribs in its mouth represent the three kingdoms it conquered in rising to dominate the ancient near east: Lydia, Babylon and Egypt.

The Persian army literally numbered in the millions. For this reason it was slow, lumbering, even clumsy, but so huge nothing could withstand it (making the "bear" a fitting symbol). It conquered by overwhelming numerical advantage, confiscating and consuming vast quantities of local food stores, leaving famine in its wake. Note that "Arise, devour much flesh" is a divine command, emphasizing God's providential control of history.

- [6] The third Gentile world empire appears as a "leopard" with "four wings". This is the Greek empire of Alexander the Great (Dan8:21). Alexander's military conquests were known for being small, agile and lightningly swift; they were able to defeat vastly greater armies (often being outnumbered by the Persians 20-to-1) by Alexander's battle innovation known as the 'phalanx'. In the time period 335-326 BC (9 years), Alexander conquered all the nations from Macedonia to eastern India, including the Persian empire.



Alexander the Great
(Istanbul Archaeological Museum)

The leopard, the fastest land animal (with wings added to hyperbolically emphasize speed), is a fitting symbol for the Greek empire of Alexander. The "four heads" undoubtedly points to the four generals who divide up Alexander's kingdom after his death (Dan8:8). Note that "dominion was given to" Alexander, emphasizing God's providential control of history.

- [7] The fourth Gentile world empire appears as a "dreadful", "terrible", "exceedingly strong" monster having "great iron teeth" which Daniel cannot liken to any earthly beast. The iron teeth of the fourth beast clearly link it with the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan2:33,40), with the beast's "ten horns" analogous to the "ten toes" of the image (Dan2:41). Though not named in the Book of Daniel, we know from history that this beast represents the Roman empire.

- [8] The "ten horns" are ten kings (v24). The "little horn" seen here rises to power within the Roman empire by subduing 3 of the original ten kings. This is the Antichrist, who takes control of the final phase of the [so-called Revived] Roman Empire (Dan2:41-43; Rev13:1-6); throughout Scripture he is characterized as one who speaks lies and blasphemies (Dan7:20; 11:36; 2Thess2:9-12; Rev13:5-6) as he is empowered, and ultimately possessed, by the "father of lies", Satan himself (Jn8:44; Rev13:2-4).

THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD

- [9] Daniel's vision now transitions to heaven, where he sees "the Ancient of days", He who is in sovereign control of history, sitting on His throne. This is God the Father, as will become clear in v13, although the description of Him is similar to that of the glorified Christ (Cp., Rev1:14-15). It is unclear exactly what the "wheels" in this vision represent, although Ezekiel made much of them in his visions of the throne of God (Ezek1,3,10).
- It is interesting that in addition to the "throne" (singular) upon which "the Ancient of days" sits (i.e., the throne of God), Daniel also notes other "thrones" (plural) that are set in place, but without mention of their number or occupants. I believe they were unoccupied as Daniel saw them; however, when John sees them, he numbers them at 24 and indicates they are in his day occupied by elders from the Church Age (Cp., Rev4:4).
- [10] Daniel sees an innumerable company of angels ready to carry out the command of God. The opening of "the books" (Rev20:12) and the issuing forth of fire from the throne of God speak of judgment. God, who has sovereignly granted power and dominion to these Gentile kingdoms, will now judge them.
- [11] The judgment of God on the Gentiles comes following the days when the "little horn" (i.e., the Antichrist) rises to power over the fourth "beast" (the Revived Roman Empire of the Tribulation period; Cp., Dan2:43-44). God's judgment at this time includes casting the Antichrist into the "lake of fire" (Rev19:20); this event brings to an end the "times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24) and corresponds to the stone that smashes the feet of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan2:34).
- [12] When the first three Gentile empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece) were conquered in history, they were not utterly destroyed; indeed, their peoples and much of their cultures were assimilated into that of the conquering empire, so that the final kingdom of the "beast" manifests elements of the three that preceded it (cf. Rev13:2). Whereas the judgment of the Antichrist takes place immediately following the return of Christ (Rev19:11-20), further Gentile judgment awaits the "Great White Throne" at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev20:7-15).
- [13] Daniel then sees "the Son of Man" come before God the Father (Cp., Rev5:1-7). This title, "the Son of Man", was the title Jesus most often used of Himself in the Gospels; He explicitly linked it to this verse in the Book of Daniel (Matt26:64), and the Jews clearly understood it to be a divine and Messianic designation

(Matt26:65). The detail that He "came with the clouds of heaven" links this with the Second Coming (Act1:9-11; 1Thess4:17).

- [14] At this time the earthly dominion that God had previously granted to the Gentiles is "given" (i.e., the language of sovereign control) to His Messiah (Ps2:2,6-8), the basis of which is Christ's resurrection as a glorified Man (Matt28:18) and ascension to heaven (Eph1:20-22). This "kingdom" is the coming Kingdom of God on earth, for which Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matt6:10); it will be a world-wide kingdom including "all people, nations, and languages" and will never pass away (as all Gentile kingdoms will). An element of this kingdom includes Christ's fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in which He inherits the throne of David over the nation of Israel (1Chron17:11-14; Ps89; Luk1:31-33). This part of Daniel's vision corresponds to the stone that grows into a great mountain and fills the whole earth in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan2:35).

INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION

- [15] The vision of the four beasts greatly troubles Daniel, even as Nebuchadnezzar's dream had disturbed him (Dan2:1).
- [16] Whereas Daniel had been the interpreter of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, an angel is provided to give Daniel the interpretation of his visions.
- [17] The four "great beasts" are the four Gentile world empires that will each in turn rise to power, then fall, just as God had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream. The difference between the two revelations seems to be one of perspective. Nebuchadnezzar saw these empires represented as a shiny, glittering, beautiful and costly image (i.e., the external, human perspective). Daniel is shown these empires from God's perspective as ravenous monsters; the character of Gentile dominion will not be virtuous.
- [18] The "times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24) will end after these four kingdoms have finished their appointed course, at which time "the saints of the Most High [God]" will receive (not "take") the righteous Kingdom of God, which will endure forever.

The designation of believers in the Most High God as "saints" in this verse is interesting. In context, these saints are Jewish believers, as Israel is destined to be the head of all nations in the Millennial Kingdom (Deut28:13). And yet, use of this generic term for believers also allows for the role of the Church as the Bride of Christ in co-reigning with Him in His Kingdom (Rev1:6; 2:26-27; 5:10), though the Church is a mystery not revealed until the N.T. (Eph3:1-10; Coll:24-27).

- [20] Daniel is interested in understanding the interpretation of the "fourth beast", especially its final form as ruled by the "horn that had eyes...", the "little horn" (v8; the Antichrist). Daniel was fascinated by what we today would call 'end-times prophecy'.

- [21] During the Tribulation period, the "little horn" will persecute "the saints" and overcome them (Rev13:7). These "saints" are believers in the Tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, who refuse to worship the beast and are killed (Rev13:15); this cannot be the Church (which will be raptured before the Tribulation begins), since Christ promised that none would ever "prevail against" the Church (Matt16:18).
- [22] The 2nd coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation period will end the dominion of the Antichrist (Rev19:11-20), at which time Christ will set up His Kingdom on earth with His saints participating in judging and reigning (Rev20:4-6).
- [23] The final phase of "fourth beast", when "the little horn" rises to power, will be utterly distinct from the previous Gentile empires in that it will "devour the whole earth" (i.e., it will literally be a **global** empire; the movement toward *globalism* today is setting the stage for the rise of the Antichrist).
- [24] The final phase of the fourth Gentile empire, the so-called [Revived] Roman Empire in the end times, will begin as a confederation of "ten kings" (i.e., nations), but 3 of these original kings will be subdued by the "little horn" (v8) in his rise to power over this empire.
- [25] The Antichrist is characterized by his blasphemous words against "the Most High [God]", ultimately demanding the worship of the whole world (2Thess2:3-4; Rev13:12,15). When his rise to power is complete (likely following his 'resurrection'; Rev13:3-4), he will begin an unprecedented campaign to destroy the "saints", those genuine believers who refuse to worship him, which includes Gentiles but is especially directed toward the believing Jewish remnant (Matt24:15-21; Rev12:13-17). The note that Antichrist will "change the times and the laws" is likely related to his outlawing of Jewish worship and desecrating of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem (Dan9:27; Matt24:15; 2Thess2:3-4), which he initially allows and apparently even facilitates. This period of intense persecution will last for "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Rev12:6,14; 13:5), the last three-and-a-half years of the 70th Week (Dan9:27), which Jesus called the "great tribulation" (Matt24:21).
- [26] At the end of this period of time (i.e., the Tribulation period), God will judge the Antichrist and destroy his kingdom (Dan7:9-11; Rev19:17-20) with the sudden coming of Christ to earth (Dan19:11-16).
- [27] Then Christ will set up His Kingdom (the Kingdom of God) on the earth. It will be a truly world-wide (global) kingdom (Dan2:35,44-45; Zech14:9; Rev19:15-16); but unlike the Gentile empires, the Kingdom of God will never end. During the Millennial Kingdom, all will serve, obey and worship Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords under the penalty of death (Ps2:8-12; Ps110; Rev19:15-16), even if it is only feigned worship (Ps66:1-4).
- [28] This ends the series of visions Daniel received at this time ("in the first year of Belshazzar; v1). The prophetic panorama of "the

times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24) revealed by God to Daniel overwhelmed him. When he saw the [Gentile] kingdoms of the earth as God sees them, he was "much troubled". No doubt he was also troubled by the revelation that "the times of the Gentiles" set out before him, during which the Gentile nations were to exercise dominion over the Jewish people, represented a very long period of time. From Daniel's point of view, the coming Kingdom of God to earth was far, far, far in the future. The purpose of this **apocalyptic** revelation (given to the people of God when there is no prospect for immediate deliverance), however, was to ensure Daniel that the Most High God (i.e., his God, the God of Israel) is in sovereign control of history, and that He will providentially bring it to His appointed end (Isa46:9-11). Daniel "kept the matter in [his] heart", not sharing it with anyone else, but eventually recording it with his other visions as Scripture.

With the close of Daniel 7, the portion of the Book of Daniel written in Aramaic (begun in Dan2:4) ends.

CHAPTER 8

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE PERSIAN AND GREEK EMPIRES

With Daniel 8:1, the original text returns to Hebrew (from Aramaic, begun in Dan2:4) for the remainder of the Book of Daniel, the significance being that the additional prophetic revelation that will be given relates to the impact "the times of the Gentiles" (i.e., Gentile dominion) will have on the nation of Israel. This revelation to Daniel and his people was to be a source of comfort and security, as the course of Gentile world history and its intersection with the nation of Israel were under the sovereign and providential control of Jehovah (the God of Israel). Details regarding two of the four Gentile empires, Medo-Persia and Greece, are the subject of the vision in Daniel 8; consult the **CHART** *Correlation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream & Daniel's Visions* for how the symbols of this vision relate to those given in Daniel 2 & 7.

VISION OF THE RAM AND HE-GOAT

- [1] The "third year of the reign of king Belshazzar" would be c. 551 BC (see comments on Dan7:1); Daniel receives this vision 2 years after that of Daniel 7, putting him in his upper 60's.
- [2] Though Daniel receives this vision early in the reign of Belshazzar, and therefore Babylon is still the world power at the time of the vision, in the vision Daniel sees himself in the palace at Shushan (which will be the future capital of the Persian empire; Cp. Est1:2; Neh1:1).
- [3] The "ram which had two horns", seen standing before the river of Ulai, represents the Medo-Persian empire (v20). Here the symbol has even extra-Biblical significance, as the ram was used as a national emblem by ancient Persia; the headdress of the Persian monarch was that of the ram, and coins from the ancient Persian empire frequently bear the image of a ram. The two horns represent the two powers that were joined in the alliance, the

Medes and the Persians. Originally Media was dominant, but dominance was ceded to the Persians as the empire expanded.

- [4] The Persian empire rose to dominate the ancient near east by conquering Lydia to its west, Babylon to its north, and Egypt to its south under the leadership of Cyrus the Great and his son Cambyses.
- [5] Subsequently, a "he-goat" arises in the "west" and [literally] flies across "the whole earth". This "he-goat" from the west represents the Greek empire (v21). Again the symbol used in this vision has extra-Biblical significance, as the goat was used as a national emblem by the Greeks; *Ægae*, the capital of ancient Macedonia, means 'goat' and is the source of the name for the *Ægean* sea on the east coast of Greece, and Alexander the Great named his only son *Ægus*, which means 'the son of a goat'. The he-goat in the vision has a single "horn", which was "notable" (i.e., prominent), and which represents Alexander (v21). Here, the he-goat who advances without touching the ground emphasizes the speed of Alexander's conquest (cf. Dan7:6); in roughly a decade, Alexander's Greeks conquered all the nations from Spain to India, including the Persian empire.
- [6] Alexander's Greek army, more than two centuries after Daniel receives this vision, will advance into the near east to challenge the Persians head on.
- [7] Alexander's invasion of Persia came after repeated incursions by Persian monarchs into Europe (especially by Xerxes, who took Esther as his wife; cf. Est2:1). These Persian incursions into Europe, though unsuccessful in subduing the Greeks, inflicted much destruction and suffering on them, creating intense hatred of the Persians by the Greeks. In Alexander's conquest of Persia, he showed them no mercy, destroying their massive armies almost to the last man (which often outnumbered the Greeks on the battlefield 20-to-1) and burning their cities; the burning of Persepolis in 330 BC completed the conquest of Greece over Persia.
- [8] At the height of the he-goat's (Greece) power, the "great horn" (Alexander) will be broken and replaced by "four notable ones"; as will be understood from the interpretation (v22), Alexander dies suddenly at age 33, and his empire is divided into four by his generals. In Daniel's previous vision, Greece was represented by a leopard having "four wings" and "four heads" (Dan7:6).

THE LITTLE HORN

- [9] Yet another "little horn" arises in the vision. This "little horn" comes "out of one of them", referring to the "four notable ones" of v8; thus, this "little horn" will be a Greek leader who arises out of one of the four divisions of the Greek empire after Alexander's death, and who will control "the pleasant land" (i.e., Israel).

Little Horns of Daniel 7 & 8. So-called "little horns" representing coming Gentile leaders are the subject of significant prophecy in both Daniel 7 and 8. One must be careful, however, in

rushing to equate these two simply because both are called a "little horn". Note that in Daniel 7, the little horn arises from the final phase of the fourth kingdom (the [so-called] Revived Roman Empire; vv7-8) and is an explicit reference to the Antichrist. In Daniel 8, however, the little horn arises from one quarter of the third kingdom (the Greek empire). Thus, these two leaders are not the same man, though both go under the figure of a "little horn". Nonetheless, though not literally the Antichrist, the "little horn" of Daniel 8 will be a clear **type** of the Antichrist, which is undoubtedly why the Holy Spirit uses the same figure for him.

- [10] This Greek "little horn" will grow to great power, and he becomes a great persecutor of "the host of heaven" and its "stars"; such language was used of Lucifer in his desire to exalt himself to the position of God (Isa14:12-14), suggesting that this "little horn" will blasphemously portray himself as God, which will also be true of the Antichrist (2Thess2:4).

Antiochus Epiphanes. History records this "little horn" (Dan8:9) as the Greek monarch Antiochus IV, who used the title of 'Epiphanes' (meaning, [God] Manifest), although the people referred to him as 'Epimanes' (meaning, the Madman). Antiochus ruled the Seleucid empire, which included Israel, from 175-164 BC. He purposed to enforce Hellenism throughout his empire, but encountered extreme resistance in Israel. He was one of history's infamous persecutors of the Jews. He forbid circumcision, Sabbath observance, Torah possession/reading, and all forms of Jewish worship under penalty of death. Most offensive was his sacrifice of a pig on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, and his subsequent erection of an idol of Zeus (which allegedly resembled Antiochus himself) in the Holy of Holies (Cp., 2Thess2:4; Rev13:7,14-15). The persecution of the Jews under Antiochus ended in a revolt led by the Maccabees (a family of Jewish priests), which temporarily threw off the Seleucid oppression of Israel.

- [11] Antiochus put an end to the required "daily sacrifice" (the continual burnt offerings made each morning and evening; Ex29:38-46) in the Temple, and "cast down" the "sanctuary" by erecting an idol of Zeus in the Holy of Holies.
- [12] He also made the possession of Scripture (i.e., "the truth") a capital offense and ordered that all copies of the Torah be destroyed.
- [13] In the vision, Daniel sees one "saint" inquire of another (apparently angels) as to how long the required sacrifices will be interrupted? The angel also mentions the "transgression of desolation", which refers to the defiling of the Temple by idolatry in the very Holy of Holies, of which both Antiochus and the Antichrist will be guilty (Dan9:27; 11:31; Matt24:15; 2Thess2:4).
- [14] The answer from the angel is that the Temple will be cleansed 2,300 "days" after its defilement. However, the Hebrew word translated "days" is not *yomim*, but literally the phrase 'evenings

and mornings'. Thus, debate exists over whether the time period is 2,300 days (just over 6 years), or 2,300 'evening and morning [sacrifices]', which would occur over a time period of 1,150 days since two sacrifices were made each day (just over 3 years). The latter interpretation is preferred, since it fits the immediate context of v11 better. Furthermore, Antiochus' desecration of the Temple took place in 167 BC, and its cleansing and restoration by the Maccabees was completed in late 164 BC; thus, the time period during which the Temple was defiled and the daily sacrifices were curtailed was literally 3+ years. The cleansing of the Temple and its rededication at this time are commemorated in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrated to this day and validated by the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn10:22).

Antiochus as a Type of Antichrist. This prophecy given to Daniel regarding Antiochus is now past history from our point of view. Antiochus was a real Greek/Seleucid ruler (175-164 BC) who persecuted the Jews horribly and defiled the Temple by committing "the abomination of desolation" (i.e., idolatry in the Holy of Holies). At the same time, Antiochus is a type of the Antichrist whose coming is yet future (cf. 1Jn2:18). At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will also commit "the abomination of desolation" (Dan9:27; Matt24:15; 2Thess2:4), and then begin an unprecedented campaign of Jewish persecution that will last for 3.5 years (Rev12:13-14; 13:5-7; 14-17).

INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION

- [15] Though Daniel could understand Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he does not understand the vision given to him. As he struggles for understanding, one "having the appearance of a man" appears before him. As this "man" has authority to issue commands to Gabriel (v16), He should be regarded as a theophany (a physical manifestation of God).
- [16] In the vision Daniel is still in Persia (cf. "the banks of the Ulai"). God commands Gabriel to reveal the interpretation of the vision to Daniel.
- [17] Gabriel makes clear that what Daniel has seen in the vision relates to "the time of the end". Two ends seem to be in play here: 1) the end of the Greek empire, when Antiochus arises as an Antichrist-like persecutor of the Jews, and 2) the end of "the times of the Gentiles", when the Antichrist arises. Both of these are in the distant future from Daniel's point of view, and the latter remains future even in the present.
- [18] This also occurs with John when the glorified Jesus Christ appears to him with an apocalyptic revelation (Rev1:17).
- [19] Gabriel repeats (for emphasis) that the vision pertains to "the last end of the indignation" and "the end", language that indicates the scope of the prophecy reaches all the way to the end of "the times of the Gentiles". Note that these prophesied events, including their "time", are "appointed" by God, who is in sovereign control of every detail of history (Isa46:9-11). It should be a comfort for the Jews (and us) to know that even their

persecution and suffering are under the sovereign control of a God who loves them and promises "that all things work together for good to them that love God . . . according to His purpose" (Rom8:28).

- [20] Gabriel reveals that the "ram . . . having two horns" in this vision represents the Medo-Persian empire.
- [21] The "rough goat" represents the Greek empire, and its "great horn" is a clear reference to Alexander the Great, its "first king".

Alexander the Great. (b. 356 BC; d. 323 BC) Alexander was the first king of the Greek empire. The son of King Philip of Macedon, he was a child prodigy who was personally educated by Aristotle and, due to his father's assassination, assumed his father's throne at age 19. Alexander accomplished what no Greek before him had, rallying all the city states of Macedonia and Greece into a unified nation. Alexander was a military genius, developing and using a new battle formation known as the 'phalanx', with which he was able to defeat armies vastly greater than his own. Alexander's Greek army never lost a battle, and in just over a decade conquered all the peoples and nations from Gibraltar (Spain) to India/Pakistan, including the Persian empire. Alexander retired to Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon, in despair that there were no more worlds left to conquer, and drank himself to death at age 32. Alexander enforced 'Hellenism' (i.e., Greek language and culture) throughout his empire, which explains why the New Testament was written in Greek.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, when Alexander approached Jerusalem in 332 BC, Jaddua the high priest showed him the reference to himself in the Book of Daniel, which pleased him so much he spared the city.

- [22] At Alexander's untimely death, his four generals killed his only son (age 12) and divided his empire among themselves.

GENERAL	DIVISION OF THE GREEK EMPIRE
Cassander	Macedonian and Greece
Lysimachus	Thrace and Asia Minor
Ptolemy	Egypt
Seleucus	Syria and Mesopotamia

Israel resided in a border region between the subsequent Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, suffering from both at various times. Antiochus arises from the Seleucid dynasty in Syria. It is ironic that the Syrian city of "Antioch", which became the headquarters of Christianity in the 1st century AD (Act11:26), was named for Antiochus.

- [23] In "the latter time of their kingdom" refers to the four divisions that devolve from Alexander's kingdom (v22). The "king of fierce countenance" is Antiochus, who arises from the Seleucid dynasty near the end of the Greek empire. What is said in this prophecy relates directly to Antiochus, but Gabriel's previous introduction

(vv17,19) indicates that what is literally true of Antiochus at the end of the Greek Empire will be typologically true of the Antichrist at the end of "the times of the Gentiles". Antiochus/Antichrist will "understand dark sentences", referring to great intelligence/wisdom (Prov1:6).

- [24] Both of these monsters will be empowered by Satan (2Thess2:8-11; Rev13:2) for the purpose of persecuting the Jews (Rev12:13-14; 13:6-7).
- [25] Both will rise to power through deception, "by peace", meaning by diplomacy rather than by military force; in the case of Antichrist, his emergence on the world scene will be recognized by his making of a peace treaty for 7 years with Israel (Dan9:27), which he will break at the midpoint. Both will "magnify himself in his heart", claiming for themselves the place of God (2Thess2:4), which has always been the desire of Satan himself (Isa14:12-14). Both will be supernaturally destroyed by God (Rev19:20).
- [26] Daniel is commanded to preserve the revelation given in this vision, which he will record as inspired scripture; Gabriel emphasizes that these events are far in the future from Daniel's perspective.
- [27] The revelation concerning these monsters of iniquity, Antiochus/Antichrist, and their persecution of the Jews made Daniel physically ill, even though he did not fully understand the vision. At this point in time, the third year of the reign of Belshazzar (v1), Daniel is still in the service of the king.

CHAPTER 9

PROPHECY OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

The prophecy of the 70 Weeks given to Daniel by Gabriel in this chapter is the key to understanding the framework of end time chronology, especially the 7-year Tribulation period. In the previous dreams and visions, God revealed to Daniel the exact sequence of Gentile empires (i.e., Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome in two phases) from his day until Messiah brings the Kingdom of God to earth. In the prophecy of Daniel 9, God reveals to Daniel that the exact period of time required for these empires to run their course will be "70 Weeks" [of years]. At the end of these 70 Weeks, the "times of the Gentiles" (Luk21:24) will be concluded, and under the righteous rule of King Messiah Israel will be exalted as head of the nations in the Kingdom of God (Deut28:13; Zech14:9-21).

DANIEL REALIZES THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY IS NEARING ITS END

- [1] The events of Daniel 9 take place in "the first year of Darius", which is 538 BC. Thus, the Babylonian empire has come to an end, being replaced by the Medo-Persian empire as prophesied (Dan2:39; 5:28; 8:20). Darius (i.e., Cyrus) was "made king" over Babylon by God, reiterating the theme of the Book of Daniel that it is Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is in sovereign control of all

history (Isa46:9-11), including that of the Gentile nations. Note that "Ahasuerus" was a title used by many Persian monarchs and should not be confused with the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Important context of this chapter is the fact that Daniel has been a captive in Babylon for **68 years**.

- [2] From Daniel's diligent study of Scripture, specifically the Book of "Jeremiah", he understood that the captivity of the Jews in Babylon had been prophesied to be 70 years, after which they would be permitted to return to Israel (Jer25:11-12; 29:10). Knowing that he was himself part of the first deportation of Jews to Babylon, and that he had been a captive for 68 years, Daniel is excited by the prospect that the captivity is nearing its end.

Note on Hermeneutics. It is important to note that every time a prophet is recorded in Scripture interpreting a prophecy of Scripture, he interprets it literally. Here, Daniel understands the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy to be a literal 70 years--this should be a pattern for us.

"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the Prophecies, and **insist upon their literal interpretation**, in the midst of much clamor and opposition." (Isaac Newton 1642-1727)

DANIEL'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION

- [3] Daniel's response to his realization that the 70 year captivity in Babylon was almost over is prayer, as had been commanded by the LORD (Lev26:40-42; 2Chron6:36-39).
- [4] Daniel's prayer will begin with "confession" of sin. The confession is to the LORD [his God], who "keeps the covenant and mercy to them that love Him". Here, the word translated "mercy" is the Hebrew *chesed*, which means 'love within the bonds of a covenant' (i.e., unconditional commitment).

Although Daniel explicitly mentions one covenant (i.e., "the covenant"), the context of Daniel's prayer involves two covenants. First, it is under the "cursings" (i.e., discipline) provision of the Mosaic covenant that the nation of Israel is in captivity in Babylon (Lev26:32-39; Deut28:49-62) for its **national** (not individual) unfaithfulness to Jehovah under the terms of that covenant. However, the absolute and unconditional promise of the LORD to preserve the Jewish nation and return it to the Land upon repentance is derived from the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Lev26:40-46; Deut30:1-5), and it is to this provision of the Abrahamic covenant that Daniel appeals.

Praying of the Promises of God. There is no more powerful and effective prayer than for the believer to petition God to do that which He has promised. When we do this, we can know with confidence that we are praying in the will of God (1Jn5:14).

- [5] Daniel begins, "We have sinned". Daniel is not confessing personal sins, but national sins. Daniel has not necessarily personally committed the sins he is confessing, but he is identifying with the sins committed by the nation corporately (i.e., his forefathers). The Mosaic covenant, under which Israel is being disciplined, was a national covenant.
- [6] The "prophets" were the "servants" of God sent to indict Israel/Judah for its disobedience to the Mosaic covenant and call it to repent (e.g., Isal:2-31). Not only did the prophets go unheeded, they were frequently killed (cf. Matt23:34-37).
- [7] Daniel acknowledges that the LORD is "righteous", in comparison to the Jews who are not (Isa64:6). The LORD was righteous and just in dispersing the Jews into "all the countries" (i.e., Israel throughout the Assyria empire in 722 BC and Judah to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 BC), for this was the discipline prescribed in the Mosaic covenant for disobedience and rebellion (Lev26:14-15,32-33; Deut28:15,49-62). The LORD had suffered the rebellion of the Jewish nation for centuries, sending prophet after prophet to call the nation to repentance, but eventually the justice of the LORD had to bring discipline on the nation.
- [9] In light of the LORD's just judgment of the nation, Daniel appeals to the LORD's "mercies".
- [10] Remember that the nation of Israel had voluntarily entered into the Mosaic covenant, promising to obey all its requirements (Ex19:5-8; Deut5:27-29).
- [11] Daniel acknowledges that the discipline of the nation is a result of the "curse" of the "law of Moses" (Deut28:15).
- [12] The faithfulness of the LORD extends to His promise to discipline the nation for their unfaithfulness. The nation entered into the Mosaic covenant in the desert of Sinai in 1445 BC; the LORD destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC (i.e., the LORD suffered 859 years of rebellion by the nation of Israel before enacting the ultimate "curse" of the Mosaic covenant).
- [13] Dispersion from the land of Israel was the ultimate "curse" (Lev26:32-39). There were many lesser curses enacted upon the nation in the centuries leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people (Lev26:16-31), always for the purpose of calling the nation to repentance, but the nation would not return to the LORD (Cp., Matt23:37-39).
- [14] Daniel's conclusion is that the suffering Israel is enduring is due to the righteous discipline of the LORD brought on the nation of Israel because of her disobedience.

DANIEL'S PETITION

- [15] Now Daniel's prayer turns from confession to petition. Daniel's petition will be directed to the "LORD, our God, who hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand". By doing this, Daniel is acknowledging the sovereignty and

omnipotence of his God; in history past He delivered the nation from bondage in Egypt, so He has power to deliver the nation presently in bondage in Babylon.

- [16] It is very important to note the basis of Daniel's request for restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem. It is not because the Jewish people in any way deserve the mercy of God, even if they were to repent—indeed, Daniel reiterates that because of their “sins” and “iniquities” they deserve God's judgment. However, Jerusalem is “thy [God's] holy mountain” (i.e., Jehovah's personal reputation is at stake in this issue).
- [17] Daniel's petition for God to restore the Jewish people in Jerusalem is “**for the Lord's sake**”. In play here is not the Mosaic covenant, under which the nation has been justly dispersed, but the Abrahamic covenant. God promised Abraham, without condition of obedience, to give the land of Canaan to his descendants forever (Gen12:7; 13:15-17; 15:18-21; 17:8). If God does not return His people to Jerusalem, the heathen nations will say that Jehovah did not have the power to keep His promise! Remember that Moses had successfully argued in exactly this way (Num14:11-20).
- [18] Daniel appeals not to his personal righteousness, but to God's mercy (Cp., Tit3:5).
- [19] Again, Daniel's petition is “for thine [God's] own sake”. The Jews and Jerusalem are the people and city of Jehovah, called by “[His] name”; for them to be in captivity in a foreign land is a disgrace for the LORD.

GABRIEL DELIVERS THE PROPHECY (OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS)

- [20] This is a summary of vv3-19. Daniel has been confessing his personal sins, as well as confessing and identifying with the sins of the nation of Israel (his nation), and presenting his petition “for the holy mountain” (i.e., the city of Jerusalem, located on Mt. Zion). Recall, this is the year 538 BC, and the city of Jerusalem (including the Temple) was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.
- [21] Daniel's prayer is interrupted by the sudden appearance of “Gabriel”. Though described as a “man”, we know from many places in Scripture that Gabriel is an angel who often manifests himself as a man (e.g., Luk1:19,26), his name meaning ‘a mighty man of God’. Daniel makes mention of the fact that he had seen Gabriel in a previous vision (Dan8:16). Daniel notes that this occurs “about the time of the evening oblation” (Ex29:38-42; Num28:1-8), which is around 3 pm; it is remarkable that Daniel marks time according to the daily Temple ritual, although the evening oblation had ceased with the destruction of the Temple 50 years before, and Daniel himself has not personally resided in Jerusalem for almost 70 years. This reinforces the inference that Daniel's childhood and home environment had been one of extraordinary devotion to the LORD.

- [22] Gabriel has been sent by God to give Daniel "understanding". From the study of Scripture (as noted in v2; Jer25:11; 29:10), Daniel knows that the Babylonian captivity is nearing its end. Daniel also knows from God's revelation in the previous dreams and visions that "the times of the Gentiles" will be a long period of time, only at the end of which will the Kingdom of God come. Daniel is obviously wondering about how the nation of Israel fits into this framework of future history.
- [23] In response to Daniel's prayer, Gabriel was dispatched by God to "show" Daniel in particular **Israel's history** as it fits into "the times of the Gentiles". Gabriel's imperative, "understand the matter", means that Daniel was capable of understanding, and expected to understand, this prophecy in his own day; how much more the believer today, with so much additional supporting revelation given since Daniel!

Thou art greatly beloved. Gabriel says that the reason Daniel is to be given this apocalyptic revelation (i.e., prophecy extending to the very end time) is that he is "greatly beloved" [by God], which is said only of Daniel in the OT. It is interesting that in the NT it is John who is uniquely referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn20:2; 21:7,20), and it is to John that the Lord gives the Apocalypse (i.e., the Book of Revelation; Rev1:1).

THE SCOPE OF THE ENTIRE 70 WEEKS

- [24] This verse gives the overview of the entire 70 Weeks; consult the **CHART** *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*.

Israel's national history during "the times of the Gentiles" will be made up of "**seventy weeks**". This period of time has been "determined" [by God] (i.e., it is part of His divine plan; Isa46:9-11) and pertains to "[Daniel's] people" and "[Daniel's] holy city" (i.e., the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem). This is not a prophecy about the Church, nor does it pertain to the Church *in any way*; it is a prophecy about national Israel.

This period of time (all 70 Weeks) is required in order to accomplish 6 things:

1. "finish the transgression" – end Israel's rejection of Messiah and receive Jesus as King (Hos5:15; Zech12:10; 14:9; Matt23:39)
2. "make an end of sins" – inauguration of the New covenant with Judah and Israel (Jer31:31-34; Rom11:27; Heb8:8-12)
3. "make reconciliation for iniquity" – the atonement of Christ must be applied to national Israel (Isa53:5; Rom11:26)
4. "bring in [an age] righteousness" – the Millennial Kingdom (Isa11:1-5; Rev20:1-6)
5. "seal up the vision and prophecy" – all prophecies for Israel will be complete (i.e., the promises of the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic and New covenants will be fulfilled)

6. "anoint the most Holy [Place]" – Millennial Temple established (Ezek40-48; Zech6:12-13)

Note concerning "Weeks". The Hebrew word rendered "weeks" in many English translations is simply the plural of the number 7. Whereas in English the word "week" denotes 7 days, this is not so for the Hebrew word (perhaps the English word 'heptad' would be more appropriate). The Hebrew word simply denotes a unit of 7, and the context determines what comprises those units. Hebrew society was divinely organized around a multitude of "weeks" (i.e., sevens). The Sabbath was celebrated after a week of days (Lev23:3). The Feast of Weeks (i.e., Pentecost) was celebrated after a week of weeks (Lev23:15-22). The cycle of Jewish festivals were organized according to a week of months (Lev23:4-44). The Sabbatical year was celebrated after a week of years (Lev25:1-5). And the Jubilee Year was celebrated after a week of Sabbatical years (Lev25:8-24). The context of Daniel 9, where Daniel has been studying Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the Babylonian captivity of the nation of Judah, is **years**. Judah was dispersed out of the Land of Israel and held captive in Babylon for 70 years (Jer25:11; 29:10) because the nation neglected to observe the Sabbatical year for 490 years (2Chron36:20-21); with the Jews out of the Land for 70 years, the Land receives the "rest" it requires (Lev26:33-35). Thus, the prophecy of the 70 "weeks" is a prophecy concerning 70 weeks of years, or 490 years. The Babylonian captivity was a result of 490 years of disobedience on the part of the nation of Judah/Israel; Gabriel informs Daniel that the future history of Israel involves another period of 490 years.

THE FIRST 69 WEEKS

[25] Again it is commanded that Daniel "know" and "understand" this prophecy. From the "commandment" (i.e., an official decree) to "[re]build Jerusalem" (which at this time is lying in ruins) until the coming of "Messiah" is to be "seven weeks" plus "threescore and two weeks" (i.e., 7 + 62 = 69 weeks of years). Note that the commandment that starts the prophecy has to do with the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, specifically the city "wall" (not the Temple). It is not entirely clear why this period of 69 weeks is subdivided into 7 weeks followed by 62 weeks; however, there is no indication that there is any gap of time between these two periods, so that the 62 weeks begin immediately following the 7 weeks and result in a continuous period of 69 weeks of years, or 483 consecutive years.

Chronology of the 69 Weeks. Daniel 9:25, recorded by the prophet Daniel in the 6th century BC, contains a prophecy of **the exact day** on which Messiah (i.e., Jesus Christ) would "come" to the nation of Israel. The Messiah would come 69 "weeks" of years after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls (not the Temple). This decree to allow the rebuilding of Jerusalem was issued by Artaxerxes in the 20th year of his reign (Neh2:1).

The date of the reign of Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) is known with great precision from secular sources. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives the dates of his reign as 465-425 BC, so the 20th year of

his reign was 445 BC. With no date within the month of Nisan specified in Neh2:1, the 1st of Nisan is considered to be implied by traditional Jewish reckoning. The date of Nisan 1, 445 BC on the Jewish calendar corresponds to March 14, 445 B.C. on our modern calendar (where reconciliation of the chronological information is taken from Sir Robert Anderson, The Coming Prince).

Daniel's prophecy states that after 69 "weeks" of years, beginning from March 14, 445 BC, the Messiah would "come". The Biblical or prophetic year is made up of 360 days; this is true throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation (Cp., Gen7:11; 8:3-4; Rev12:6,14; 13:5). Converting these weeks of years into days gives (69 weeks)x(7 years/week)x(360 days/year)=**173,880 days**.

To work in our modern calendar, this number of days must be converted to 365-day years: 173,880 days ÷ 365 = 476 years, with 140 days left over. Adding 476 years to 445 BC gives 31 AD. However, there is no calendar year "0", so an additional year must also be added, taking the termination of the prophecy to the year 32 AD (i.e., the year the Messiah would "come").

There remain two details for which to account: 1) the 140 days left over, and 2) leap years. In 476 years there are apparently 476 ÷ 4 = 119 leap years; however, only every 4th 'century' year, which would normally be a leap year, is reckoned as a leap year. In 476 years there are 4 'century' years, three of which are NOT leap years. So, from 119 apparent leap years 3 must be subtracted, giving 119 - 3 = 116 actual leap years. Since leap years include an additional day, there are 116 too many days in the working total. Correction for these extra days is accomplished by subtracting them from the 140 'left over' days, still leaving 140 - 116 = 24 days. These 24 days are added on to the starting date of March 14 to arrive at April 6. Thus, Daniel's prophecy is that the Messiah of Israel would "come" to the nation of Israel on **April 6, 32 AD!** The calendar for the month of April in 32 AD is:

APRIL 32 AD						
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11 12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Passover always occurs on the 14th of Nisan. In the year 32 AD, Passover fell on April 10th, which as seen above was a Thursday. This particular Thursday Passover was the CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST! We can pin-point this year as that of the crucifixion because it is known that John the Baptist began his ministry during the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luk3:1). The Encyclopedia Britannica gives the year of the reign of Tiberius as 14-37 AD; thus, the 15th year of his reign would be 29 AD. The first year of John's ministry was the year of Jesus' baptism and the start of His public ministry. The gospels record that his public ministry lasted for three Passovers, or just over 3 years, ending in his crucifixion. Thus, by this reckoning we have independently confirmed that the crucifixion of Christ occurred in 32 AD.

April 6th in 32 AD, the termination of Daniel's 69 Weeks, was the Sunday before the crucifixion of Christ. The Church refers to this particular Sunday as 'Palm Sunday' or 'the Triumphal Entry', the day that Christ rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, officially presenting Himself to Israel as the Messiah in the precise manner prophesied in the OT (Zech9:9; Cp., Matt21:1-9; Mk11:1-10; Luk19:29-38; Jn12:12-16).

What is sobering is that Jesus gives the failure of the Jewish nation to recognize the prophesied day of His coming as the reason for the 2nd destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (Luk19:41-44). Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks gave the precise day on which the Messiah would appear before the nation of Israel, and Jesus held the Jewish nation accountable to both "know" and "understand" this prophecy!

A GAP OF UNSPECIFIED DURATION

- [26] Then, "after" the 62 weeks have been completed (and since the 62 weeks follow the 7 weeks in v25, this is equivalent to saying after the 69 weeks have been completed), but before the 70th week begins (v27), at least two events are said to occur. Thus, it must be recognized that there is an explicit gap of time, of *unspecified duration*, that is to take place between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week; **the 70th week does not immediately follow the 69th week**. The 69th week ended with the 1st coming of Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel in 32 AD, and the 70th week is yet to begin, so that the gap of time represented by this verse has gone on for almost 2,000 years.

The first event mentioned is that "Messiah [shall] be cut off, but not for Himself"; this is a direct reference to the death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Isa53:8; Jn1:29), which occurred in 32 AD (4 days following the 'Triumphal Entry'). The second event mentioned is that the [rebuilt] city of Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed by an invading army (Luk19:43-44; 21:20-24), which occurred in 70 AD. This destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple would be by "the people of the prince that shall come". The "prince that shall come" is a designation for the Antichrist (v27). Since it was the Roman army that destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, this tells us that the future Antichrist will be Roman; as the "little horn" (i.e., Antichrist) arises out of the "fourth beast" (Dan7:7-8), which represents the 4th and final Gentile empire, we can know with certainty that the 4th Gentile empire of Daniel 2 & 7 is the Roman empire.

THE 70TH WEEK

- [27] The final, 70th week will begin when "he" (referring back to "the prince that shall come" in v26, the Antichrist) enforces a covenant (i.e., a peace treaty that Isaiah calls "a covenant with Hell"; Isa28:15,18) with Israel for 7 years. However, at the midpoint of that 7-year period of time, Antichrist will commit the "abomination of desolation" (Matt24:15), historically prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan8:10-12; 11:31); this includes putting

an end to "the sacrifice and the oblation" (the bloody and the non-bloody offerings in the Temple), setting up an idol in the Holy of Holies (Rev13:14-15), and from the Holy of Holies demanding worship of himself as God (2Thess2:4; Rev13:12,15). This prophecy necessitates the future rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and requires that it be functioning with sacrifices by the midpoint of the 70th week; it does not have to be rebuilt by the start of the 70th week, and it may well be that the terms of the Antichrist's peace treaty with Israel include a provision for rebuilding the Temple.

This 70th week is the yet future 7-year Tribulation period. Note that it begins with the Antichrist's peace treaty with Israel, not the Rapture of the Church (i.e., the pretribulational Rapture of the Church will take place **before** the Tribulation period begins). Much more elaborate details regarding the 70th week are given in Revelation 6-19, which covers this very same period of time. The 70th week ends with the destruction of Antichrist at the 2nd coming of Christ (2Thess2:8; Rev19:11-21), when "that determined shall be poured upon the desolat[or]".

CHAPTER 10

THE INVISIBLE WAR

The vision of Daniel 10 (continued in Dan11-12) includes the latest chronological reference in the book (Dan10:1), and therefore represents God's final word to the prophet Daniel. God's ongoing message to Daniel has been that He is sovereign, and that He providentially controls all human history (Jewish and Gentile). It is not merely that God knows what will happen in advance, but that before the world began He planned the course of history (Heb11:3), and in time He is guiding it according to that plan (Isa46:9-11); to demonstrate He is in control of history, He has foretold history in advance (Cp., Isa41:21-23).

That being said, God's plan is resisted by fallen and unregenerate men; this is obvious to every believer and is plain to see. What is not as obvious, and what cannot be seen by human eyes, is the fact that the plan of God is resisted not only in the human realm, but in the angelic realm as well. Satan and his fallen angels (Rev12:4) actively work to thwart the plan and purpose of God (2Cor4:3-4; Eph6:11-12). One way they do so is by spiritually influencing men and nations. And the higher, more powerful, more influential position to which a man may rise in human affairs, the more likely it is that he will be targeted by Satan for demonic influence, control, or even possession (e.g., Jn13:27; Rev13:2); it is for this reason the believer is commanded to pray urgently for all those in positions of government leadership and authority (1Tim2:1-2; see Dan10:20). Daniel 10 is one of the rare places in Scripture where God pulls back the curtain on visible world history, giving us a peek as the invisible war underway behind the scenes (Cp., 2Kgs6:15-17; 2Chron18:18-22).

A VISION OF [THE SON OF] GOD?

[1] The "third year of Cyrus, king of Persia" is 536 BC, putting Daniel in his mid-80's. This is the latest chronological

reference made in the book, and represents God's final word to Daniel. Daniel understands this "vision" (which is not true of all his visions), including the fact that what is being revealed to him is something that will take place, from his vantage point, in the distant future. It is emphasized that the vision is "true", since it reveals activities that can never be seen by human eyes; this vision represents truth that can only be known by revelation from God.

- [3] Daniel has been in prayer and fasting for "three full weeks". In the Hebrew text, the phrase is literally "weeks of days" (in contrast to Dan9:24-27, where the qualification "of days" is not included).
- [4] The date of this vision is given as Nisan 24, 536 BC. The decree of Cyrus to allow the Jewish captives in Babylon to return to Jerusalem has been given (Ezr1:1-4), and the first return under Joshua and Zerubbabel is in progress (Ezr1:5-3:13). However, Daniel is by the Hiddekel (i.e., Tigris) river, which is in Persia. Though Daniel had prayed earnestly for the return of the Jewish captives to Jerusalem (Dan9:2-19), he is not part of it. Either Daniel's continuing government service at the highest levels of the Persian empire (Dan6:1-3,28) will not allow him to be part of the return, or he is simply too old. Perhaps his earnest prayer and fasting is for his kinsmen making this dangerous journey?
- [6] To begin Daniel's vision, he sees a "man" (v5). Though many conclude that this man is merely an angel (equating him with either Gabriel, who Daniel has seen in previous visions, or Michael, who appears later in this vision), every indication in the text testifies that this man is very different from the angels Daniel has seen frequently in his other visions. Much is made of this man's glorious appearance. In comparing the description of this man with that of the glorified Christ seen by John (Rev1:13-15), it is reasonable to conclude that Daniel is also seeing a vision of Christ in glory, "the son of man" (Dan7:13).
- [7] Other men are present with Daniel when he receives this vision of Christ. However, Daniel alone sees Christ, although the others are aware that something supernatural is taking place. This is very similar to the circumstances of the Apostle Paul seeing a vision of Christ while in the presence of others (cf. Act9:3-7).
- [8] In the presence of Christ in glory, Daniel is overwhelmed by his own "corruption" much as the prophet Isaiah was (Isa6:5).
- [9] Furthermore, all "strength" drains away from his body, and he falls on his face before the "man" just as the Apostle John (Rev1:17). This is the standard response when godly men suddenly find themselves in the presence of God (not when they are confronted by an angel). Daniel will subsequently see powerful angels working to influence human affairs, but he sees a vision of Christ in glory first, for the angelic creatures are merely subordinates who carry out the commands of God; it is God alone who is in sovereign control of history.

ANGELIC PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

- [10] At this point an angel is dispatched to reinvigorate Daniel.
- [11] This angel, though unnamed, is likely Gabriel, who addresses Daniel as "a man greatly beloved [by God]", just as he has previously (Cp., Dan9:21,23).
- [12] Gabriel's message is that Daniel's prayer was heard by God, and on the very first day of his prayer God dispatched Gabriel to come to Daniel with an answer.
- [13] However, Gabriel has been prevented from reaching Daniel for 21 days, the "three full weeks" of Daniel's prayer and fasting (vv2-3). The one preventing Gabriel's passage is called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia". As will become clear (v20), this "prince" is not Cyrus, the king of Persia. No human, however great, has power to withstand an angel of God. This "prince" is a *principality* (Cp., Eph1:21; 6:12; Col2:15), an angelic creature (in this case, a fallen angel) who works as a demonic influence on the human king of Persia in an effort to thwart the plan of God. Satan himself is elsewhere addressed in a similar way as the demonic influence behind human leaders (cf. Isa14:4-17; Ezek28:2-19), even being called "the prince of this world" (Jn16:11).
- Gabriel was able to break through the resistance of this demonic principality only with the aid of "Michael" (whose name means 'Who is like God?'), here described as "one of the chief princes" and elsewhere as "the archangel" (1Thess4:16; Jud9). Clearly, there are degrees of authority and power within the angelic ranks; here, this principality is more powerful than Gabriel, and Michael is more powerful than the principality. Michael, however, is less powerful than Satan (Jud9).
- [14] With the aid of Michael, Gabriel has arrived with his message for Daniel. The message, which apparently refers to what will be given in Daniel 11-12, pertains to what will happen to the Jewish people "in the latter days" (i.e., the Tribulation period, the coming of Messiah, and the setting up of the Kingdom of God).
- [15] Daniel is overwhelmed with the gravity of the message, as he has been previously (Dan7:28; 8:27).
- [16] One "like the similitude of the sons of men" touches Daniel's lips, enabling him to speak (Cp., Isa6:7). This one is apparently the glorified Christ of vv5-9, for Daniel addresses him as "my Lord" (Heb., *adonai*).
- [17] Daniel is conscious of his own unworthiness in addressing this one, who is his Lord. This has never been true in Daniel's previous interactions with angels, and adds weight to the understanding that Daniel is indeed seeing a vision of God.
- [18] This is apparently the angel of v10, probably Gabriel, who again restores strength (which was drained in the presence of God) to Daniel.

- [19] Again Daniel is addressed as one who is "greatly beloved [by God]", which will again be followed by revelation of future events extending to the end times. Now that Gabriel has "strengthened" Daniel, he is prepared to receive the revelation from God, "[his] Lord", which will come in Daniel 11-12.
- [20] Gabriel had been detained in his attempt to reach Daniel with a message from God by "the prince of Persia" (vv12-14), the demon influence behind the ruling Gentile empire of Daniel's day. When Gabriel departs from Daniel, he will again have to "fight" that spirit creature. And in the future, he knows that "the prince of Greece shall come", which would be the demon influence behind the Greek empire that will replace Persia in approximately two centuries.
- [21] Here, Michael (the archangel; Jud9) is referred to as "your prince", meaning the prince of Israel (Dan12:1). Apparently, even as Satan assigns particular spirits from his ranks of fallen angels (Rev12:4) to influence particular nations for evil, so God has assigned individual elect angels (1Tim5:21) for the defense of nations in the spiritual realm.

It is safe to say from Daniel 10, we are often guilty of underestimating the magnitude and extent of the invisible war (i.e., the angelic conflict) that is taking place to influence the course of world history, though Scripture makes clear we are part of it (Eph6:10-12).

CHAPTER 11

ISRAEL'S HISTORY FROM DARIUS TO ANTICHRIST

The vision begun in Daniel 10 continues in Daniel 11. In Daniel 10, the vision opened with a revelation of the angelic conflict that operates, unseen by human eyes, to influence the course of human history. However, seen above the details of the angelic conflict was God, who is in sovereign control, and who will bring history to His appointed end (Isa46:9-11). As the vision continues, God reveals minute details of future history for the nation of Israel, especially during the period when the Greek empire is dominant. After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire fractured into 4 subdivisions. Geographically, the nation of Israel resided on the border between the Seleucid dynasty ruling Syria to the north and the Ptolemaic dynasty ruling Egypt to the south, and conflict between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings wrenched control of Israel back and forth. This portion of the vision (vv2-35) is past history from our present perspective. Its clear historical fulfillment in the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC, in minute detail, is one of the main reasons liberal critics have sought to date the book of Daniel after 165 BC (so that Daniel 11:2-35 becomes history written after the fact, not prophecy written three centuries before its fulfillment).

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

- [1] The pronoun "I" apparently refers to the interpreting angel, presumed to be Gabriel. As soon as "Darius, the Mede" (i.e.,

Cyrus the Great) conquered Babylon (Dan5:31), and thus controlled the destiny of Israel (from the human perspective), Gabriel "stood to confirm and to strengthen him" for the role for which God had raised him up (Isa44:28-45:4; 2Chron36:22-23). In this ministry, Gabriel was presumably fighting against "the prince of Persia" (Dan10:20) who was undoubtedly attempting to influence Darius for Satan's purposes.

- [2] The first Persian king was Cyrus the Great, who is reigning at the time Daniel receives this vision (Dan10:1). After him there will come "yet three [additional] kings", who were Cambyses, the son of Cyrus (530-522 BC), Pseudo-Smerdis (522 BC), and Darius Hystaspes (522-486 BC), after which a fourth Persian king will arise having unprecedented power and wealth. This fourth king is **Xerxes I** (486-465 BC), who is the "Ahasuerus" of the Book of Esther (the Persian king who takes the Jewess Esther as a wife; he is also the father of the "Artaxerxes" of the Book of Nehemiah, but not by Esther). Xerxes was "far richer" than previous Persian monarchs, enabling him to finance military conquests into Europe to challenge the fledgling Greeks (who were on the rise during his reign); in 480 BC, he attempted to invade Greece with an army of 1 million men and a navy of over a thousand ships. Xerxes (Ahasuerus) failed in his attempt to conquer the Greeks, but the suffering he inflicted upon them sowed a seed of Greek hatred for the Persians.

THE GREEK EMPIRE

- [3] Jumping forward in history by more than a century after Xerxes, this "mighty king" is **Alexander the Great** (331-323 BC), the first king of the Greek empire (Dan8:21).
- [4] After Alexander's conquests were complete, he died unexpectedly at the age of 33 in Babylon (323 BC). His 4 generals killed Roxana his wife and their young son Ægus and divided the empire among themselves (see note on Dan8:22). From the perspective of Israel, the two important divisions of the Greek empire were Syria to their north, ruled by **Seleucus** and his descendents, and Egypt to their south, ruled by **Ptolemy** and his descendents.

Kings of the North/South. In Daniel 11:5-35, kings "of the north" refers to the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, and kings "of the south" refers to the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt.

KINGS OF THE GREEK EMPIRE	
331-323 BC, Alexander the Great	
Kings of the North (Syria)	Kings of the South (Egypt)
312-281 BC, Seleucus I Nicator	323-285 BC, Ptolemy I Soter
281-262 BC, Antiochus I Soter	
262-246 BC, Antiochus II Theos	285-246 BC, Ptolemy II Philadelphus
246-227 BC, Seleucus II Callinicus	
227-223 BC, Seleucus III Cereunus	246-221 BC, Ptolemy III Euergetes
223-187 BC, Antiochus III the Great	
187-175 BC, Seleucus IV Philopater	221-204 BC, Ptolemy IV Philopator
175-164 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes	
164-162 BC, Antiochus V Eupator	204-181 BC, Ptolemy V Ephiphanes

162-150 BC, Demetrius I Soter	
150-145 BC, Alexander Balas	181-145 BC, Ptolemy VI Philometor

WARS BETWEEN THE SELEUCID AND PTOLEMAIC DYNASTIES

- [5] The "king of the south" is Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's 4 generals and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt (323 BC). Another "of his [Alexander's] princes" is Seleucus I Nicator, who founded the Seleucid dynasty in Syria. Seleucus' attempt to enthrone himself in Syria was initially challenged by Antigonos (another general); with help from Ptolemy, Seleucus' position as king of Syria was finally established in 312 BC. Seleucus' rule from Syria included Media and Babylonia, so that the territory he controlled greatly exceeded that of Ptolemy.
- [6] After the deaths of Ptolemy I and Seleucus I, animosity fermented between their descendents, resulting in almost continual conflict. Eventually, "in the end of years" (i.e., after certain years), a truce between the dynasties was negotiated and sealed with the marriage of Ptolemy II's daughter, Bernice, to Antiochus II. However, this truce did not last. Antiochus had divorced his wife Laodice in order to marry Bernice. The spurned ex-wife Laodice poisoned Antiochus, had Bernice killed, and installed her son Callinicus as king in Syria in 246 BC.
- [7] Ptolemy II was succeeded by his son Ptolemy III Euergetes, brother of Bernice ("a branch of her roots"), in 246 BC. Here, the "king of the north" is Seleucus II (Callinicus), son of Laodice. To avenge the death of his sister, Ptolemy III invaded Syria, captured Laodice and killed her.
- [8] Ptolemy III plundered Syria and returned to Egypt with great spoil, though Seleucus II's rule continued.
- [9] Humiliated by Ptolemy III's killing of his mother and plundering of Syria, Seleucus II attempted an invasion of Egypt but was unsuccessful. It is Seleucus II referred to here as "return[ing] to his own land" in defeat.
- [10] Seleucus II died in a fall from a horse. He was succeeded by his son Seleucus III Cereunus, who reigned briefly before being caught up in a conspiracy that resulted in his assassination. His brother, Antiochus III (the Great), assumed the throne over Syria. Seleucus II's sons, "his sons" (i.e., Seleucus III and Antiochus III), both attempted to expand the rule of Syria, with Seleucus III invading Asia Minor and Antiochus III invading Egypt. The result of these military initiatives was that control of the land of Israel, which had been up to this time held by the more powerful Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, was transferred to the Seleucid dynasty in Syria.
- [11] Ptolemy IV, "the king of the south" (having murdered his father, Ptolemy III, and earning for himself the nick-name Philopater, or *father-lover*), attempts to retake the lost Egyptian lands by launching a renewed invasion of Israel.
- [12] Ptolemy IV wins a few initial battles against the occupying Syrian forces in Israel, killing "many ten thousands".

- [13] However, Antiochus III, "the king of the north", arrives with sizable reinforcements, "a multitude greater than the former". Antiochus III defeats Ptolemy IV on the southern border of Israel.
- [14] At this time "many" are turning against Egypt, including Philip V of Macedon as well as "robbers [i.e., violent men] of *thy people*" (i.e., Jews). According to Josephus, the Jews came to the aid of Antiochus III's forces to defeat the Egyptian garrison in Jerusalem, unwittingly helping to secure Syrian rule over Israel, which will be such a virulent persecutor of the Jews it is used as a type of Antichrist's future kingdom!
- [15] The routed Egyptian forces consolidated themselves in the fortified city of Sidon, but Antiochus III, "the king of the north", besieged it, eventually forcing the surrender of the Egyptian army in 203 BC.
- [16] After the defeat of the Egyptians, Antiochus III solidified his rule "in the glorious land" (i.e., Israel).
- [17] In Egypt, Ptolemy IV is succeeded by his son Ptolemy V. Feigning an offer of peace, Antiochus III gives his daughter Cleopatra (the first of many in Egypt) to the young Ptolemy IV, but in actuality having the goal of "corrupting her [Egypt]". However, Cleopatra turned out to be completely loyal to her husband Ptolemy V, identifying with her new people of Egypt; thus, "she shall not stand on *his* [i.e., her father Antiochus III] side".
- [18] His plans to subvert Egypt being thwarted, Antiochus III turned his attentions toward expanding his rule in Asia Minor and even toward Greece. He initially took considerable territory, until the General Cornelius Scipio was dispatched from Rome to turn him back. Scipio defeated Antiochus III at the Battle of Magnesia in 190 BC, forcing him to agree to humiliating terms of surrender that included the return of his troops to Syria and the payment of an enormous annual tribute to Rome.
- [19] Returning to Syria, Antiochus III was assassinated in 187 BC when he ordered the treasury of one of his own pagan temples (to Bel) be plundered, apparently in order to raise the funds needed to meet his obligations to Rome.
- [20] Antiochus III was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV. Inheriting his father's enormous financial obligation to Rome, Seleucus IV of necessity increased the taxation of his own citizens to staggering levels. He also dispatched Heliodorus, his finance minister, to plunder the Temple in Jerusalem (2Macc3:1-40). Seleucus IV was poisoned by Heliodorus in 175 BC, who may have conspired with Seleucus IV's younger brother Antiochus IV. Antiochus IV was at this time en route to Syria from Rome, having been held as a political hostage for 15 years since his father's treaty with Rome in 190 BC.

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES AND THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

[21] At Seleucus IV's death, the legitimate heir to the throne was his son, Demetrius Soter. Arriving at just this time from Rome, however, Antiochus IV murdered his brother's young son and had himself proclaimed king (175 BC). Antiochus IV Epiphanes (i.e., [God] manifest) is described here as "a vile person", who in the Book of Daniel is the preeminent type of Antichrist. He assumed the Syrian throne by means of political conspiracy, not by force, thus "obtain[ing] the kingdom by flatteries".

1 & 2 Maccabees. Much of the history that fulfilled Daniel's prophecies of Antiochus Epiphanes and his persecution of Israel was recorded in the Books of 1 & 2 Maccabees (written around 100 BC, after the events they record). While these books are **not** inspired Scripture, they are generally regarded by scholars as reliable historical records.

[22] Early in his reign Egypt attempted an incursion into Syria, which was turned back by Antiochus IV. This early military victory served to solidify Antiochus as king over Syria.

It is at this point that Antiochus Epiphanes intersects directly the history of the Jewish people and nation. In 172 BC, Antiochus deposed and executed Onias III, the legitimate Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem, referred to here as "the prince of the covenant". Israel at this time was a province of Syria and had no king, but the High Priest acted as the *de facto* head of the Jewish people. Onias had resisted Antiochus' program of Hellenizing his Jewish subjects. Antiochus replaced Onias with his brother Jason to be his puppet in Jerusalem. Some time later, Jason himself was replaced as High Priest by Menelaus, who purchased the office from Antiochus with a bribe.

[23] As usurper to the throne obtained through a conspiracy, Antiochus' position as king was dependent upon continued backing of his co-conspirators.

[24] Antiochus heavily taxed his own citizens (especially 'the rich') and plundered his people's temples, diverting these funds to his co-conspirators in order to purchase their continued support (1Macc3:20).

[25] In 170 BC, Antiochus launched an invasion of Egypt (1Maccl:16-19), which was ruled by Ptolemy VI Philometor (i.e., "the king of the south").

[26] Although Egypt's army was apparently superior, intrigue and conspiracy within the Egyptian court undermined Ptolemy's leadership and translated into a victory for Antiochus on the battlefield at Pelusium (near the Nile Delta).

[27] After the battle at which Antiochus was victorious, Antiochus and Ptolemy sat together at a banquet "table", both professing a desire for peace, which neither intended (i.e., "they shall speak lies"), and which never materialized. It was Antiochus' objective to undermine Ptolemy's rule in Egypt, and thus bring it down from within, but this was not to be "for yet the end shall be at the time appointed"; that is, the history of Egypt is under the

sovereign and providential control of Jehovah, who is guiding it to His appointed end in His appointed time (Isa46:9-11).

- [28] Antiochus returned home from Egypt with great spoil (1Maccl:19-20). However, he had hoped to take all of Egypt, but was unsuccessful. Passing through Jerusalem on his way home, Antiochus found the deposed High Priest Jason leading an uprising to regain his office, which Antiochus had sold to Menelaus. Antiochus interpreted Jason's uprising as a general rebellion of the Jews, and he put it down with great fury, massacring 80,000 Jews, plundering the Temple, and taking many of its treasures (including the Golden Altar, the Golden Lampstand, and the Table of Showbread) back to Syria with him (1Maccl:20-24; 2Macc5:5-21).
- [29] In 168 BC, Antiochus launched a second invasion of Egypt, but this incursion would not turn out as well as the first.
- [30] Recently arrived in Egypt were "the ships of Kittim" (i.e., Cyprus) bringing a contingent of Romans. The leader of the delegation was Gais Popillius Lanas, dispatched by the Roman Senate with a message for Antiochus forbidding him from waging war with Egypt. Unwilling to escalate a conflict with Rome, Antiochus leaves Egypt in humiliation ("he shall be grieved").

To vent his "indignation" over his humiliation by the Romans, Antiochus launches a new wave of Jewish persecution "against the holy covenant". He sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, and they burned portions of the city, slaughtered many Jews, and took women and children as slaves. He forbid Jewish religious practice of any kind, including Sabbath keeping and circumcision, and ordered all copies of the Torah be burned (1Maccl:41-50,56-57). In these activities he was supported by a group of apostate Jews, "those who forsake the holy covenant".

- [31] Antiochus' outpoured wrath against the Jews was culminated on Chislev (~December) 15, 167 BC, when he entered the Temple in Jerusalem and put a stop to the "daily sacrifice". In its place, he ordered a pig to be offered on the Brazen Altar and an idol to Zeus be erected in the Holy of Holies (1Maccl:54). This act is called "the abomination that maketh desolate"; in other words, the greatest abomination that can be committed by man is idolatry, the worship of a false god, in that unique place on earth where Jehovah says His very Presence dwells (cf. Ex25:22; 2Chron5:13-6:1). This ultimate act of abomination to defile the Temple of Jehovah was performed by Antiochus in 167 BC, and Antichrist will repeat this abomination at the midpoint of the future 70th Week (Dan9:27; 2Thess2:4; Rev13:14).
- [32] Following the "abomination of desolation" in the Temple, Antiochus ordered his soldiers to visit each Jewish community and require that the city sacrifice a pig on the 25th day of each month (1Maccl:59) in honor of Antiochus' birthday; this was a conscious attempt to destroy the Jewish religion. Many Jewish communities submitted to the demands of Antiochus, but "the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" refers to the Hasmonean family (father Mattathias and his 5 sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan), priests who lived in the city of

Modein, who for love of Jehovah refused to comply with the required sacrifice and instigated a rebellion (i.e., the Maccabean Revolt) against Antiochus' blasphemous rule.

[33] Mattathias died shortly after the revolt began, and his son Judas, referred to as Maccabeas (meaning, 'the hammer'), took over leadership of the rebellion. Judas and his brothers lived in hiding in the mountains, from which they conducted guerilla warfare against the Syrian occupiers. Many faithful Jews joined them in the rebellion; though many Jews died in the 3 year guerilla war that followed, Syria was eventually driven from Israel (1Macc2-4). However, their independence was short-lived, as the Roman empire was rising to power to the west, and Israel would soon come under subjugation to the 4th Gentile Empire as prophesied.

[35] The Maccabean Revolt achieved victory over Antiochus and the Syrians in 164 BC. The first order of business was to cleanse the Temple and reinstate sacrifices to Jehovah, which Antiochus had stopped. Proper sacrifices began in a rededicated Temple on Chislew (~December) 25, 164 BC, exactly 1,150 days after its defilement which had been the "time appointed" by God (Dan8:14). From this time, the Jewish people (including the Lord Jesus; cf. Jn10:22) have celebrated the winter festival of **Hanukkah** (meaning, 'Dedication') commemorating the cleansing and restoration of the Temple at the time of the Maccabean Revolt (2Macc10:1-9).

ANTICHRIST AND THE 70TH WEEK

All of Daniel 11 was future prophecy at the time it was given to Daniel. From our point of view, however, Daniel 11:1-35 is now past history. Beginning with Daniel 11:36 and continuing to the end of the vision, this portion of the prophecy remains unfulfilled. It concerns the rise of Antichrist during the 70th Week. Though more than two millennia have passed between Antiochus and Antichrist, there is a typological connection between the two. Antiochus was the Satanic persecutor of the Jewish people at the end of the 3rd Gentile (Greek) Empire, and Antichrist will be the Satanic persecutor of the Jewish people at the end of the 4th Gentile (Roman) Empire. What Antiochus did in history by committing the "abomination of desolation" (Dan8:13; 11:31), Antichrist will repeat in the future (Dan9:27; 2Thess2:4; Rev13:14). In the Bible, Antiochus is the ultimate type of the Antichrist.

[36] The future Antichrist will be "king" of the 4th Gentile (Roman) Empire (Dan7:7-8; Rev13:1-2; 17:10-11). He will set his "will" in opposition to the will of God, which was the primeval sin of Lucifer (Isa14:12-14). He will "magnify" himself "above every god" (2Thess2:4), specifically speaking blasphemies against "the God of gods" (i.e., the One true God, Jehovah). He will "prosper", that is, exercise world dominion, "till the indignation be accomplished". In the Old Testament, "the indignation" is often used in a technical sense to designate "the day of the LORD", which is the Tribulation period of Daniel's 70th Week (Isa26:20; 34:2; Dan8:19). And yet, Antichrist's dominion is both constrained in extent and limited in time, having been "determined" by a sovereign God (Isa46:9-11; Rev13:5).

[37] Three personal characteristics of Antichrist are given in vv37-38. First, he will not regard, or give respect to, "the God of his fathers". The Hebrew word translated "God" is *Elohim*, which is correctly translated in the singular as "God" for Jehovah (the One true God), but which can be translated in the plural as 'gods' if the context refers to the false gods of paganism. Modern English versions tend to translate *Elohim* in this verse as 'gods'; however, I believe the KJV rendering as "God" is appropriate. Antichrist will be Roman (i.e., European). Historically, Europe of the past two millennia has been predominantly Christian. The traditional "God" of Europe has been the One true God. Of course, modern Europe is rapidly turning from this historical tradition, becoming increasingly secular; Antichrist will fully complete this turn, rejecting the Christian God of his European ancestors.

Second, Antichrist will not regard "the desire of women". The expression "the desire of women" here has a Hebrew construction (Cp., 1Sam9:20) that should be understood as 'that which is desired by [Jewish] women' (i.e., to give birth to the Messiah; cf. Gen3:15; Isa7:14). The Antichrist will give no respect to the Jewish Messianic hope, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Antichrist "shall magnify himself above" both the One true "God" and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, instead demanding the whole world worship him under penalty of death (Rev13:4,15).

[38] Third, Antichrist will "honor the God of forces" (i.e., force or military might"). In a sense, Antichrist will appear to be the ultimate humanist. He will reject the worship of any and all gods. By instead demanding that all worship him, a **man**, Antichrist will lead the world in the ultimate blasphemy, the worship of a creature rather than the Creator (Rom1:25).

[39] Unwittingly, however, by worshipping Antichrist the world will really be worshipping Satan, who gives Antichrist his power (Rev13:2). Satan is the "foreign god, whom [Antichrist] shall acknowledge and increase with glory".

Those who worship Antichrist will be rewarded; those who refuse (i.e., true believers) will be executed (Rev13:15). Just as the Roman Catholic inquisitions of the middle ages included the confiscation of the property of true believers who were martyred, so the martyrdom of multiplied millions of true believers during the 70th Week (Rev7:9-14) will transfer immense wealth to Antichrist, which he will use to reward those faithful to him. This may be what is meant by the reference to "divid[ing] the land for gain". However, there may be something more specific behind this; it may refer to a division of Israel, the Promised Land, as part of a 'land-for-peace' treaty (cf. Dan9:27; Joel3:2).

[40] Though Antichrist will attempt to control the world, he will not succeed, and "at the time of the end" (i.e., the latter half of the 70th Week, the time Christ referred to as "the great tribulation"; Matt24:21) the 4th Gentile (Roman) Empire with Antichrist as its king will enter a war that will last until the 2nd Coming. This is the so-called 'battle' of Armageddon (Rev16:16), but it is more of a war or extended campaign than a

battle. It will be centered in the Middle East, specifically Jerusalem (Zech14:2), since Antichrist is in covenant with Israel (Dan9:27).

In vv40-45, geographical designations are to be understood as relative to Israel/Jerusalem. Thus, Armageddon begins when Israel is attacked on two fronts by "the king of the south" and "the king of the north". The "king of the south" throughout this chapter is Egypt; the "king of the north" is likely Magog (i.e., Russia) with its confederation of Muslim nations detailed in Ezekiel 38-39. These two attacks do not have to be simultaneous, but may be an overview of the entire war; in fact, the attack from the south appears to come first, with that from the north coming later (v44).

- [41] With Israel under attack, Antichrist (who may be based in Babylon; Rev17-18) must come with his forces to "the glorious land". In the ensuing battle, many surrounding countries will be conquered, but excepted from conquest are the countries of Edom, Moab and Ammon (i.e., modern Jordan). The explanation for why Jordan is exempted is likely the supernatural protection afforded it since the believing Jewish remnant will have fled Jerusalem (Matt24:15-20) and taken refuge at Bozrah by this time (Isa63:1-6; Rev12:13-17).
- [43] Antichrist will push south and conquer Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia, an Old Testament designation for all of Africa.
- [44] Apparently, while occupied with his campaign in Africa, Antichrist receives word of an attack from the "east" (Rev9:13-21: 16:12), which may be an attack on his base at Babylon, and an attack from the "north", which may be the Magog invasion (Ezek38-39).
- [45] This causes Antichrist to rush back to Jerusalem, "the glorious holy mountain" of Mt. Zion, to make his last stand. The 70th Week ends with all the nations of the world coming against Antichrist at Jerusalem (Zech14:1-2), at which time Christ returns and ends the Battle of Armageddon with a word (2Thess2:8), destroying the armies assembled at Jerusalem and casting Antichrist immediately into the Lake of Fire (Zech14:3-5; Rev19:11-21).

CHAPTER 12

THE GREAT TRIBULATION (WAR IN HEAVEN)

- [1] The phrase "at that time" corresponds to the time of Jewish persecution under the "willful king" (i.e., Antichrist; Dan11:36). It refers specifically to the last 3.5 years of the 70th Week, which here Gabriel calls "a time of trouble", Jeremiah called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer30:7), and the Lord Jesus called "the great tribulation" (Matt24:21). It will be a time of unprecedented persecution of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel (Joel2:2; Matt24:22). It will be the Devil's final, all out attempt to exterminate every last Jew, since Satan understands that Christ's 2nd coming is contingent upon the national conversion of Israel and the Jewish petition of Messiah to return as their king (Deut17:15; Hos5:15-6:2; Matt23:39).

During this time of Jewish persecution on earth, there is an unseen "war in heaven" in which the Archangel Michael and the holy angels overpower Satan, the "dragon" who gives Antichrist his power (Rev13:2), and cast him out of heaven (Rev12:7-12). Satan/Antichrist's attempt at Jewish genocide will not be successful. Although 2/3 of all Jews will be killed by Antichrist during this time period, the remainder will be converted and call on Jesus to deliver them (Zech13:8-9); the surviving, converted remnant near the end of the 70th week fulfills the prophecy that "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom11:26) since every Jew alive on earth at the return of Christ will be a true believer.

RESURRECTION OF JEWISH SAINTS

- [2] Whereas the resurrection of Christians (believers from the Church Age) occurs at the time of the rapture (1Thess4:16), before the 70th Week begins, the resurrection of Jewish saints (and presumably all O.T. saints) takes place after the 70th week is completed. Thus, all Jewish saints will be resurrected at the return of Christ so that they may inherit all the earthly promises God made to them (i.e., the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic and New covenants will be fulfilled with a regenerated and resurrected nation of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom).

The two categories of resurrection are mentioned, one to "everlasting life" and one to "everlasting contempt" (Cp., Jn5:25-29; Rev20:5-6), but they do not take place at the same time; the resurrection of the unbelieving dead from all ages does not occur until the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev20:11-15).

- [3] The Lord Jesus alluded to this verse in Matthew 13:43. Resurrected saints of all ages will participate in the Millennial Kingdom, then pass into the eternal state.

GOD'S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS TO DANIEL

- [4] Daniel is instructed to record the "words" of the vision and "seal" them in a book (as inspired Scripture to be preserved by God). Even though Daniel and his people could not possibly have understood all that was revealed to them at this time, the promise is given that "knowledge" and understanding **of this prophecy** would be "increased" as "the time of the end" approaches.

Nonetheless, even without understanding all the details, this prophecy given to Daniel and the Jewish nation could be a tremendous source of comfort and hope to them as it clearly revealed that God's plan and purpose for them will triumph in the end, and even those Jews who do not live to see the Kingdom of God come will be resurrected to participate in it.

- [5] Daniel is still in the midst of the vision, and in it his attention is directed toward two angelic persons, one on each bank of the Tigris river (cf. Dan10:4).

- [6] One of the angels asks the "man clothed in linen" (Dan10:5-6), the glorified Son of God who is in sovereign control of history (Isa46:9-11), how long it will be "to the end of these wonders", apparently referring to the time of persecution under Antichrist (Dan11:36-45).
- [7] The answer is given by the glorified Son of God, swearing by "Him who liveth forever" (i.e., two divine witnesses attesting to absolute surety in the matter), that it will be "for a time, times, and an half" (i.e., three-and-a-half years); this is a reference to the last half of the 70th Week. While the first half of the 70th Week will be a time of much tribulation on earth (the Seal and Trumpet Judgments of Rev6-11), it will not be directed specifically toward the Jews; the nation of Israel will be living in comparable peace during this time, under the protection of their covenant with Antichrist. It is with the breaking of that covenant at the middle of the 70th week (Dan9:27; Rev12:6; 13:11-18) that the unprecedented persecution of Israel begins. At the completion of this three-and-a-half year period, "the breaking up of the [stubborn/rebellious will] of the holy people" shall have been accomplished; that is, the Jews as a nation will repent of their national sin of rejecting Jesus as Messiah and King.
- [8] Daniel does not understand the response, and himself asks of the glorified Son of God whom he addresses as "my Lord", for additional clarification.
- [9] The Lord's response to Daniel's additional query is, in effect, that it is not going to be possible for Daniel to understand all that has been revealed. The full understanding of the revelation will not be possible "till the time of the end".
- [10] The 70th Week, and especially the final three-and-a-half years of it, is a period during which God is purifying the Jewish people in order to produce a believing, holy nation (cf. Ezek20:33-38); in contrast, the world will worship the beast and the dragon (Rev13:4).
- [11] Another prophetic time period is revealed specifically concerning the Temple and its sacrificial system. From "the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up" (i.e., the defiling of the Temple by Antichrist, which occurs at the midpoint of the Tribulation) to the cleansing of the Temple and its rededication will be **1,290 days**. This means that a period of 30 days following the 2nd Advent will be needed before animal sacrifices, which were stopped by Antichrist, will begin again. This is a period of time consistent with that taken by King Hezekiah to cleanse the Temple after it was defiled by his father Ahaz (cf. 2Chron29).

The prophetic Scriptures clearly teach that a greatly expanded Temple will function during the Millennial Kingdom (Ezek40-48), built by Messiah Himself from which He will reign over all the earth as both king and high priest (Zech6:12-13; 14:9), with animal sacrifices brought as sin and trespass offerings by the mortal citizens of the kingdom (Cp. Ezek40:39; 42:13; 43:13,19,21,22,25; 44:27,2; 45:17,19,22,23,25; 46:20; Zech14:16-17,21), and which are offered by a Zadokian priesthood (Ezek40:46;

43:19; 44:15; 48:11) in fulfillment of the everlasting covenant God made with Phinehas (Num25:11-13; cf. 1Sam2:35; Jer33:15-21).

- [12] Yet another prophetic time period is revealed concerning the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. The Lord Jesus informed Nicodemus that no one who is not "born again" will "see the Kingdom of God" (Jn3:3); that is, the Messianic Kingdom cannot be inaugurated until the judgment of unbelievers still alive at the return of Christ is completed, they are removed from earth, leaving only resurrected saints and believing mortals to enter the Kingdom Age. This period of judgment and removal of unbelievers from the earth will take **1,335 days**, or an additional 75 days after Christ's return; since all Jews are true believers when Christ returns, this period of judgment concerns only the Gentiles (Matt25:31-46) and will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel3:2,12). All those still remaining on earth after these 1,335 days are completed are "blessed" to inherit the Kingdom of God (Matt25:34).

[See the accompanying **CHART**, The 1,290 & 1,335 Days of Daniel 12].

- [13] Daniel will not live to see what has been prophesied in the vision of Daniel 10-12. He will "rest", that is die, before it comes to pass; however, he will personally "stand" in the resurrection (Dan12:2) to inherit "[his] lot" (i.e., portion) in the Messianic Kingdom [of God] that will be inaugurated on earth "at the end of days".

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