



DANIEL

THE KING'S TABLE

A Brief Sketch of the History Leading up to Daniel

- **715–686 Hezekiah** served as a righteous king and under his leadership, Judah was preserved from Assyrian Invasion. (Isaiah 36-37).
- **686–642 Manasseh (44 years)** his son is remembered as the most wicked king in Judah's history. He revived pagan rites, including astral cults in the very forecourts of the temple of Yahweh, child sacrifice, and temple prostitution.
- **642–640 Amon also wicked - assassinated (2 Years)**
- **640–609 Josiah** At eight years old he becomes king and leads the nation to repentance at twenty-five, restoring the temple, the law, the covenant. He waged a war on idolatry throughout Judea.
- **609 - Jehoahaz (3 Mo)**
- **609–598 - Eliakim / Jehoiakim** – Becomes the vassal of Nebuchadnezzar.
- **598 - Jehoiachin/Jeconiah (3 Mo)**
- **Zedekiah - 597–586**
- **605 – The Battle of Carchemish** - Nebuchadnezzar inflicted a crushing defeat on an Egyptian army led by Pharaoh Necho II.
- **605 – Demoralizing of Judah** – Deportation of temple treasures and the Royal family to Babylon
- **597** – Ezekiel and 10,000 captives led into exile.
- **586** - The city of Jerusalem and the Temple Destroyed

King Nebuchadnezzar

- Approximately 14 million Baked Bricks have been discovered in the ruins of ancient Babylon bearing Nebuchadnezzar's stamp which read, "*Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon ... eldest son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon*"
- The legendary hanging gardens were built by Nebuchadnezzar to remind his homesick wife of her home in the mountains of Iran.
- He manages to defeat Egypt, subdue and enslave the nation of Judah, and assume the throne in Babylon all within one year (605 BC).
- Name Meaning: "May Nabu Protect the Crown"
 - The Importance of the god Nabu and the Akitu Festival
 - In the beginning, the god Marduk battles the goddess Tiamat (the deified ocean) Marduk is victorious, kills Tiamat, and creates the world from her body – he has a son, Nabu.
 - Nabu's cult center at Borsippa (referred to as a Second Babylon) was almost as important as the Esagila, the **temple** of Marduk at Babylon. (Dragon Surrush)
 - Nabu was the god of writing, a gift which he bestowed on humanity (cuniform). What Nabu wrote would come to be. He therefore served as a god of providence and creation.
 - On the fourth day of the festival, the king was to face his trial.
 - The high priest greeted the king before stripping him of his crown and royal insignia
 - Dragging him by the ears to the image of Marduk (Bel) causing him to kneel.
 - The king was required to review his promises of the past year before Marduk and beg for forgiveness if any were unmet.
 - Promises to the People for the coming year were then made before Marduk
 - The chief priest struck him hard upon the cheek, with an open hand but as strongly as he could. The blow had to be decisive and hard, for according to tradition tears had to flow from the king's eyes.
 - A steady flow of tears assured the priest and the people the king's reign would be prosperous and his crown and royal regalia were returned to him.

Daniel 1:1-5

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

“And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim”

The word for “the Lord” in the opening verses of Daniel is אֲדֹנָי “Adonai” meaning, “Sovereign One,” instead of the more common יְהוָה “Jehovah.” This is likely intentional as God’s sovereignty is emphasized throughout the book. Jehoiakim and the nation of Judah are delivered into exile not because of the superior might of Babylon, but because the Lord had handed them over.

“These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.”

The taking of treasures (particularly sacred relics) and storing them in the temple of one’s own god was a common practice (see 1Sam 5:2; 21:9) – these served as trophies with which their respective gods might be pleased, and the temples themselves served as treasure vaults of the nation. Nebuchadnezzar’s god would have been Marduk. The record of this event in chapter one sets the stage for Belshazzar’s celebration in chapter 5.

The three deportations of the Jews are not distinguished here or described in any great detail. While there is disagreement among scholars on the specific dates and distinction of events, it is generally accepted that the temple treasure and leading men of the city were deported in 605 BC immediately following Nebuchadnezzar’s victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish. A second deportation of 10,000 men, including the prophet Ezekiel occurred in 597 BC, and then a third, final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple occurred in 586 BC.

2 Kings 24:13-17 - Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the Lord. 14 He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans – a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.

15 Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land. 16 The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand craftsmen and artisans.

2 Chron 36:6-7 - Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the Lord and put them in his temple there.

The journey into exile itself is alluded to in Psalm 137. This would have been a perilous 680 mile journey. A collection of approximately 200 clay tablets, known as the Al-Yahudu tablets detail, in cuneiform, various transactions and give us insight into the daily lives of Jews in Babylon. They appear to have lived, not as prisoners, but simply as exiles. They could live and trade as they pleased.

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

“young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve”

The first characteristic of these young men, “without any physical defect” echoes the characteristics required of priests in Leviticus (Lev 21:17-23), but might also call on us to think of the sacrifices themselves. These young men (perhaps in their early teens) were being captured, processed, and prepared to offer up to Marduk as living sacrifices. Their qualities would serve only as instruments through which they, and the Jewish people who would follow them, might be carefully and strategically reprogramed.

“He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.”

Learning to speak the language and the literature of the Babylonians would have involved much more than simply learning a new form of communication. They would have been presented with an entirely different account of historical events, and an entirely different religion through which to see the creation of the world and the development of civilization. An extensive amount of their education would likely have included omen texts, magic, sorcery, occultic practices, and the science of astrology, all forbidden under the Mosaic law:

***Deut 18:10-12** - Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.*

“The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table.”

While it would seem that these four Jews did not have any option but to comply, as captives, they would hardly be living behind iron bars. They were set in a position of high privilege. Jehoiachin was given a very similar honor: *“He spoke kindly to him [Jehoiachin] and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table.”* 2 Kings 25:28-30

Daniel	“God is my judge”	Belteshazzar	“Keeper of the Treasure of Baal”
Hananiah	“Jehovah is gracious”	Shadrach	“Command of Acu” (the moon god)
Mishael	“Who is what God is?”	Meshech	“Who is what Shach is?” (Babylonian goddess)
Azariah	“Jehovah is my helper”	Abednego	“Servant of Nebu” (the god of writing)
		Nebuchadnezzar	“Nabu has protected the son who will inherit”

6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Daniel and his friends would have likely been quite young. Many historians and scholars suggest that their three-year period of training would likely lasted from age fourteen to seventeen. A three-year period of training appears to have been customary age at this age. Plato, Alcibiades 1:121, states that the education of Persian youths began in their 14th year, and Xenophon, Cy., 1,2 mentions the 16th or 17th years as the close. The [Persian] Avesta says that a student for holy training should go to a master for three years.

Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonian's did not set out murder and enslave. Rather they sought to bring Babylon to the world through assimilation. Their methods were tailored to reprogram a new generation of Jews through their most influential leaders. They would bestow honor, and provide comfort, and education. But their intent would be to thoroughly conquer the people through these means.

The examples of these young men and God's hand of providence in their lives would serve both as an encouragement and a caution to generations to come. Satan does not simply possess one's life through Ouija boards and seances, but rather, in our pride, our philosophies – even our freedoms and luxuries.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

:: Col 2:8 ::

DANIEL

RESOLVED

Intro

- The Journey into Exile would have been app. 680 Miles.
- Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were likely 14 Years of Age - Ancient writings of Plato and Xenophon and others speak of this three year training as occurring specifically between the ages of 14 and 17.

Daniel 1:8

8 But **Daniel resolved not to defile himself** with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now **God had caused** the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." 11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 17 To these four young men **God gave** knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. 18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

“Daniel resolved not to defile himself”

Often the difference between what we might consider to be sin and what we might not is entirely subjective. When faced with temptation there are many shades of grey. Daniel was not given an option when he was deported to Babylon. His name was changed, and he would not see his home again. His path forward had already been determined for him – a new language, a new education, and a new king to serve. But when faced with what Daniel considered to be a hard line ... what he knew would serve as a sign of rejection of his God, Daniel ... “resolved himself...”

Conviction Comes from the Recognition of God's Presence and his Sovereignty

- “And **the Lord delivered** Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand”
- “**God had caused** the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel”
- “To these four young men **God gave** knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.”
- In the first and tenth chapters of Ezekiel we are presented with a fantastic and elaborate picture of something that would resemble a chariot of God in heaven. At first the picture appears dark, as in chapter ten, God removes his presence from the temple. But a more comforting theme develops through the book. God was not simply removing his presence, but rather, was going with his people. The Spirit of God was not locked within a building and they had not been shut out from his presence! “The Spirit of God was within the wheels!” This message is powerfully portrayed in Ezek 11:16, *“For a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.”*

Conviction Comes from the Recognizing What God has done

- We gain conviction from our own history (Raising Ebenezers).
 - It is so important that we occasionally take inventory of what God has done for us in our walk with him. In times of discouragement, maybe make a list of all that you can remember that he has done and take comfort in knowing that God is unchanging and he has not forgotten you (Is 49:16).
- We gain conviction from Biblical history.
 - Most of our Bible is history!
 - Most sermons preached throughout scripture were themselves rooted in history.
 - Imagine the comfort Daniel may have felt in discovering the obvious parallels between his own journey and that of Joseph!
- We gain conviction through one another's histories.
 - This is why fellowship is so important. We take comfort and inspiration from the experiences of others. These shared journeys are what transform relationships into “fellowships.”

Conviction Comes from the Recognizing the Dangers of Compromise

- Adam and Eve compromised eternal life for a bite of fruit.
- Esau compromised his entire future for a bowl of soup.
- Saul traded his throne for a herd of sheep.
- David traded the future of his entire kingdom for a moment of weakness.
- Judas traded Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Conviction Comes Through Our Recognition of a very Real and Present Enemy

- Just as Conviction Comes by Recognizing our common savior – It also comes through recognizing our common enemy
 - **1 Peter 5:8-9** - Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The Test of Our Resolve

- Our enemy is described throughout scripture as “scheming” and “deceptive.” He will often test us in ways we may have not anticipated.
 - Daniel and his friends might have prepared themselves to face torture, or cruel circumstances, but choice food and a position in the King’s court?
 - They may have been willing to put their own lives on the line, but they are put in a situation where they will have to risk the lives of others. It would have been easy to compromise here. They were forced in to this situation. God is bigger than what we eat or drink! They could simply have complied and honored God in their hearts. But they knew that their witness and their representation of their faith would be non-negotiable.

Thematic References

- **1 Cor 2:2-3** – *“For **I resolved** to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*
- **Ps 17:3** – *“Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; **I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.**”*
- **Josh 24:15** *“choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**”*

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

:: Col 2:8 ::

DANIEL

TIMES & SEASONS

1 In the second year of his reign, **Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.** 2 **So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.** When they came in and stood before the king, 3 he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means." 4 Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, " **O king, live forever!** Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it." 5 The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: **If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.** 6 But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me." 7 Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it." 8 Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: 9 If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me." 10 The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. 11 What the king asks is too difficult. **No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.**" 12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death. 14 When **Arioch**, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. 15 He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. 16 At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. 17 **Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.** 18 **He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.**

“Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.”

When we wake up from a nightmare, we are thankful that it was just an illusion. The vision in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream was anything but an illusion. Instead, it served as a revelation that his perception of himself and his own kingdom was the illusion. This dream would be the closest the king had ever come to reality. In the ancient world, dreams were nearly always understood as meaningful or significant. This dream in particular troubled the king that his spirit was "troubled" – The Hebrew **נִתְפַחֵץ**, meaning a loud stomping or beating, likely refers to the racing of his heart as he woke from his sleep. Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar already understood this vision as ominous, he did understand it to be from God (or the gods).

“So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.”

The king’s counselors reveal a lot about the nature of his rule. He had surrounded himself with wicked and dishonest men. Four groups of “wise men” (designated as “Magi” in later times) are brought in:

- לְחַרְטֻמִּים – “hartom” **Scribes** (from the word for “stylus”) They would chart the stars.
- וְלִאֲשָׁפִים – “assapim” **Priests** who practiced spells and communed with the dead.
- וְלְקַשְׁשָׁפִים – “kashshapu” **sorcerers** who used herbs and potions, summoning demons.
- וְלְכַשְׁדִּים – “chaldeans” **Astrologers**, wise men and prophets.

Any Jews living in Babylon, together with any Jews who would have read these words in future generations would have immediately been struck by this categorization of the king’s counsel. Likely, they would have immediately recalled Deut 18:9-11:

When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.

There may be an implicit caution in this account relating to the friends and advisors with whom we choose to surround ourselves. The king’s counsel was dishonest, self-serving, and wicked. By way of contrast, Daniel also will also call upon his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, to “plead for mercy from God” (2:17).

- **Ps 1:1** - Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.
- **Prov 15:22** - Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.
- **Prov 11:14** - For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.
- **Prov 20:18** - Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.
- **Prov 24:6** - for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers.

“No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.”

The confession of the king’s counsel serves to set the stage for an encounter that Nebuchadnezzar must have with the one true God, but is also thematically important to the book as a whole. After the destruction of the temple and deportation into a foreign land, Jews would likely have felt as though they had been cast off from God. But nothing could be further from the truth. As Ezekiel emphasizes, “Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.” (Ez 11:16). This theme of God’s presence, sovereignty, and concern is what ties together the various stories and prophecies of the book as a whole.

19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; **wisdom and power are his.** 21 **He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. 22 He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.** 23 I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king." 24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." 25 Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means." 26 The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" 27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: 29 "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. 30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

“wisdom and power are his ... He changes times and seasons”

After God reveals the mystery in a vision, Daniel praises God both for the revelation and for its meaning. The very same vision that brought terror to the king brought relief to Daniel. He opens his prayer of thanksgiving by acknowledging “wisdom and power are his” (2:20), and then closes in saying, “You have given me wisdom and power” (2:23). Daniel’s praise here does not simply stem from the revelation of the dream, but more particularly, the meaning of it. Daniel had just witnessed God’s revelation of himself as sovereign over the nations and over time itself. In seeing the coming kingdoms represented by the statue, and the inevitable rock that was to come, He had received a much bigger picture of his God.

Whether we are passing through a period of wealth and prosperity (as was Nebuchadnezzar), or passing through a time of pain and uncertainty (as were the Jewish people), seasons do change (Ecc. 3:1-8, 17). All that which causes us pain will soon be dust. All that which brings joy - this also will be dust. This same message that breathes hope in times of trial also brings sobriety in times of abundance. Daniel is unique among the prophets as he, together with the king, had the amazing privilege of seeing, what Solomon also, through his wisdom, was able to see - a grand perspective of time itself. Times and seasons do change. Solomon writes, “The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both” (Eccl 2:14).

If you are passing through a time of pain, this message might bring hope. If you are passing through a time of privilege and blessing, this message might appear to be dark. But just as Solomon’s words would have appeared nihilistic without an Ecclesiastes 12, so also, Daniel’s visions would carry little comfort if not for the rock that was not cut by human hands (Dan 2:34), and a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan 2:44).

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

The motifs of “light” and “darkness” are prominent throughout both the old and new testaments. “Light” appears to most frequently represent, not simply goodness, but, more importantly, knowledge and wisdom. By way of contrast, “darkness” is not to be understood simply as evil, but rather, foolishness and lack of direction. Daniel 2:22 and Job 12:22 are remarkably similar. Job says, “He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light.”

Without divine revelation, we are left with only conjecture and subjective opinion. We, like Nebuchadnezzar, might look to this world for counsel and direction. We might look to a variety of books, speakers, therapists, podcasts, and forums. But, as in the case of the king’s counsel, our counsel is not either from God, or thoroughly rooted and dependent upon God’s word, we are ultimately still in the darkness. With this understanding of the themes of “light” and “dark” consider the verses below:

- **John 1:5** - The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.
- **John 3:19** - Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light
- **John 8:12** - "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- **Acts 26:17-18** - I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light
- **2 Cor 4:6** - For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
- **Col 1:13** - For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves
- **1 Thess 5:5-6** - You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.
- **1 Peter 2:9-10** - you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
- **1 John 1:5** - God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.
- **1 John 2:9-11** - Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.
- **Rev 16:10** - The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

:: 1 Tim 6:17-19 ::

DANIEL

AN ENDURING KINGDOM

Matt 6:9-13 - "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

31 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue — an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. 32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. 34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. **But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.**

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

39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. 40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron — for iron breaks and smashes everything — and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. 41 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. 42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

44 "In the time of **those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.** 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands — a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. **47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings** and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." 48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. **He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon** and placed him in charge of all its wise men. 49 Moreover, **at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.**

“You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.”

Nebuchadnezzar serves not only as the head of the Babylonian empire, but also the head of the entire series of kingdoms that would follow. He has been placed in a position of prestige and power and great responsibility. The king is immediately confronted with a sobering reminder that all of the dominion, power, might, and glory that he enjoyed was not his own achievement but had been given to him by God. He was a steward of all that which ultimately belonged to God alone.

"After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours."

The chest and arms of silver represent the kingdom that would follow Babylon. Historically we know this to be the joint kingdom of Media and Persia, but fortunately we are not left to historical resources alone. Daniel 8:20 also states that the second kingdom would be that of the Medes and Persians. The two arms are likely intended to represent two-part nature of this kingdom as the two horns of a ram do in chapter eight.

“Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.”

Again we are not left to speculate as to who this third kingdom would be. Historically, the kingdom of Greece followed that of the Medes and the Persians and Greece is specifically identified as the third kingdom in Daniel’s prophecies (8:21; 10:20; 11:2). In 332 B.C. the armies of Alexander the Great defeated the Medo-Persian Empire, and would remain as an empire for the following 185 years.

The “whole earth” represents the known civilized world of the day. Alexander named more than seventy cities after himself and was acknowledged as the king of Macedonia, the King of Persia, the King of Asia, and the Pharaoh of Egypt. The Egyptians even declared him to be the son of their god, Ammon.

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

The fourth kingdom, historically, would be the Roman empire. The unprecedented power of this empire is emphasized through the imagery of iron and the five terms employed in 2:40, “breaks,” “smashes,” “breaks,” “smashes,” “breaks to pieces,” “crush,” and “break.” The Roman empire would endure for approximately 500 years before it would be split into East and West.

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

The kingdoms represented by the metals in the statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream appear to become increasingly strong, but also, progressively inferior in worth. Each successive empire would become larger and more impressive, but also become increasingly unstable. Rome would be plagued by internal conflict throughout its rule – particularly the conflict that existed within Judea. The incompatibility between Jews and the Romans (represented most notably in the Zealots and Sicarii) would eventually lead to war and instability throughout the empire. Ultimately, the rule of man has always been characterized by corruption, greed, and deterioration.

Rome

The Feet:

- Still Represented by Iron
- Identified with the kingdom of Iron in 2:21.
- There are only four kingdoms represented in Daniel 7 as well.
- Historic Fulfillment (The Christ Came)



“a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.”

While the eventual demise of the Roman Empire would come only after many centuries of gradual decay, the reign over God’s people that all of these kingdoms represented would, in fact, come to a sudden and decisive end. The foundation stone for a new kind of kingdom had been cut and set in place by God himself. Likely referencing the vision of Daniel 2 Jesus says, “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matt 21:44; Lk 20:18). Observing this phenomenon Gamaliel wisely said, *“if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God (Acts 5:38-39).*

While it would take six-hundred years before the rock would come into view, the various visions that describe the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are so remarkably accurate that until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, many critical scholars assumed that Daniel must have been written at a much later date. As one commentator writes,

The evidence for the fulfillment of this vision in Christ and his disciples is found not only in Daniel’s prophecy, but also in Jesus’ own words. Jesus cried out, *“The time has come ... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:15). He said, *“if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”* (Matt 12:28), and *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing”* (Matt 11:12). Finally, after teaching on the nature of his kingdom through a series of parables, and conquering the ultimate enemy through his reign – death itself, he identifies himself with the king of Dan 7:14 saying, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ...”* (Mt 28:18-19).

The kingdoms of Babylon and Rome are in ruins. The world kingdoms that are here today will not be here tomorrow. But *“His kingdom is an eternal kingdom and his dominion endures from generation to generation!”*

The Kingdoms of the World

The kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream appear to represent something of a single unit. While each successive kingdom would conquer and supplant the kingdom before, as a whole, they appear to cooperate as one. Daniel’s visions would ultimately reveal the kingdoms of this world as what they really were:

- They were united in their control of the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia.
- They were united in their subjugation of the Jewish people.
- They were united in their depiction as something of an idol.
- They were united in their ultimate demise – all of these kingdoms are shattered at once (2:35).
- They were united under the control of a much more sinister force that was at war with the people of God, a theme that will become the focus of Daniel 10.

While the kingdoms of Daniel 2 represent a particular timeline leading to the time of the Messiah, they also represent a number of truths about the kingdoms of our world today:

- A kingdom represents more than Rule. It represents control and values.
- The Kingdoms of this world are **under the influence** of something much more sinister (2 Cor 4:1 - The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers).
- The Kingdoms of this world **suffer divide and decay**.
- The Kingdoms of this world serve as **idols that are worshiped**.

The Kingdom of the Messiah

Jesus commonly identified himself with “the rock,” or “the stone that the builders rejected.” It seems likely that these metaphors were intended to serve as references both to Psalm 118:22 and to Daniel 2.

- **Mt 16:18** - “On this Rock I will build my church”
- **Matt 21:44** - “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed”
- **1 Peter 2:4-6** - As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The Jews anticipated a “Christ” who would come and establish an eternal kingdom.

- The very name “Christ” (Χριστοῦ), or “Messiah” (מָשִׁיחַ) means “anointed one,” or “king.”
- The prophets anticipated that this king would come to usher in his kingdom. (Is 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-5:5; 9:6-7; Ez 34:24; 37:24; Zech 2:10-12; 9:9-10 et. al.)
- Jesus came in the midst of the fourth kingdom of Daniel’s vision with the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 4:17; 9:35; 10:7; Lk 8:1; 9:2; Ac 1:3 et. al.).
- All of Jesus parables dealt particularly with the nature of this kingdom.
- Jesus taught that, with his coming, this kingdom was both present and advancing in this world.
 - **Luke 17:20-21** - "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
 - **Lk 11:20** - “if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”
 - **Matt 11:12** - “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing.”

The Kingdom of God Today

- The kingdom of God is “the reign” of God, manifested in his people (the church) but also in heaven, and throughout creation.
- Much as the kingdom was both present yet advancing in the land in the time of Joshua, so God’s Kingdom is both present, yet advancing in this world and in our lives.

How the Kingdom is to be Identified

- The Kingdom of Christ refers to all that which submits itself to the reign of Christ – those who submit to and honor his word (Jn 5:24; 8:37, 51; Rev 3:8).
- The Kingdom of Christ is unified (Jn 17:23; Rom 15:5; 1Cor 1:10; 12:12; Eph 4:3).
- The Kingdom of Christ is identified by its fruit (Mt 7:17-20; Jn 15:2-8; Gal 5:22).
- The Kingdom of Christ is an Enduring kingdom (Dan 2:44; 4:3, 34; Heb 12:26-28).

Thematic References

- **Isa 28:16-20** - So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. 17 I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. 18 Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it. 19 As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through. "The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror. 20 The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you.
- **1 Peter 2:4-6** - As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- **1 Peter 2:7-8** - Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."

Now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

:: Hebrews 12:26-28 ::

DANIEL

THROUGH THE FIRE

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.
2 He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. 3 So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: 5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. **6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.**" 7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, 11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon-Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up." 13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" 16 **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."**

“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon”

It seems both odd and deliberate that the record of Nebuchadnezzar setting up a golden statue on the plain of Dura follows the account of his dream of a statue in which he, together with his empire, served as a “head of gold.” We are not told whether this image was intended to represent Nabu, Marduk, another of the king’s gods, or possibly even Nebuchadnezzar himself.

We do know that relative to other idols discovered from this time period, particularly in Babylon, that this image would have been of unprecedented magnitude and worth. In a society in which many gods were honored, this particular image was of such significant importance that worship was demanded – the penalty for noncompliance would be death.

The book of Daniel as a whole, while bound together thematically, is characterized by abrupt and surprising transitions from one chapter to the next. In this instance, Daniel 2 closes with Nebuchadnezzar's praise of God, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings!" (2:47), and Daniel 3 opens with the king's actions that don't seem to harmonize well with his words at all. These contradictory ideas are likely carefully juxtaposed in the compilation of the writing and completely intentional.

“He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up.”

The third chapter of Daniel is characterized by the repetitive incorporation of lists that are of surprising detail. Both the nobility and the instruments associated with worship are carefully described. The instruments may have, in some manner, served as a representation of the various nations subjected to Babylonian rule (see 3:7), as each of these instruments appears to have originated in a different corner of the empire, or they may simply have represented what would have been understood as a significant orchestra of the time period.

The purpose of assembling the nobility appears to be, not for the purpose of simply worshiping this image, but rather for its dedication, and then more importantly, the commission they are given to enforce the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's image. With this in mind, it is important to note the elevated position that had been bestowed upon Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael (1:19; 2:49; 3:12) - these men were not simply citizens, but were in a position of influence. People would look to them and follow their lead.

“Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

Nebuchadnezzar may have been particularly fond of burning his enemies alive. Jeremiah writes, *“I will hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will put them to death before your very eyes ... The Lord treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon burned in the fire”* (Jer 29:21-23). Whether or not this may have been, in some manner, an homage to Nusku, Girra, or another Babylonian fire god is uncertain. We know that smelting furnaces of this region and time period were quite large and capable of reaching temperatures approaching 1,000 degrees.

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.”

In light of what we know of the king, the response of these young men is quite bold. Knowing that they were facing execution, we might expect them to eagerly offer up a defense of their actions. Instead, they recognize the situation for exactly what it is – they have no course of action but to rely entirely on God. Anyone who has been there knows what a humbling place, but also what a powerful place this can be. God is a defender of the defenseless! (Ps 82:3)

In whatever situation we find ourselves in, we must recognize God’s power. He is more than able to deliver us from our weaknesses, our trials, our sin, and even death itself. We don’t worship a God who watches our lives in an unengaging fashion, but rather a God who is deeply concerned with us, deeply in love with us, and powerful enough to save us in any circumstance.

“But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

These words ... *But even if he does not* have served to strengthen the resolve and the faith of so many. Having recognized the power of God to rescue from any threat, the three young men acknowledge that God may choose not to deliver them - and he would be equally worthy of praise!

The same God who rescued Joseph from a well, Jonah from the ocean depths, and Israel from Egypt is the same God who allowed David to lose his child, Paul to keep his “thorn in the flesh,” and His own son to suffer humiliation and death on the cross.

The point made here is so powerful. We don’t worship God or remain obedient to his will because we are bartering with him. We aren’t faithful for the purpose of achieving our own ends at all. We are faithful because he is God. If the only thing that we are able to accomplish in this life is to lift his name up before the world – then we have lived a full life.

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

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

They replied, "Certainly, O king." 25 **He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."** 26

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. **They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.**

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29

Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

“Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

Have you ever felt as though God has abandoned you? That, possibly due to sins in your past, God had decided to turn his attention toward others who had not made the same mistakes? I wonder if this is how the Jews living in captivity in a foreign land may have felt at times. Their home was gone, they, as a people, had violated their covenant with God (Jer 7:4-7), the temple that represented God's presence with them and their covenant with him, had been destroyed, and now they lived as exiles in a foreign land where foreign gods appeared to reign.

Yet an important theme of Daniel and Ezekiel, the prophets of God in this time period, was that God had not forgotten his people at all. Ezekiel 11:16 says, *Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.* The fourth man in the fire, then, represents much more than the God who delivered Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael from the fiery furnace. To those Jews who had felt abandoned, or forgotten by their God, the account may have called their minds back to Isaiah 43, 49 and God's unfailing love for his people.

- **Isa 43:2-4** - *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze ... Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you.*
- **Isa 49:14-16** - *But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me." 15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! 16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.*

May God remind you today of his presence with you. May he remind you that nothing will ever separate you from his love!

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze ... Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you.

:: Isaiah 43:2-4 ::

DANIEL

HE IS ABLE TO HUMBLE

1 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly! 2 It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! **His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.** 4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. 5 I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. 6 So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. 7 When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. 8 Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. 10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. 11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed. 13 "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14 He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. 15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.'" Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. 16 **Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.**

17 "The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

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

“King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly!”

The fourth chapter of Daniel is unique in that the words belong to King Nebuchadnezzar himself. In the opening three chapters of the book we came to know this king as a prideful, idolatrous, impatient, and remarkably cruel man. The transformation we witness in him in chapter four is abrupt, leaving the reader shocked and perplexed. How could such a radical transformation occur?

Yet as incomprehensible as such a transformation might be, the account of the humiliation of the King recorded in this chapter is also preserved in ancient Mesopotamian inscriptions. Among the Babylonian records it is written, *For four years my kingdom in the city . . .gave me no joy. During this time, not one building of any importance did I issue to be built; the precious treasures of my kingdom I did not lay out . . . I did not sing praises to Merodach, my god, nor did I provide his sacrificial table with offerings, nor did I clean any of the waterways.* Though only partially preserved, another artifact in the British Museum appears to corroborate this account as well:

*[Nebu]chadnezzar considered His life which appeared of no value to [him,]
And (the) Babylon(ian) speaks bad counsel to (his son) Evil-merodach [....]
Then he gives an entirely different order but [. . .] He (his son) does not heed the word
from his lips, no do his cour[tier(s) - - -] He does not show love to son and daughter
[. . .] his family and clan do not exist [. . .] His attention was not directed towards
promoting the welfare of Esagil [and Babylon] He prays to the lord of lords, he raised
[his hands (in supplication) (. . .) He weeps bitterly to Marduk, the g[reat] gods [.....]
His prayers go forth to [.....]*

“His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.”

The King’s words in 4:3 and 4:34 appear to be influenced by the 145th Psalm. The Psalmist writes in vs 13, *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.* As a worldly king, Nebuchadnezzar was characterized by cruelty and impatience. By way of contrast, the great King of Psalm 145 is presented as *gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.* Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would soon be turned into dust, but the Lord’s kingdom is eternal.

While at first glance the book of Daniel may appear to be a random collection of heroic tales and various prophetic visions, there are certain themes that flow through each chapter. The most important of these is the eternality of the kingdom of God, a theme that becomes increasingly emphasized as the book progresses.

“Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him”

The heart of the king (some versions, “mind”) had to be transformed, for this was the seat and the source of his pride. But what, exactly, did God do? We aren’t given any specifics here. Nebuchadnezzar may have been so overwhelmed by this revelation from God that he simply took some time in the wilderness, and much like Elijah lived off of the land, so did the King. But the eating of grass would be more closely associated with a form of madness, and “being given a mind like an animal” would not appear to be equivalent to being given a mind of humility. It seems most likely that God, in some manner, took from Nebuchadnezzar that which he had also given him - the intellectual prowess of which the king boasts. It is the Lord who determines times and seasons; It is the Lord who sets up kings and deposes them; it is the Lord who grants us our every breath; and it is the Lord who bestows upon us every gift and opportunity that we are given. Yet the King still retains enough mental capacity to lift his eyes up to heaven and acknowledge God.

The term for “times” זמַן (also 23, 25, 32) most likely indicates a period of seven years.

19 Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, **"My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!** 20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, 21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air— 22 **you, O king, are that tree!** You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

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

24 "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: 25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

26 **The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.** 27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

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

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

33 **Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.** 34 **At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.**

35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

36 **At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.** 37 **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**

"My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!" ... "you, O king, are that tree!"

After receiving yet another ominous dream, Nebuchadnezzar looks to Daniel for an interpretation. Daniel's explanation and application are reminiscent of Dan 2:38, "You are the head of gold," and Nathan's words to David, "you are the man!" Nebuchadnezzar thought of himself as the king of kings - The gods, in a sense, served him! But the visions of a statue, doomed to fall, and a great tree, about to be chopped down would reveal to the king just how fragile his kingdom was. He stood in the courtroom of the one true God - he and his kingdom were on trial.

"but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze" ... "The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules."

The vision of iron and bronze bands encircling the stump are likely not intended to convey the idea of being bound or enslaved, but rather, protected. They would serve as something of a fence, protecting the stump that was left as a sign of hope for a new future (See also Is 6:13; 11:1).

"Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

Nebuchadnezzar is given a season to repent. Daniel had pleaded with the king, *Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue!* Still, after one year the king had no change of heart. The language is reminiscent of 2 Sam 11 - The king, walking on the roof of his palace, becomes overwhelmed by pride and falls into sin. God is so swift in carrying out his judgment that he interrupts the king's words - *the words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven ...*

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

We don't need to presume that the feathers and claws are to be understood as literal. But while the language is metaphoric, the mind of an animal appears to be quite literal. He is not simply living off the land as Elijah had done. He had been driven mad. The intellectual acumen of which the king had become so proud had been taken from him entirely. He is *drenched with the dew of heaven* - exposed to the elements and entirely dependent upon God for provision and security. The message being sent to Nebuchadnezzar is similar to the lessons Israel would need to learn in their own wilderness experience.

“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.”

While the king is given the mind of a beast, he retains his ability to acknowledge God. Yet even animals may be able to acknowledge God to some degree! Isaiah 43:20 says, *The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland.* The king had essentially lost his sanity long before God gave him the mind of an animal. He had not raised his eyes toward the heavens, for as C.S. Lewis says, *As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on thing and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you.*

“At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

The account of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and ultimate change of heart serves as a powerful witness of the power of God to change what may appear to us to be hopeless and unchangeable. The same God who created man is more than capable of transformation and recreation. While this process can be uncomfortable, or even painful, in the end, we can see the work of his hands, his wisdom and his love, and with Nebuchadnezzar we can acknowledge, *everything he does is right and all his ways are just.*

- **James 4:6-8** - But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
- **1 Peter 5:5-6** - All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Personal Application:

Pride is a beast that must be fed.

- Pride demands a steady diet of acknowledgement.
 - **John 12:43** - “They loved praise from men more than praise from God.”
 - **Acts 5:29-30** - "We must obey God rather than men!"
 - **Gal 1:10** – “Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Pride Thrives in Comparisons.

- Pride may be elevating ourselves or it may be degrading another.

- **2 Cor 10:12** - We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.
- *Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone. – C.S. Lewis*

Pride will rob us of our sanity.

- Pride will cause us to look in the mirror and admire what you see, or it will cause us to look in the mirror and despise what we see. As CS Lewis commented, *Pride is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.*
- Like Nebuchadnezzar, in our pride we will begin to erect idols to ourselves and sacrifice those who do not bow down to them.

Pride will Ultimately Destroy Our Lives and Relationships.

- C.S. Lewis Said, *Pride is the mother hen under which all other sins are hatched.*
- **Prov 13:10** - Pride only breeds quarrels.
- **James 3:16** - where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice
- **James 4:1-2** - What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?
- Pride manifests itself in a number of destructive Behaviors:
 - You will boast in your accomplishments.
 - You will become easily offended.
 - You will become unforgiving.
 - Pride will manifest itself in boasting but will also manifest itself in our private thoughts.
- Is there a fractured relationship that it is in your power to repair? Then it is specifically your own pride that has prevented healing.
 - **Rom 12:18-19** – “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Our pride will ultimately Separate us from God.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

:: 1Peter 5:5-7::

DANIEL

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

1 King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. 2 While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3 So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. **4 As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. 5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. 6** His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. **7** The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." **8** Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. **9** So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. **10** The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! **11** There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father — your father the king, I say — appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. **12** This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means." **13** So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? **14** I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. **15** The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. **16** Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." **17** Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means. **18** "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. **19** Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. **20** But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.

“King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them.”

We can assign a range of dates for the events of Daniel chapter 5 with relative certainty. Historically Belshazzar would have reigned as a king for only one year (539 BC), when his father, left on a campaign. The *Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus* preserves this record – “He freed his hand; he entrusted the kingship to him. Then he himself undertook a distant campaign. It seems as though as soon as his father left Babylon to his care that, rather than work to protect the city from the imminent invasion of the Medes and the Persians, Belshazzar decides to throw a party. Two of our most reliable historical sources, Herodotus and Xenophon, record that Babylon was captured at time in which, in celebration of a festival, the citizens had been drinking and celebrating all night long.

“While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.”

The sacred temple vessels that Belshazzar calls for are those first mentioned in Dan 1:1-2, *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.* The events of Daniel 5 would have occurred approximately sixty-six years later, on October 12, 539 BC (The 16th of Tasritu, according to the Nabonidus Chronicle).

These temple vessels would have been used for the sacred libations of the Jews. These drink offerings were considered so sacred that they would later serve as a typological metaphor for Jesus’ own blood shed on the cross (Lk 22:20; Jn 19:34). It would have been considered a great crime to mishandle these vessels at all, but Belshazzar goes so far as to use them as goblets with which to get drunk in a pagan festival. Nabonidus, his father, must have recognized his son’s lack of honor for the gods. In a prayer for his son (preserved on a tablet) said, “As regards Belshazzar, my first born son, my dear offspring, put in his heart reverence for thy high divinity.”

“As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone ...”

In Romans 1:24, Paul writes, *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.* This worship of the created material world appears to be of central importance to Daniel 5 as these words are emphasized again in verse 23. Throughout the book of Daniel, God’s sovereignty and eternal nature are continually highlighted. These are contrasted with the corruptible and temporal nature of the idolatrous kingdoms of the world (which themselves serve as idols). The statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 was also comprised of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay.

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

The Babylonians greatly revered their god, “Nebo.” He was of such great importance that three successive kings, Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus, all had names honoring him.

He was the god of writing and the god of creation. Whatever he wrote would come to pass, as he was the god of unalterable decrees. But just as God humiliated the false gods of Egypt, each on his own turf (Ex 12:12), so also in Daniel, God appears to be revealing himself as the one God who is over all. In writing his decree on the wall, God reveals that he alone is sovereign over times and seasons.

21 He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes. 22 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

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

25 "This is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

26 "This is what these words mean:

Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

27 Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

28 Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

29 Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, **31 and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.**

"He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes. "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this."

The saga of the Babylonian kings mirrors that of the Jewish kings. A righteous king will have an evil son; a wicked king will have a noble son. The book of Daniel, much like the framework of the entire Old Testament, is intended to grant the reader perspective. We are able to see a king in the context of the generations that went before and those that will come after. Similarly, we are able to see an entire kingdom (even a series of kingdoms) within the greater context of eternity. Essentially, the book of Daniel accomplishes through history what the book of Ecclesiastes does through poetry – as the readers we are witnesses to the rise and fall of both kings and kingdoms.

In the opening four chapters of Daniel we are struck by God's patience with Nebuchadnezzar. His 43-year long reign was characterized by cruelty, idolatry, and arrogance, but even after the severity of his crimes against God and humanity, God continually seemed to give him opportunities to repent. Even after his final vision of a tree that was to be cut down, he was given a full year to repent. Belshazzar, however, is given no such opportunity. Judgment was to be decisive and swift -He would lose his life and the kingdom the very night of his crime. Why does God respond to these two kings in such a radically different manner? Because while God may demonstrate the grace of patience, it should never be expected of him.

“You did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.”

Once again God’s sovereign nature is brought into view. Daniel’s powerful words in verse 23 are not just intended for King Belshazzar, but for the reader as well. Whether we have been entrusted with the oversight of a kingdom, a family, or just our very lives, we are faced with a tremendous responsibility. A king would have to come to terms with the fact that ultimately, the kingdom was not his – he was merely given stewardship. Kings often failed in their calling when they considered themselves to be sovereign – when they no longer counted themselves as accountable either to the people, or to God as supreme. In the same way, we are frequently tempted to go about our own lives as though we are sovereign, but the truths that were revealed to Belshazzar are equally true for us. He holds our very life and all of our ways in the palm of his hand.

“This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN”

The writing on the wall was not clear to the king as he had to call for someone to explain the meaning. This is not because, as some have concluded, that the writing was in some sort of heavenly language, or because the cuneiform might have been understood in a number of ways. Rather, it was because the words were so simple. Most scholars agree that each of these words related to the currency and trade of the region and time-period. The currency of “mene” and “tekel” would correspond to the “Minas” and “shekels” that we are more familiar with (see Ezekiel 45:12). The term “peres” would simply mean “divided,” or “split.” So the English equivalent to the writing on the wall may have read something like, “dime, dime, nickel, divided.” The words we would understand, but the meaning would be elusive.

“Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.”

Much like the British pound, the mina was a weight, or a “count.” Just as a specific number of grams would equal a mina, so also a specific number of days had been assigned by God to the king’s reign. The message in these passages echoes Ps 90:12, *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

“Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.”

The coins of this time period were not measured in value by a stamp or engraving identifying the coin’s worth so much as the actual weight of the coin itself. A tekkel would have served as a lesser denomination (weight) than a mene. We can only imagine that throughout ancient Mesopotamia balance scales would have been as common as credit card readers are today. If a tekkel were placed on the balance and found “wanting” it would be the equivalent of “insufficient funds.” In allotting Belshazzar a set period for his reign, God would also demand an accounting for his life and his rule.

“Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

The Aramaic “peres” meaning “divide” may also serve as a play on words, as it closely resembles “paras,” meaning “Persians.” Remarkably, it appears that our historical records (those provided by Xenophon, Josephus, and Herodotus) harmonize well with Daniel’s prophecy. Cyrus and Darius (each representing one part of the joint-kingdom of Media and Persia), took the city in a relatively peaceful manner that very night.

King Belshazzar was judged for showing disregard for God, the reign with which he had been entrusted, and the sacred temple vessels themselves. The words “holy” and “sacred” meant very little to him. But it may be that these terms are not on our own thoughts enough as well. Like Belshazzar, we have been entrusted with so much that God counts as “sacred!”

- **Scripture**

2 Tim 3:15 - From infancy you have known the **holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation

- **Faith**

Jude 20 - But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in **your most holy faith**.

- **The Holy Spirit**

Eph 4:29 - And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption

- **You (2Cor 5:21)**

Heb 2:11 - Both the one who **makes men holy** and those who are made holy are of the same family.

Rom 12:1 - in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God**.

Eph 5:2 - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because **these are improper for God's holy people**.

Cor 3:16-17 – Don't you know that **you yourselves are God's temple** and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for **God's temple is sacred**, and you are that temple.

- **His Calling**

2 Peter 2:21-22 (Noah, Lot) - The Called Out

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on **the sacred command** that was passed on to them.

In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

:: 2Timothy 2:20-21::

DANIEL

SHUTTING THE MOUTHS OF LIONS

Daniel 6

1 It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that **the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.**

4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. **They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.** 5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." 6 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that **the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den.**

“It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel.”

The 120 satraps (a term for provincial governors in the Persian empire) appear to correspond closely to the 127 provinces ruled by Xerxes in Esther 1:1. Daniel had already been appointed to a position of significant power under Babylonian rule, a position that appears to have, in some manner, conveyed as Cyrus and Darius conquered Babylon in a relatively natural and peaceful manner.

“the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom”

Daniel, together with Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, would have been taken into captivity for their training at around the age of 14 (as was the custom at the time). If this is the case, we can assume that Daniel is now, at the very least, in his eighties. At this point in his life, he had already received visions from God. He had already witnessed the miraculous. He had served as a witness to the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms. To say the least, he was a man of great wisdom, and this did not go unrecognized by the King of Persia. Daniel had so distinguished himself that he was just about to be placed in such a position of power that only the King himself would have been above him.

“They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.”

The recognition that Daniel received naturally led to jealousy among his counterparts. Much as in our contemporary political realm, leaders were carefully and unscrupulously scrutinized. Daniel could not afford to allow even a hint of corruption or negligence to jeopardize his calling before God. He would have to live a life in such a manner as we are called to also in 1 Peter 2:12 -*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

“The king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den.”

While there are many similarities between Daniel 3 and 6, there is one major difference. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael are commanded to do what their faith prohibited. Daniel, on the other hand, is commanded not to do what his faith would require.

It was not uncommon in the Ancient near-East for emperors, kings, and pharaohs to be recognized, and even worshiped as gods. Daniel's adversaries recognized that, while he might demonstrate loyalty and respect to the king, he would not honor him as a god, nor would he neglect his service to the true God. The command to honor Darius as a god comes at a time of transition from Babylonian control to Persian rule. This new 30-day law would likely have served as a test of the people's loyalty to Persia.

In an effort to instill fear and obedience into the hearts of the people, many forms of execution were implemented by the Persians. Much as was the case in the arenas of Rome, the Persians would have captured lions and kept them in enclosures for this very purpose.

8 Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered — in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing. 10 **Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.** 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands — in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. 15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed." 16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" 17 **A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.**

18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"²¹ Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 **My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.** They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

“Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered — in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

Any decree that was issued by a Persian king could not be undone – even by the king himself. This historical commentary is emphasized throughout this account, and again in Esther 1:19 and 8:8. As the Persian ruler was recognized as a god, it would be impossible, in the minds of the people, for him to make a mistake. If the King were to retract his words, then, he would be conceding that he was not perfect, and therefore not a god at all.

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

Daniel does not pray facing Jerusalem because he considers the temple mount to be the throne of God. He knows that God is present with him. Ezekiel writes, *“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone”* (Ez 11:16). Daniel would open his windows and pray toward Jerusalem specifically because he had the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in mind – he was praying for the healing and restoration of the land of Israel. The content of these prayers will become the focal point of the latter chapters of the book. The events of chapter 9 also took place “in the first year of Darius son of Xerxes.” We can imagine Daniel in his upper room, before an open window facing Jerusalem, praying these words:

***Dan 9:17-19** - "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."*

“A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.”

Much of the language and imagery of Daniel 6 appears to foreshadow the events surrounding the crucifixion of Christ. The chart below outlines some of these connections:

Parallels Between Daniel and Jesus	
His Adversaries sought to indict Daniel but could find no fault	His Adversaries sought to indict Jesus but could find no fault
Darius is manipulated by the officials	Pilate is manipulated by the Jews
Darius was powerless to save Daniel	Pilate was powerless to save Jesus
Cast into the lion's den	Nailed to the cross
A stone is rolled over the entrance	A stone is rolled over the entrance
The official's seal is placed on the enclosure	The official's seal is placed on the enclosure
Victory over death –brought out in the morning.	Victory over death –resurrected in the morning.

“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.”

God could have rescued Daniel in a number of ways, but his intervention is personal. The term, “his angel” (the same language employed in 3:28), appears to refer to God himself. As David writes in Ps 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” God does not just rescue Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael from the fire, but walks through the fire with them. He does not just deliver a message to King Belshazzar, but his own hand is made manifest. He would comfort Daniel with his presence as well in the den of the lions.

Paul, drawing on the comfort offered in this account writes, *But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth* (2Tim 4:16-18).

24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. 25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! 26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. **"For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.** 27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." 28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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

Those who were not able to tell Nebuchadnezzar the content of his dream would be cut into pieces and their homes turned into rubble. Later he decides that anyone who would speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would be cut into pieces and have their houses turned to rubble. Here again, we find a relatively severe penalty issued by King Darius. It would seem harsh, and even unfair that the wives and children would have to pay for the crimes of these men, but the severity of the extent of their punishment is in keeping with the karma-related motif that seems common to the accounts recorded in Daniel and Esther (both written under Persian rule). This theme is in keeping with Psalm 141:10, *Let the wicked fall into their own nets.*

"For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end."

The overarching theme of the book of Daniel, connecting both the historical-narrative portion (1-6) and the apocalyptic portion (7-12) is that of the eternal kingdom of God. Darius would come to recognize and honor this truth just as Nebuchadnezzar had done. The wealth and power with which they were surrounded were ultimately an illusion – what Solomon would refer to as a “vapor.” Each of these kings and kingdoms would have to come to terms with the fact that they all served as little more than vessels that God would raise up for his purpose. In the end, every king would have to recognize that they, together with their respective kingdoms, were just as expendable as their own servants were. Ultimately, sovereignty and dominion belong to God alone.

DANIEL

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

Daniel 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. **10** A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

11 "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. **I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.**

12 (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

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

15 "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. 16 I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 17 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. 18 **But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever — yes, for ever and ever.'**

19 **"Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying,** with its iron teeth and bronze claws — the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. 20 I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell — the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. 21 As I watched, **this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them,** 22 **until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.**

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

26 "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.

27 **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'**

28 "This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.”

The opening six chapters of Daniel contain important prophetic elements – the vision of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue; his vision of a great tree that is felled, and then the writing on the wall at Belshazzar’s banquet. Still, these opening chapters are historical in nature whereas the second half of the book (6-12), belonging to the apocalyptic genre, focuses on the events of the future. Much as he interpreted the dreams and the visions of the kings in the opening section of the book, so now he turns his attention to his own visions that he had received from the Lord.

“there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.”

The four winds רוחות ruach (also “spirits”), in keeping with a major theme of Daniel, likely represent God’s sovereignty and his involvement in the rise and fall of nations. The term “great sea” was generally used with reference to the Mediterranean Sea (i.e. Josh 1:4; 9:1; 15:12,47), but the sea in general, in Jewish thought, served as a metaphor for all that is contrasted with, and opposed to the heavens. Just as the heavens represented eternity, light, and all that which would be beyond our understanding, so also the abyss of the sea represented what was dark, uncertain, and dangerous. The four subsequent kingdoms, represented by four terrible beasts, correspond to the four sections of the statue of Daniel 2. Ultimately, Daniel’s vision portrays these empires of the world as manifestations of a much darker source.

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

Just as the kingdom of Babylon was represented by a head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, so also now it is represented by a lion and an eagle – creatures that each represented grandeur and majesty. The imagery is fitting, as Babylon is compared to both an eagle and a lion in a number of other instances in the OT (Jer 4:7; 49:19, 22; 50:17, 44; Ez 17:2-3, 12; Dt 28:49; Jer 48:40; 49:22; Hab 1:8). The famous Ishtar gate of Babylon was ornamented with 120 lions, so such an animal would have been associated with Babylon as naturally as a Bald Eagle is to the United States.

This creature is transformed from a creature into a man – his wings are removed, he is caused to stand on two feet, and most importantly, “the heart of a man” was given to him. This imagery serves as a reflection of the events of Daniel 4 - Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and transformation. God had given the king “the mind of an animal,” and “his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle.” Here we have exactly the reverse. The king, together with his kingdom, repented, and his sanity was restored (Dan 4:34).

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

Bears were known for their ferocity, but more importantly, for their appetite. The second beast of Daniel’s vision fills itself on flesh and is portrayed with three ribs still in its mouth. It may be that these three ribs represent Media, Persia, and Babylon – the three regions subdued by Cyrus.

In each depictions of the joint empire of Media and Persia, the dual nature of this kingdom can be seen. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream it is a chest with two arms; In Daniel 7 we have a bear that is raised up on one side; in Daniel 8 it is a ram with two horns.

The voracious appetite and Greed of the Persians would eventually lead to their own destruction. Persia led expeditions against Greece in 492 and 490 BC resulting in the famous battle of Marathon, in which the Athenian army managed to defeat the Persian invaders. Xerxes (Ahasuerus), the son of Darius, in seeking revenge, advanced against Greece once again. The king watched his entire navy destroyed at Salamis (near Athens), and his army defeated by the Spartans.

The Greeks survived these attacks by the Persians and animosity between the two civilizations only intensified, and would result in the advance of Alexander the Great against the Persian world.

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

The third beast would be fearsome and fast. A young man who, from the age of thirteen, had studied under Aristotle took the throne of Macedon in 336 BC – Alexander the Great. Just two years later he set out to conquer the whole of Persia. In only a few short years he managed to subdue Egypt and Persia and was recognized as king in Macedonia and Asia, as the Sultan of Persia, and as Pharaoh in Egypt. Egyptians recognized Alexander as the son of their god Ammon, and they dedicated a temple to him in his honor. The city of Alexandria, in northern Egypt, was also named after him together with more than twenty cities throughout his vast empire.

It is said that every night he slept with a copy of the Iliad and a dagger under his pillow. Knowledge and conquest were his life. In the city of Persepolis, for example, he killed all the men of the city and enslaved the women.

Yet Alexander was left without an heir and so his entire kingdom was parceled out to his four leading generals: Antigonus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The empire of Greece would be broken into four major parts during this period of the wars of the “diadochi” (Alexander’s successors). The four heads of the leopard correspond to the four horns that rise out of one that had been broken in Dan 8:8. These prophetic images appear to have all been fulfilled with remarkable detail.

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

As the fourth and final section of the statue in Daniel 2 is given particular attention, so also the fourth beast is set apart in Daniel’s vision as “different from all the former beasts.” As the first beast is said to have stood on two feet, having received “the heart of a man,” the fourth beast is portrayed as more of a machine with iron teeth. Just as the precious metals of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue appear to have degenerate into a worthless mixture of iron and clay, so the beasts also appear to decline and worsen. As each progressively becomes stronger and more powerful than the former, they also seem to become increasingly heartless and ruthless.

While the toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue are not given emphasis, they would naturally correspond to the ten horns which are given particular emphasis in Daniel’s vision here. They would also likely correspond to the ten horns and ten crowns of the dragon in Revelation 13. If the sequence of beasts and associated kings is intended to follow the historical record as naturally and chronologically as it has up until this point, it would be natural for us to look to the first ten Caesars of Rome:

Pompey
Julius
Augustus
Tiberius
Caligula
Claudius
Nero
* Galba
* Otho
* Vitellius
Vespasian
Titus

*After Nero's death, three of his leading generals returned to Rome in an effort to be recognized as the next Caesar. In 69 AD (known as "the year of four emperors") Each took the throne for just three months before being assassinated. Vespasian finally took the throne, "uprooting" these three.

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

Among those who follow what would be the most natural historical fulfillment of these images, there is still much debate about whether this "little horn" would serve to represent Nero, Vespasian, or possibly even Vespasian's son, Titus. It is also difficult to determine whether the line of rulers should begin with Pompey or Julius Caesar. As Pompey was recognized by the senate as the ruler of Rome, and was the man responsible for bringing Israel under the rule of Rome in 63 BC, it seems reasonable that he would be included in Daniel's vision as the first of the horns. If this is the case, history would appear to follow the vision quite well. The first ten rulers of Rome are indeed followed by an 11th who would supplant three (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius), wage a campaign of annihilation against the Jews, and ultimately destroy Jerusalem.

If this understanding of Daniel's timeline is correct, then it is not of little significance that the book opens with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple on the 9th of AV 586 BC, and concludes its prophecies with the destruction of the temple on the 9th of AV 70 AD.

"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."

The great throne room scene of Ezekiel plays an important role in the opening chapters (1-5) of Revelation. In each account the Messiah is exalted as the King of Kings. The thrones that are said to be "set in place" are important to the central message that the vision intends to convey. These thrones are the very thrones that are given so much focus throughout Daniel's prophecy – the thrones of the kings of the earth. From Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus all the way through the rule of Alexander the Great and the later emperors of Rome, these thrones had been "set in place" by the King of these kings. While many of these figures sought to be recognized as gods, they were not gods, but rather, mere servants that had been entrusted with a kingdom by God and would ultimately have to give an account before him.

The appearance of God corresponds appropriately to his designation, “the Ancient of Days.” His clothing and his hair are a brilliant white. The imagery might intend to convey purity, but also, and perhaps more importantly, wisdom and age. Set times, ages, and reigns occupy an important place in the book of Daniel. A set number of days are assigned to various tests in the opening chapters and then also to kings and kingdoms throughout the book. There is a test of ten days; a test of thirty days. The prince of the Persian kingdom is said to resist God for twenty-one days. Darius is told that God has “numbered the days” of his reign. Set periods of 1,290 days and 1,335 days are determined by God in chapter 12. But why are these set periods of days of such thematic significance to Daniel? The answer might be found here in chapter 7. God is contrasted with all of these kings and kingdoms as he is eternal and his kingdom will be as well – this is why his title, “Ancient of Days” is of such significance against the backdrop of temporal rulers.

It really is amazing that both Daniel and Ezekiel, writing under similar circumstances, have visions of God’s great throne. It is particularly interesting that both of these prophets emphasize the “wheels” of God’s throne (Ez 1:15-21; 3:13; 10:2-19; 11:22; Dan 7:9; 1Ki 7:27-33). In a time in which the temple in Jerusalem had been leveled to the ground and his people found themselves in a foreign land ... it is under these circumstances that God’s throne is illustrated with wheels! This imagery conveys a powerful message that Ezekiel reflects on in Ezek 11:16: “Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.”

The Jews living in captivity were not cast out from God’s presence at all... he would be an ever-present sanctuary for them ... What beauty in that thought! The God of the universe was no more confined to Jerusalem than he is in a church building or a temple today. “He is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring' (Acts 17:27-28).

The books that are opened before the throne appear once again in Revelation 23 where more light is shed on their nature and purpose. John writes, “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Rev 20:12-13). These books appear to represent an accounting of our stewardship of what God has entrusted to us.

“and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

This image of the coming Messiah is of central importance both to the book of Daniel and to the messianic expectations of Israel. His coming “with” (or “upon”) the clouds is an image that would be alluded to frequently in the NT (Mt 24:30; 26:64; Mk14:62; Rv 1:7 et. al.).

God’s “coming in the clouds” served as a metaphor indicative of divine judgment. The terminology was used to reflect God’s judgment of Egypt in Ezekiel 30:3, and of Assyria in Isaiah 31:4. It was used to indicate the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem in Micah 1:3 and then of Nineveh in Nahum 1:3. Throughout prophetic literature, stars fall to the earth, heavenly horses ride forth into battle, the moon is turned to blood, mountains are leveled, and rivers of life flow from Jerusalem. As to how or

why the Jewish community adapted such rich metaphoric imagery is uncertain, but we can be sure that physical stars did not and will not literally fall to the earth, and that all such images spoke of greater, more profound truths.

The terms “clouds of heaven” and “host of heaven” appear to have been used interchangeably. In Hebrews 12:1, for example, the “cloud of witnesses” appears to represent a great assembly. So the imagery of “one like a son of man ... coming on the clouds of heaven” would not convey the idea of a man floating down to earth on a literal cloud so much as it would convey the idea of a Messiah-figure (Jesus) who’s coming would be a manifestation of heavenly deliverance and judgment.

“another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.”

Nero’s name would become synonymous with the persecution of the Jews as well as the early church. We know that he was worshiped as a god, and was considered by many early Christian writers as the “antichrist” of John’s first epistle. After his death, his leading generals (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius) all returned to Rome in an attempt to establish themselves as the new emperor. This year, 69AD, is commonly referred to as “the year of four emperors.” Each reigned for only three months before being assassinated. Finally, Vespasian “uprooted” each of these, establishing himself as the new emperor who would carry on the three-and-a-half year war against Judea. This period of war against Jews and Christians alike corresponds remarkably to the “time, times and half a time” of Daniel’s vision.

As mentioned above, if this approach to Daniel’s timeline is correct, then the book opens with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple on the 9th of AV 586 BC, and concludes its prophecies with the destruction of the temple on the 9th of AV 70 AD!

“Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”

The Bible as a whole is a narrative constructed around the central theme of God’s kingdom. Genesis through Esther present us with an unbroken account of Israel’s deliverance from slavery, her wanderings in the wilderness, her overwhelming conquest of Canaan, and eventually, her rise to become an established and unified kingdom. In violation of God’s conditional covenant of blessing and cursing (See Dt 28), Israel lost her kingdom and returned once again to slavery. Yet even in slavery Israel held on to the hope of her promised Messiah. According to their prophets he was to be a king in the line of David who would come to deliver and restore her and who would reign as her king perpetually (See Jer. 23:5; Ez. 37:24-27). It was for the restoration of Israel that the Messiah was to come. It must be emphasized that the Messiah and the kingdom were completely inseparable in the Jewish mind. Both the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) and its Greek equivalent, Χριστός (Christ) mean “anointed one,” indicative of the royal nature of the savior who was to come.

It is clear that this messianic kingdom is what the righteous people of Jesus’ time were anticipating. We are told that Simeon “was waiting for the consolation of Israel,” and that “he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Lk. 2:25-26). Likewise Anna the prophetess, upon seeing the Christ “spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38).

Joseph of Arimathea was likewise described as “waiting for the kingdom of God” (Mk 15:43; Lk. 23:50-51). Even after sin had been atoned for and Christ had been raised from the dead, the question was still on the disciple’s minds, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Ac1:6).

Certainly these were not all mistaken. The proposal that the Messiah came as a sin-offering alone, and that the restoration of Israel and the establishment of His kingdom were to be either delayed or postponed is unacceptable. The central teaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his disciples was the imminent coming of this kingdom. The first book of the New Testament ushers in the theme of redemption with John’s prophetic cry, “The Kingdom of God is at hand!” (Mt 3:2). Following his baptism and subsequent testing in the wilderness, Jesus likewise began to teach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” (Mt 4:17) He said, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing” (Mt 11:12), and in the very next chapter, “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt 12:28). After his death, burial, and resurrection we are told that “he appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days, and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Ac 1:2-3). His disciples went out with precisely the same message. In accordance with Jesus’ command the message of their gospel was, “the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 10:7). The disciples’ gospel throughout the book of Acts remains consistent with what they received: “they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Ac 8:12).

Christ confirmed their expectations and hopes for the kingdom, promising that all was to be fulfilled within their generation as prophesied:

- I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (Mt 10:23)
- I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. (Mt 16:28)
- I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Mt 24:34-35)
- I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power. (Mk 9:1)
- I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Mk 13:13-31)
- I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God. (Lk 9:27)
- Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Lk 21:31-33)
- And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. (Lk 22:15-18)

DANIEL

THE TIME OF THE END

Daniel 8

1 In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me. 2 In my vision I saw myself in **the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam**; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. 3 I looked up, and there before me was **a ram with two horns**, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. **One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later.** 4 I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great. 5 As I was thinking about this, **suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.** 6 He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. 7 I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power. 8 The goat became very great, but **at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up** toward the four winds of heaven. 9 **Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land.** 10 **It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them.** 11 **It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.** 12 **Because of rebellion, the host [of the saints] and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.** 13 **Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?"** 14 **He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."** 15 While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. 16 **And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."** 17 As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. **"Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."** 18 While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. 19 He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. 20 The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. 21 The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. 23 "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise.

24 He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people.

25 He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. 26 **"The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."** 27 **I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.**

"In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal."

The **הַבִּיטָה** "citadel" of Daniel's vision could either denote a fortress within the city or the city itself. Seeing a vision of himself in this place is significant as Susa (approximately 220 miles from Babylon) would later serve as a royal city and administrative capital of the Medo-Persian empire. Daniel was essentially seeing himself serving under a new administration.

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

We are not left to speculate as to the identity of the ram of this vision. We are told in vs. 20, "The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia." Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a statue (Dan 2) had two arms representing this joint empire. Similarly, the bear of Daniel's vision of the beasts (Dan 7) was raised up on one side. In keeping with this pattern, one of the ram's horns (Persia) is longer than the other (Media).

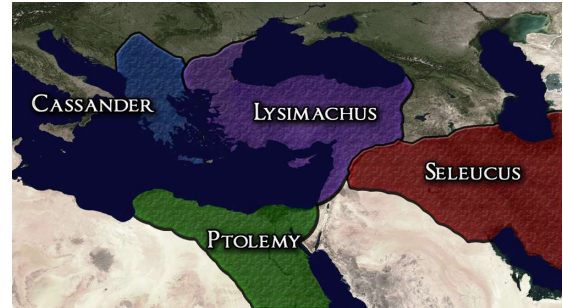
As the Persian empire spread out from the far East, it is fitting that this ram is charging toward the west, north, and south. The unpredictability and recklessness nature of a charging ram aptly conveys the irresponsible rage characteristic of the armies of Cyrus.

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

The identity of the goat is also revealed in 8:20 – this is the empire of Greece. As the Medes and Persians represented the East, so the empire of Greece would represent a force from the West. Just as the leopard in the corresponding vision (ch 7) had four wings, so also this goat is said to move "without touching the ground." The Medo-Persian empire was characterized by its reckless rage, but the Grecian empire would be characterized by the speed with which the armies moved and the empire was expanded. Alexander the Great would manage to conquer all of Persia, Egypt, Macedonia, and Asia in only a few years.

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

Alexander’s kingdom was parceled out to his four leading generals: Antigonus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The empire of Greece, also, would be broken into four major parts during this period, 322 - 281 BC (see map below). The four horns of this goat correspond to the four heads of the leopard of chapter 7, and likely to these four most prominent factions of the Grecian empire.



“Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land.”

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was appointed as king of the Seleucid empire in 175 BC. His passion for the Hellenization of the Jewish world would bring him into intense conflict with the Jews. He sought to unite the entire empire once again under one head, one religion, and one law. His goal was to establish a sense of cultural uniformity.

The “beautiful land” refers specifically to the land of Israel (see Dan 11:41; Ezek 20:6). It would be here that Antiochus would be met with the greatest resistance.

“It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. 12 Because of rebellion, the host [of the saints] and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.”

Antiochus’ assault on God’s people is depicted as an attack on God and on heaven. God’s people are thrown to the ground (vs 10); God’s temple is thrown to the ground (vs 11); and finally, truth itself is thrown to the ground (vs 12). Under Antiochus’ rule, circumcision, the possession of scripture, the observance of the sabbath, the daily sacrifice, and any assembly for the purpose of prayer were outlawed. All of these observances were punishable by death. The books of Maccabees provide us with a detailed account of what would appear to be a fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecies. The author of these books indicates, on several occasions, that the Jews of this time period understood this to be the case.

1 Macc 1:20-24

20 After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. 21 He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. 22 He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. 23 He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. 24 Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance.

1 Macc 1:54-61

54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, 55 and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. 56 The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. 57 Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. 58 They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. 59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. 60 According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, 61 and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.



Coins were minted with the inscription, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ
“King Antiochus, God Manifest”

2 Maccabees 5:11-14

Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery

The prophecies of Daniel 8, beginning with a ram (the Medes and the Persians) that is overtaken by a goat (Greece) culminate in a little horn that would arise out of this empire to challenge both God and his people. Antiochus IV “Epiphanes” and his persecution of the Jewish people is likely in view. Antiochus’ assault on God’s people, in this prophecy, is depicted as an attack on heaven and upon God himself. Daniel writes that God’s people would be thrown to the ground (vs 10); God’s temple is thrown to the ground (vs 11); and ultimately, truth itself is thrown to the ground (vs 12).

We know that, historically, under Antiochus’ rule, circumcision, the possession of scripture, the observance of the sabbath, the daily sacrifice, and any assembly for the purpose of prayer were outlawed. All of these observances were punishable by death (see 1Macc. 1:20-61). Ultimately, Antiochus was willing to sacrifice truth for power and control under the pretense of “unity.”

The central threat posed by the enemies of God and his people has always been a perversion of truth. In the NT Paul warns against those who would “suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom 1:18), and “exchange the truth of God for a lie” (Rom 1:24). Pilate, caught in the middle of this existential battle for the mind asks, “what is truth?” (Jn 18:38).

Our world today is haunted by that question, isn't it? Truth can be defined by what social media channel we might choose to follow. It can be defined by what has become popularized, or what might be trending among a particular demographic. If we begin with the premise that there is no God than truth itself becomes subjective, and we are left with the same question Pilate posed 2,000 years ago... "what is truth?" Does an objective "truth" even exist at all?

... And then the Messiah comes and reveals himself as "THE way THE truth and THE life" (Jn 14:6). He repeats (more than seventy times in the gospels) "I tell you the truth...". He cried out, "truth will set you free!" (Jn 8:32) and promised his spirit that would guide them into all truth (Jn 16:13). Ultimately, his desire is that all men would come to a knowledge of the truth (1Tim 2:4-5), and so he calls upon his church ... his people, to be just that – the "pillar and support of truth" (1Tim 3:15).

May God, once again, reveal Christ as the "true North" in a world desperate for deliverance from confusion and deception. A world that, as Nietzsche said, has been "unchained from her sun." A world in which truth itself has been "thrown to the ground!"

"Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."

The 2,300 evenings and mornings (almost 6 ½ years) would likely refer to the period between Antiochus' plundering of the temple in Jerusalem in 170 BC to the rededication of the temple in 163 BC. The Jewish holiday, "Hanukkah" celebrates this reconsecration of the temple at this time as recorded in 1 Maccabees:

1 Macc 4:52-59

52 Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year, 53 they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built. 54 At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. 55 All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. 56 So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving offering. 57 They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and fitted them with doors. 58 There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed. 59 Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

“And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.”

The messenger “Gabriel” (lit. “Mighty one of God”) is only mentioned here in the book of Daniel (8:16; 9:21), and then at Jesus’ birth in the book of Luke (1:19, 26). We are not given a great deal of insight into the angelic realm in scripture. Only Gabriel and “Michael” (Jd 1:9; Rev 12:7; Dan 10:13; 12:1) are mentioned by name. This instance in Dan 8:16 is the first time an angel is called by a name in scripture.

The “Ulai” is a term which simply means “between the banks,” or, “in the midst” of the river. So the angel Gabriel is called to give an explanation of this vision to Daniel by a man standing in a river.

“Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.”

Gabriel emphasizes that this vision concerns “the time of the end” twice (8:17, 19) and then calls upon Daniel to “seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future” in 8:26. The “time of the end” לְצַתְּ הַיָּמִים would not imply the end of time or the end of the world at all, but rather, the end of the age and the terminus of these prophetic images. Though Daniel had lived to see many prophecies fulfilled and many kings rise and fall, he was told that he would not live to see these particular prophecies fulfilled – they dealt with the end of the age and the coming Messiah.

“He will become very strong, but not by his own power ... Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.”

Kings and kingdoms rise and fall throughout Daniel’s prophecies, but God remains sovereign. This theme is woven throughout each of the chapters of the book of Daniel. “He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.” (Dan 2:21). Antiochus would refer to himself as “Epiphenes,” or “God Manifest,” but the Jews would refer to him as Antiochus “Epimanes,” or “the madman.” He was no God at all, and like so many kings who had reigned before him, he was merely given a stewardship, and, in the end, would he held accountable for his crimes against humanity.

“The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”

In these visions, God projects events that will occur well beyond the lifetime of Daniel. He is called to “seal up” these prophecies (preserve them) as they would relate to later generations. Conversely, when John receives the prophecies of Revelation he is called to do just the opposite! “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near” (Rev 22:10).

“I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.”

Daniel was particularly blessed by God with the gift to understand “visions and dreams of all kinds” (1:17), and he had an angel from God (Gabriel) explain this one to him ... and still he was left both exhausted and confused! But what confused Daniel? The identity of the ram and the goat were provided for him (8:20-21). The actions of the “little horn” that would arise from the goat are also given quite plainly. It may be that what confused Daniel was not so much the riddle of the images themselves, but rather, why God would allow his people, his temple, and truth itself to undergo such hostility – particularly when he knew that it was coming. Why would God allow such a king to come to power knowing what he would do? Yes. What exhausted, frustrated, and appalled Daniel were likely the same questions that exhaust, frustrate, and appall us today!

DANIEL

SEVENTY SEVENS

Daniel 9

1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

*"O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his **covenant of love** with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 **we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets**, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame — the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. 8 O Lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. 9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. **"Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. 12** You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. 14 The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. 15 "Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. 16 O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.*

*17 "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, **look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18** Give ear, O God, and hear; **open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name.** We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 **O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."***

“In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom”

This “Darius, son of Xerxes” should be identified with Darius “the Mede” of chapters 5-6. Xerxes (lit. “King of Kings”) serves as a title more than a proper name – he should therefore not be confused with the Xerxes (or Ahasuerus) of Esther. The events of chapter 9 should be understood as contemporaneous with the events of chapter 6, where Daniel is said to have had a custom of praying three times each day at a window in his upper room facing Jerusalem. Daniel’s prayer in chapter 9 may give us some insight into the significance of the Jewish practice of orienting oneself toward Jerusalem in prayer (1Ki 8:23-61; Dan 6:10).

I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Jewish nation would be exiled for seventy years in Babylonian captivity:

Jer 25:8-12 - *Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, 9 I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the Lord, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. 10 I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*

12 "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the Lord, "and will make it desolate forever.

Jer 29:10-11 - *This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.*

The Seventy years assigned to this exile should not be understood as an arbitrary number – there was meaning and purpose in all of this. In 2 Chron 36:21 reads, *The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.*

Each seventh year the land was to be given a rest. After seven cycles of sabbatical years, the fiftieth year was to serve as a jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-12). Yet the people of Israel had not allowed the land to rest – particularly because of their sin. In their exile the land would receive the rest it was not given during the sabbaths in which the Jewish nation dwelt in it (Lev 26:35). Consider the following from Leviticus 26:

“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

“If after all this you will not listen to me, I will discipline you for your sins seven times over.

“If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.

“If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.

“If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will discipline you for your sins seven times over.

“I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.”

“we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets ...”

Daniel 9, together with Psalm 51, Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9 represents one of the great prayers of contrition in the OT. Daniel does not set himself apart from the Jewish people in his prayer but rather, identifies with them. He recognizes the sin of the people as his own sin. Similarly, the prophet Isaiah says, *I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips* (Is 6:4).

“O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

The people of Israel had been called to bear the name of the Lord in a representative manner. In the larger context of the covenant given at Sinai, the people were essentially entering into a marriage covenant with God. They were becoming his people and, much as in many marriage covenants today, they would receive his name. God says in the book of Numbers, *they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them* (Nu.6:27). This sentiment is echoed throughout the writings of the O.T.:

Deut 28:10-11 - *Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord ...*

2 Chron 7:14-15 - *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves ...*

Isa 43:6-7 - *Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name ...*

Much as an ambassador’s behavior and actions would reflect upon the nation that they represent, so the people of Israel had essentially slandered God in their sin, as they were uniquely called to “bear his name.” Yet it is on this same basis that Daniel makes an appeal to God’s great mercy.

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

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

25 **"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.**

26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. **The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.** 27 **He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."**

"while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice."

In chapters 9 and 10 we have two remarkably similar, yet different events. In chapter 9, Daniel's prayer is met with an immediate response. The angel Gabriel comes in swift flight - even while Daniel is still praying (cf Is 65:24). In chapter 10 Daniel prays for three weeks, after which a messenger comes and appears to indicate that he was, in some manner, detained! (More on this when we get to chapter 10).

Daniel's reference to the "evening sacrifice" is significant, as the daily sacrifices, offered up in the temple in Jerusalem both morning and evening, had been cut off for almost 70 years. It may be that Daniel offered up his prayers at these set times.

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

The term "sevens," שָׁבֻעַ *šābūa*, sometimes translated "week," is unique to Hebrew - the English has no true equivalent. The term was used commonly and related to any unit of seven much as the English word "few" might generally relate to a unit of 3. Most scholars are in agreement that these sets of seven should be understood as relating to years. This understanding is in keeping with the theme of "sabbath years" that the land was to receive during the 70-year exile.

Just as seventy years had been decreed as a time of exile in which the land would receive her sabbaths, so now seven seventy's (490 years) are designated as a time of restoration and atonement.

- **finish transgression**
The term “transgression” relates to a rebellious and defiant spirit. Israel had a long history of rebellion against God, and Daniel’s prayer (9:4-19) indicates that even after this time of exile, the people maintained a rebellious heart.
- **put an end to sin**
As “transgression” represents a rebellious condition of the heart, “sin” would encompass all of the law-breaking that has resulted from this rebellious spirit.
- **atone for wickedness**
After calling on his people to address their heart (transgression) and the resulting actions (their sin), God calls for them to make atonement (lit. “covering”). This would mean contrition, sacrifice and offerings.
- **bring in everlasting righteousness**
The righteousness that God’s people are called to was to be everlasting. This clearly embraces more than the coming of a righteous king such as a Hezekiah or a Josiah. A brief period of righteousness would not suffice. The righteousness which was to be ushered in would be enduring in nature.
- **seal up vision and prophecy**
Daniel is told twice to “seal up” the vision that he is given (8:26; 12:4), as it would relate to the distant future. Conversely, John, in a vision characterized by the breaking of seals (Rev 6-8) is told not to seal up the vision he is given because the time of fulfillment was “at hand” (Rev 22:10). After tying a scroll or other item, ancient officials would wrap part of the string with clay and stamp it with an official seal to show that it had not been opened. Scrolls were also sealed away in jars. This sealing of a prophetic writing served as a means of authentication and preservation.

In keeping with the general theme of repentance that the people are called to in this context, it seems likely that God’s people are being called upon to restore honor for the words of the prophets, recognizing them as the words of God through their sealing and preservation.

- **anoint the most holy**
The final requirement to be met would be the anointing of the “most holy.” The restoration of God’s people would be complete once the temple, representative of God’s covenant relationship with Israel, had been anointed. In 516 BC, just 20 years after Cyrus’ decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (536 BC), the temple would be completed and consecrated (Ezra 6:16). Once again, in 146 BC, the temple would be rededicated after it had been defiled by Antiochus IV “Epiphanes.”

“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’”

Before we can begin to explore any potential fulfillments of this prophecy, we must first consider what “decree” would be in view, as there are at least a couple of options to consider. Critical scholars, seeking to place the terminus of the seventy weeks at the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, look to a divine decree, sometime early in the 6th century, referencing passages such as Jeremiah 25 or 29:10. Conservative commentators typically look to either the decree of Cyrus (539) – see Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5; the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra (457) – see Ezra 7:11-26; or the authorization of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah (445) – see Nehemiah 1-2.

The Decree of Cyrus (539 BC)

While Cyrus’ decree was specifically to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the city as a whole appears to be in mind as well – see Is 44:26-28; 45:13. What is attractive about this view is the fact that Cyrus’ decree is the first in this series of decrees, and was issued in 539 BC – the very year that Daniel was consulting the prophet Jeremiah (Dan 9:1). Cyrus’ Decree is recorded in Ezra 1:1-4; and 6:3-5:

***Ezra 1:1-4** - In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:*

2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem ..."

***Ezra 6:3-5** - In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be ninety feet high and ninety feet wide, 4 with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury. 5 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.*

***Josephus, Antiquities, XI, I, 3** - when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God.*

The Decree of Artaxerxes (457 BC)

Ezra is specifically sent to both establish and enforce Jewish law, but it is clear that it encompassed more than this as Ezra writes, *“He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem”* (Ezra 9:9). Without question, this decree would have contributed toward the restoration of Jerusalem, but what is most attractive about this view is the timing of fulfillment itself, as 483 years (69 weeks) would bring us to 27AD – likely the time of Jesus’ baptism and early ministry. This decree is preserved in Ezra 7:12-26:

***Ezra 7:12-26** - Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings. 13 Now I decree that any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who wish to go to Jerusalem with you, may go. 14 You are sent by the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand.*

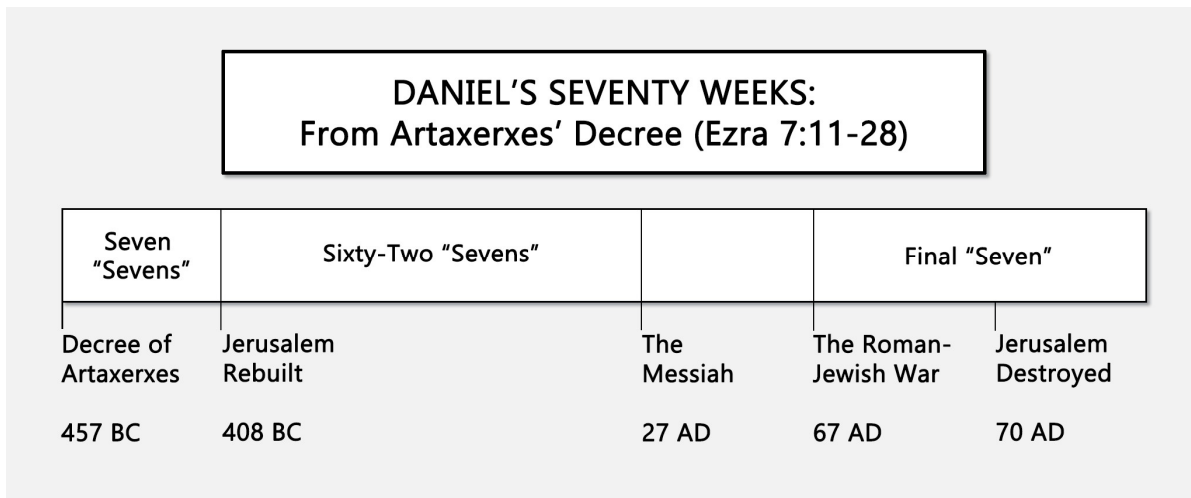
Artaxerxes’ Authorization to Nehemiah (445 BC)

Nehemiah’s request to Artaxerxes was more specifically for the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem itself (Neh 2:5-8). This period of reconstruction was done in a troublesome time (see Dan 9:25). The difficulty with beginning with this “authorization” is arriving at a terminus anytime before AD 37 – well past the arrival of the Messiah.

***Neh 2:5** - "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."*

***Neh 2:17-18** - "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.*

All of these decrees contributed toward the rebuilding of the city, but the most natural fit, both contextually and historically might be the Decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC. With this decree as a starting point, we have the completion of the restoration of Jerusalem cir. 408 BC- a reasonable date. We also have the Messiah’s arrival at 483 years (69 weeks) from this decree at 27 AD.



“It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble”

The book of Nehemiah highlights the troubles that the Jews endured in their efforts to rebuild Jerusalem. The opposition was substantial enough that Nehemiah records that each man *did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other* (Neh 4:17).

“The end will come like a flood”

Writing just before the seven-year Roman-Jewish war (67-73 AD) Peter, in his letters alludes to the great flood of Noah’s time four times (1Pet 3:20-21; 4:4; 2Pet 2:5; 3:5-7), and sees himself and his generation facing remarkably similar circumstances. Much as the flood waters came upon the people suddenly, and in overwhelming fashion in Noah’s day, so sin and destruction swept through the land at the time Peter. *He writes, they think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation* (1Pet 4:4).

“He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering”

The final seven, or “week” of the seventy “sevens” is also the most variously interpreted. We cannot confuse the ruler of these verses with the Messiah, or “anointed one” who had been “cut off” in vs 26. This ruler does not present himself as a sacrifice, but rather puts an end to sacrifice; He is the one who sets up an “abomination of desolation”; and it is his people that would destroy the city and the sanctuary. All of this would not point to the Messiah, but rather, to an anti-messiah – an antichrist.

The phrase והגביר ברית לרבים “he shall confirm a covenant with many” might naturally lead the Christian reader to presume that Christ and God’s covenant with man would be in mind, but again, the context would lead us to conclude that this ruler represents the enemy of God, and this “covenant” represents a law that was to be enforced. But what covenant, pact, or law would this hostile figure impose?

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (171-164 BC)

His edict (1 Mc 1.43–53) that all peoples within his kingdom must be one in law, custom, and religion brought about an inevitable conflict with the Jews. Under Antiochus’ rule, circumcision, the possession of scripture, the observance of the sabbath, the daily sacrifice, and any assembly for the purpose of prayer were outlawed. All of these observances were punishable by death. If this covenant is in view, than a seven-year time period of 171-164 BC would be a plausible fulfillment of this prophecy. Antiochus did put an end to sacrifice and offering, and he did set up an idol which would be recognized by many of the time as the “abomination of desolation.”

Vespasian (67-73 AD)

If the seven-year Jewish war (67-73 AD) is in mind, it would likely be the Roman rule which was enforced. The citizens of cities throughout Roman territories (including Judea) either exiled Jews or put them to death during this period to save themselves from the wrath of the Roman armies. The roman legions under Vespasian and Titus would, in fact, conduct a seven-year war. They would put an end to sacrifice and offering, and they would also serve to fulfill the sign of an “abomination that causes desolation” as Jesus himself applied this prophecy to this event (Mt 24:15-16; Lk 21:20-22).

“And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him”

Daniel 9:27 is the second among four references in this book to the “abomination of desolation” (see also 8:13; 11:31; 12:11). It was the abomination of the sins of the Jewish people that brought about the desolation of their city in 586 BC (Jer 44:6). But what future events would serve to fulfill this vision?

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

During the period of the Maccabees, the Jewish people largely understood that Daniel’s vision had been fulfilled when Antiochus set up of an idol (Jupiter) in the temple courts and sacrificed a pig upon the altar in 167 BC. 1 Maccabees 1:54 says, *At the time of the they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar.* Similarly, Josephus, in his history of this event writes, *Now the desolation of the temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which had been made four hundred and eight years before; for he had revealed that the Macedonians would destroy it* (Josephus, Ant. 12.322).

Vespasian

Under Vespasian, at the extremity (the “wing”) of the Roman advance against the Jews, they would finally reach Jerusalem and her temple. Four Roman legions surrounded and besieged the city. In the context of the anticipation of this event (Mt 24:1-2) Jesus had cautioned the Jews that within their generation they would see the fulfillment of *the abomination of desolation* (Mt 24:15). Luke’s account identifies this event with *Jerusalem surrounded with armies*.

Christ’ reference to Daniel is particularly significant because he had just departed the Temple grounds where he left the teachers of the law and the Pharisees with the words, *Look, your house is left to you desolate!* (Matt 23:38). When Christ had spoken these words, he turned to leave the temple never to return – *you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* (Matt 23:39) The significance of these words, and of this occasion could hardly be overstated, for in Christ, God’s Spirit was then and there removed from the temple forever. Their house had truly been left to them - desolate.

Matthew, writing chiefly to a Jewish audience, and making frequent allusions to the Old Testament, identifies the sign as *the abomination of desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel*. Luke, writing primarily to a gentile audience does not work in terms that a gentile would fail to understand. He plainly states that the sign would be *Jerusalem surrounded by armies*.

Matt 24:15-16 15 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-let the reader understand- 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ...	Luke 21:20-22 20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ...
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Concluding Thoughts on Chapter 9

The instruction in 9:24 for the Jewish people *to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy* appears to relate directly to the expectations God would have for his people in the time-period that followed their release and their return to the land. Still, each of these directives appear to point to a greater reality that, ultimately, would only be fulfilled in the Messiah.

The prophecies relating to the “abomination of desolation” appear to have been fulfilled in the events surrounding the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC, but then find a second (or greater) fulfillment in the events surrounding the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

But would these prophecies also find relevance and application in our own lives and experiences? Most definitely! We were created to serve as the very temple of God. What breathes life, fullness, depth, and purpose into us is the very spirit of God within us.

1 Cor 3:16-17 - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

1 Cor 6:18-20 - Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Eph 2:21-22 - In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1 Peter 2:5-6 - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The greatest tragedy in Israel’s history commemorated by Jews today as Tisha B’Av, was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem on the 9th day of the month of Av in 586 BC and then again in 70AD. Just as the temple would be defiled and left “desolate” when polluted by an idol, so our own hearts can be as well. The greatest tragedy a human life can encounter today is not cancer, nor economic disaster – not even death. The greatest tragedy a life can face today is to not serve as a living temple in which God dwells by his spirit. This, still today, is the abomination of a life desolate of the Spirit of God – the “abomination of desolation.”

DANIEL

A GREAT WAR

Daniel 10

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.

2 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, 5 I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. 6 His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

7 I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. 8 So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. 9 Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

10 A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. 14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

15 While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless.

16 Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. 17 How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe." 18 Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.

19 "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength." 20 So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

Chapters 10-12 comprise the fourth and final vision of the book of Daniel and should be approached as a single unit.

“Its message was true and it concerned a great war”

As this vision unfolds we begin to understand that this war is referred to as “great” not simply because it would involve conflicts between nations, but also, and primarily, because these conflicts would serve as a stage, upon which a greater war would be waged in the spiritual realm.

“I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.”

Similar scenes with remarkably similar descriptions of this heavenly being occur in both Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 1. Each metaphor appears to represent an attribute of God, or, perhaps in this case, the preincarnate Christ.

The messenger who appeared to Daniel is repeatedly described as “a man” (10:5, 16, 18), and of all of the superlative metaphors we are presented relating to his body, his face, his eyes, arms, legs, and voice, perhaps none is more important and significant than this. Daniel’s vision in chapter 7 involved “one like a son of man” who approached the “Ancient of Days.” (Dan 7:13). The angel Gabriel is also described as a man (Dan 8:15, 9:21).

“dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist”

The linen garments are those of a high priest (Ex 23:42; 28:4-5; 29:5; 1Sam 2:18; Wisd of Sol 18:24). Typically, the sash (or belt) of high priest would also have been composed of linen (Lev 16:4) but in this instance it is made of the finest Gold – lit. Gold from “uphaz” (likely another name for Ophir – a region of South Arabia).

“His body was like chrysolite”

Scholars are uncertain about the Hebrew כְּתֹרֶשֶׁת (see also Ezek 1:16; 10:9), frequently translated “chrysolite,” “topaz,” “beryl,” or “yellow jasper.” But the precise identity of the stone is less important than the nature or characteristic of the Lord that the vision intends for us to understand through this metaphor. Most likely the idea of perfection, purity, and beauty would be in mind.

“his face like lightning”

As Daniel describes his face being as lightning, so John describes the face of the Lord as *the sun shining in all its brilliance* (Rev 1:13). Similarly, Jesus’ face is said to have *shown like sun* when he was transfigured before his apostles (Mt 17:2). What would this imagery have conveyed to the early disciples? As the radiance of the sun and the flash of lightning illuminate all that was concealed in the darkness, so all things are exposed in the presence of God. The light of his countenance was considered a blessing - *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you* (Num 6:24-25). It was also thought of as life-giving. He is the source of direction and knowledge - *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.* (2 Cor 4:6).

“his eyes like flaming torches”

The fire in the messiah’s eyes does not serve to indicate anger or rage, but rather his wisdom and discernment. He is the Word of God about which the Hebrew writer says, *judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account* (Heb 4:12-13). Malachi describes the coming Messiah as one who would be a *refiner's fire and fullers' soap* (Malachi 3:2-4). Proverbs offers a similar analogy, *The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart* (Proverbs 17:3).

The Lord addresses each of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 with an allusion to a specific aspect of his own nature, He specifically alludes to his eyes *like blazing fire* to the church in Thyatira in Rev 2:18-19, 23: *These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds ... all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds.* In keeping with allusions to this metaphor in the OT then, the Lord’s *eyes like blazing fire* appear to relate directly to *the one who searches hearts and minds.*

“his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze”

Burnished bronze would convey the concept of strength and power. Micah 4:13 reads, *Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for ... I will give you hoofs of bronze and you will break to pieces many nations.* Similarly, Rev 2:18-19; 27 reads, *These are the words of the Son of God ... whos feet are like burnished bronze ... He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery.”*

“his voice like the sound of a multitude”

If this image is that of Jehovah God, then his voice spoke creation into existence (Jn 1:3), and all things are upheld by the word of his power (Heb 1:3). His voice would represent the countless children of Israel scattered among the nations. He was their God, but because of his covenantal relationship with Israel, he served also as their advocate – their defense, and their representative.

All of this imagery does not appear to describe an angel such as Gabriel, but rather, a manifestation of Jehovah himself. Daniel does not express disabling fear when he encounters Gabriel, nor are such superlative descriptions applied to Gabriel’s appearance. The parallel accounts of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 1 are helpful, as each metaphor conveys the man of this vision as high, exalted, pure, majestic, all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-powerful. Whether or not we choose to identify him specifically as the pre-incarnate Christ, we must understand this as a picture of Jehovah God- the ruler and representative of Israel.

“as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep”

Daniel had witnessed a number of visions and had encountered angelic beings, but something about this encounter seems different. Those who had accompanied him were, though they did not see the vision, were left terrified. Daniel says, *I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless* (10:8) he is described as *trembling* (10:11), *speechless* (10:15), and *overcome with anguish* (10:16). He says, *My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe* (10:18). Daniel falls asleep while the Lord is talking to him! He appears to be overcome by exhaustion due to the magnitude of the vision.

Daniel 10	Revelation 1 & Ezekiel 1
"I looked up and there before me"	"I turned to see whose voice was speaking to me ... " (Rev 1:12)
"a man dressed in linen"	"and in the midst of the lampstands was one like a son of man. He was dressed in a robe extending down to his feet." (Rev 1:13)
"with a belt of the finest gold around his waist"	"with a golden sash around his chest." (Rev 1:14)
	"His head and hair were as white as wool, even as white as snow." (Rev 1:14)
"His body was like chrysolite"	"what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire" (Ezek 1:24)
"his face like lightning"	"His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance" (Rev 1:13)
"his eyes like flaming torches"	"his eyes were like blazing fire." (Rev 1:14)
"his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze"	"His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace" (Rev 1:14) "from there down he looked like fire" (Ezek 1:24)
"his voice like the sound of a multitude"	"his voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev 1:15)

"A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees"

It seems likely that vs. 10 introduces a new figure (perhaps Gabriel), distinct from the vision of the exalted Christ (vss. 5-9).

"Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days."

Daniel had engaged in fervent prayer for three weeks. The messenger before him affirms that Daniel's words were heard from the very first day that he entered into prayer, but he had, in some manner, faced resistance from the prince **יִשְׂרָאֵל** (tsar - ruler) of the Persian kingdom. This conflict was not some demonic attempt to prevent Gabriel from responding to Daniel's prayers, for the conflict is resumed after his revelation is delivered (10:20). Nor is this conflict to be understood as an invisible battle in the spiritual realm as we are not dealing with arbitrary demonic forces. The conflict was specifically between God's angels and the rulers of Persia and then in vs. 20, Greece. These were, respectively, the 2nd and 3rd Kingdoms represented in Daniel's visions throughout the book.

What we might conclude from this is that, while angelic, or “spiritual” warfare is quite real, the battle is not fought in an existential realm apart from the practical world of our experiences. Rather, the battlefield of angels and demons alike is the world in which we live. The rulers of Persia and Greece did not merely oppose the nation of Israel, but the very kingdom of God. These angels are not battling to destroy Persia or its rulers, but rather, to preserve and protect Israel. As Keil writes, *The angel fights ... not to destroy the Persians, but to influence the Persian king in favour of the people of God* (Keil, 422). This is not to say that demonic forces are irrelevant to the context of Daniel 10. Rather, it appears to be demonic forces that wage war against the kingdom of God through their influence on hearts and minds – even their influence over entire kingdoms. So, as CS Lewis writes, *There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.* (C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*).

But how might it be possible for an earthly king to oppose an angel of God? Israel was so named because Jacob, representing the nation as a whole, “wrestled with God.” Saul, also, on the road to Damascus (an account that bears remarkable similarities to Daniel 10) is said to be persecuting Christ (Ac 9:5), because he resisted his kingdom.

What is more troublesome about this account is the concept that an answer to prayer might, in some manner, be delayed, or even withheld by demonic forces. This would not, however, be consistent with what we know of God or of the nature of prayer in scripture. When Gabriel says, *Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard*, he is not simply conveying the idea that God got the message, but rather, that God had responded and granted his favor. This is consistent with how the phrase *God heard* is employed throughout scripture (see 2Chron 30:27; 2Sam 22:7; Job 34:28; Ps 18:6; Lk 1:13 et. al.). Gabriel is sent to bring an explanation of the vision and a revelation of what would happen to the Jewish people in the future (10:14). He was upheld, but the answer to Daniel’s prayer was not.

“Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia”

There are at least 273 references to God’s holy angels in the Bible, but only Gabriel and Michael are mentioned by name. Both of these angels are first introduced here in the latter half of the book of Daniel. Gabriel is referenced four times in scripture (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19, 26), and Michael, five times (10:13, 21; 12:1; Ju 9; Rev 12:7). In Jude 9 he is described as ἀρχάγγελος – an “archangel,” meaning one who is “first,” or “chief” among the angels. Again, here in Daniel 10:13 he is called קְרַאשְׁתִּימְּיָהוּ *chief among the princes*. He appears to be, in some manner, specifically assigned to Israel (Dan 10:21).

The prince (ruler) of Persia may speak in reference to a spiritual power that governs or influences the nation as a whole. C.F. Keil describes this being as a *guardian spirit* or *protecting genius* of the Persian kingdom (Keil, 416). It may also be that Cyrus himself would be in mind. If this is the case, we would have to ask how a mere man might oppose and even detain an angel of God! Yet, as discussed above, God appears to allow such striving. The battle does not appear to be an invisible battle with swords in the sky, but rather, a battle for the heart and mind of the king and the kingdom. God may have, in some manner, been fulfilling the promise he made regarding king Cyrus in Isaiah 45.













1 "This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: 2 I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. 4 For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me

... 13 I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty."

“Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come”

If the battle that is being waged in the spiritual realm is not fought with invisible swords in the clouds, then where is it waged? ... and in what manner? The two adversarial rulers mentioned represented to successive empires that would come to power and threaten the people of God (Persia and Greece). Ultimately, they were manifestations of Satan’s rebellion against God. He is referred to as the “prince” of this world with good reason (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph 2:2).

The spiritual battle we see unfolding, then, is not to be understood as disconnected from the visions that we have been presented with throughout the book of Daniel. Rather, this vision gives us further insight into the grand theme that lies at the heart of this book. The kingdoms of the world are at war with the kingdom of God, but through it all, God remains sovereign.

CH 2	CH 7	CH 8	CH 10	
				BABYLON
				PERSIA
				GREECE
				ROME

“but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince)”

The “Book of Truth” may be, as Keil observes, *the history of the world as it shall certainly be unfolded* (see Ps 139:6; Rev 5:1), or it may simply represent the revealed truths that are to follow in chapter 11. Either way, they appear to represent God’s unalterable will. While God has granted humanity free will, and therefore, the option to oppose his direction and sin, he has not completely handed the world over to entropy and chaos - His sovereignty is a manifestation of his grace.

Eph 6:10-14 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

We are given various glimpses into the spiritual realm and the influences of both angels and demons on the affairs of men throughout scripture:

Josh 5:13-14 - *Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."*

2 Kings 2:11-12 - *As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"*

2 Kings 6:16-17 *"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

2 Kings 13:14 - *Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"*

These demonic and angelic forces that are alluded to in the OT appear to take a more central stage in the writings of the NT:

2 Cor 11:13 - *Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*

James 4:7 - *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

1 Peter 5:8-9 - *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him ...*

Eph 4:26-27 - *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold*

2 Cor 2:10-11 - *If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

Daniel and his contemporaries were able to take comfort in these visions, as it was revealed to them that, God was not only aware and concerned about their circumstances, but was actively carrying on a war on their behalf. They were comforted by knowing that God was indeed sovereign, and in complete control of the present as well as the future. The early church, caught between Roman and Jewish persecution was comforted with a very similar message. Their true enemy was not a man or even an empire. There was a much more sinister force that was at work in all of this. As C.S. Lewis comments, *The enemy will not see you vanish into God's company without an effort to reclaim you.*

What was true in the time of Babylon and Persia would also be true in the time of Paul. The same message should resonate with God's people today. As dark as circumstances might appear, and as strong and influential as our enemy is, we are not alone in this battle. May God open our eyes to see the horses and chariots of fire that surround us!

DANIEL

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Daniel 11

1 And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)

2 "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. 4 After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

5 "The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power. 6 After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

7 "One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. 8 He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone. 9 Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country. 10 His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. 11 "Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. 12 When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant. 13 For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped.

14 "In those times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success. 15 Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand. 16 The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it. 17 He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him. 18 Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. 19 After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.

“And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him”

The first verse of chapter 11 should be treated as the final verse of chapter 10, in which we see the archangel Michael coming in support of Gabriel because of the resistance he faced from the kings of Persia (10:13, 21). Now Gabriel speaks of his efforts to support and protect “him.” Commentators are divided, however, on who is being referenced here. Is Gabriel speaking of his reciprocal support of Michael the angel, or is he referring to his support of Darius the Mede? Both options are linguistically feasible, but both also present interpretive difficulties. The more natural reading of the grammar would make the antecedent of the pronoun “him” to be Darius. It would also seem strange that an angel would need “protection” from some level of harm. John Walvoord’s comments are helpful:

The statement that the angel “stood” in verse 1 is probably used in sensu bellico s. militari, that is, standing as in a military conflict against the enemy, as in 10:13. His stand is usually taken as being in support of Darius the Mede, “to confirm and strengthen him,” but it is possible that “him” refers not to Darius the Mede—for the angel must fight against the prince of Persia (10:13)—but to Michael, the prince of Israel, on whose side he contends (10:21). In the first year of Darius the Mede when the world power passed from the Babylonian to the Medo-Persian, the angel stood by Michael, the guardian of Israel, until he succeeded in turning the new kingdom from hostility to favor toward Israel. The story of chapter 6 demonstrates that efforts were made in the first year of Darius to make him hostile toward Israel. But God sent His angel on that occasion and shut the lions’ mouths (Dan 6:22). The miraculous deliverance by the angel caused Darius the Mede to reverse his policies to favor Israel (6:24-27). The beginning of the second great empire with the fall of Babylon in chapter 5 was, then, more than a military conquest or triumph of the armies of the Medes and Persians. It was a new chapter in the divine drama of angelic warfare behind the scenes, and the change was by divine appointment (Walvoord, Daniel, 255).

This entire account gives us great insight into what “spiritual warfare” actually is and how it is to be understood. The role of angels in this greater battle was not to conquer and subdue so much as to engage in a battle for the hearts and minds of the people. These are not angels and demons clashing in the clouds with invisible swords! Rather, angels and demons alike appear more interested in swaying the minds of men. Michael’s efforts were then, as Thomas Howe comments, *to sway Darius into a favorable disposition toward the people of God* (Howe, Daniel, 469).

“Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.”

There were more than four kings who ruled in Persia following the joint rules of Darius and Cyrus, but the prophecy concerns itself with the four kings that would immediately follow:

539-537	Darius the Mede
538-529	Cyrus
530-522	Cambyses
522-521	Pseudo-Smerdis
522-486	Darius I the Great (Hystaspes)
485-465	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)

A number of Kings would follow these four in the following years 465-331: Araxerxes I (Longimanus); Xerxes II; Darius II Nothius; Artaxerxes II; Artaxerxes III; Arses; and Darius III. The prophecy of the four kings, however, brings us to Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) – the same king that is brought into view in the book of Esther. It would be during his reign that a large-scale assault would be launched against the kingdom of Greece. Herodotus details the account of Xerxes’ invasion of Greece. After a defeat at Marathon, the Persian forces carried their assault as far as Athens, but were ultimately defeated and with many casualties and depleted resources, would return to their ships, and abandon the invasion ... The Greeks, however, would not forget this offense.

“Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases. After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.”

The prophecies of Daniel 7, 8 and 11 appear to relate to much of the same events. In Daniel 7 the third kingdom is presented as a leopard with four heads; in chapter 8, a goat with a prominent horn that is replaced by four horns. In chapter 11, the third kingdom is again broken up into four parts. Just as the four horns are said to *grow toward the four winds of heaven* (Dan 8:4), so also Alexander (the mighty king’s) empire is *broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven*.

Lysimachus	Thrace and Bithynia
Cassander	Macedonia and Greece
Seleucus I	Syria, Babylonia, and the lands to the East
Ptolemy I	Egypt, Israel, and Arabia



“The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power. After some years, they will become allies.”

The closing prophetic vision of Daniel becomes oddly specific at this point. These chapters (11-12) stand out among OT prophecies in their careful attention to detail regarding future events. The king of the South (Ptolemy I) became strong, but one of his leading commanders (Seleucus 1) became stronger and inherited his own kingdom. Together, they fought against Antigonos in what are commonly referred to as “the wars of the Diadochi.”

“The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

At the close of the *Second* Syrian War, the Ptolemies (the South) and the Seleucids (the North) sought to establish unity and peace through a marriage alliance. Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II was to be married to Antiochus II in 252 BC. Antiochus, however, died unexpectedly, and in an effort to ensure that the throne went to her own son instead (Seleucus II), the king's previous wife, Laodice, had Berenice and her son killed.

“One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone.”

After ascending to the throne, Ptolemy III invaded Syria, entered the fortified palace of Antioch, and, upon learning of Berenice's death, had Laodice and her family killed. His intention was initially to seize permanent control of the Syrian region, but due to uprising and unrest in Egypt, he turned his attention back to those affairs. He looted the temples and fortresses of Syria and returned home with great treasures so that he might present himself as a victorious king – he would need to regain the favor and loyalty of his people.

“Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country. His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress.”

Seleucus II did manage to attempt a counteroffensive against Egypt but was unable to reach any further into Egypt's territory than Palestine - his forces were defeated there. His sons, however, Seleucus III Ceraunus and Antiochus III were so successful in recapturing the territory that had been lost, that Antiochus would receive his epithet “the Great.” Their armies swept through the land “like an irresistible flood.”

“Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant. For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped. In those times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success.”

Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand. The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it. He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him. Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.”

Wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids would continue for many years until, ultimately, the Ptolemaic General Scopas surrendered to Antiochus in 198 BC. After returning to Egypt he was arrested and put to death. The Southern kingdom of the Ptolemies gradually declined as the Seleucids grew stronger. Jerusalem, together with the whole of Palestine, would remain under Seleucid control.

Antiochus III, knowing that he would need to focus his attention on the growing threat of Rome, sought to establish peace with the Ptolemies. He gave his daughter, Cleopatra, to be married to Ptolemy V. This arrangement, however, proved disastrous for Antiochus, as his daughter only enticed her husband to seek an alliance with Rome.

Though Rome cautioned Antiochus not to attack Greece, in an effort to prove their strength to Rome, Antiochus’ forces crossed the Hellespont and were routed as soon as they arrived in Thermopylae in 191. This defeat was humiliating for the Seleucids. At the treaty of Apamea, Antiochus was forced to agree to become a vassal of Rome.

Alexander the Great	
The Ptolemies	The Seleucids
Ptolemy I Soter (323-282)	Seleucus I Nicator (312-280)
Ptolemy II Philadelphus (282-246)	Antiochus I (280-261)
Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221)	Antiochus II (261-246)
Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203)	Seleucus II (246-226)
Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181)	Seleucus III (226-222)
Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146)	Antiochus III the Great (222-187)
	Seleucus IV (187-175)

20 "His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle.

21 "He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue. 22 Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. 23 After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. 24 When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses — but only for a time.

25 "With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. 26 Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. 27 The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time. 28 The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

29 "At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. 30 Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. 33 "Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. 34 When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. 35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time. 36 "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. 37 He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. 38 Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.

40 "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. 41 He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. 42 He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. 43 He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. 44 But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. 45 He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

“He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue. Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed.”

Antiochus IV “Epipheneas” is here introduced as a “contemptible person.” This word, *הֶזְבִּין*, *hezbin* speaks not simply to his reception by the people, but perhaps more importantly, to his character. He is described as both cunning and malicious. He is one who “will act deceitfully” (vs 23) and use “flattery” (vs 32).

“The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.”

Antiochus IV attempted to convince Ptolemy Philometor to side with him against Ptolemy Euergetes. Both of these men, however, had no intention of honoring their agreement. The moment Antiochus left, Ptolemy Philometor alerted his brother regarding Antiochus’ conspiracy.

“Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.

First we are told that Antiochus’ heart would be *set against the holy covenant* (vs 28), then that he would *unleash his fury* against this same covenant and *show favor* to those who forsake it (vs 30). But what would drive a man to possess such hatred for the Jews and their covenant with God? Antiochus knew that *a kingdom divided against itself could not stand* (Mt 12:25), and the wars of the Diadochi, and particularly the hostility between the Seleucid’s and Ptolemy’s had emboldened him in his conviction. Antiochus had set out to Hellenize the entire region and unify the people under one king, one language, and most importantly, one law. Because of the importance of their covenant with God, the Jews resisted his direction (See notes on Dan 8:13; 9:27; 11:31).

Antiochus set up of an idol (Jupiter) in the temple courts and sacrificed a pig upon the altar in 167 BC. 1 Maccabees 1:54 says, *At the time of the they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar.* Similarly, Josephus, in his history of this event writes, *Now the desolation of the temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which had been made four hundred and eight years before ...* (Josephus, Ant. 12.322).

“With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered.”

In the final chapters of Daniel, a clear distinction is made between two groups of people: those who know their God and those who do not; those who are wise and those who are foolish; those who will be raised to everlasting life and those who will be raised to everlasting contempt. Just as Daniel and his friends passed through a series of tests, so the people of Israel would undergo a national sifting through a series of trials. As a nation, they would need to resolve not to defile themselves though, like Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, it may mean persecution or death.

This group, designated as the “overcomers” in John’s Revelation, would not only resist this evil influence, but would rise up and instruct others (see also Dan 12:3).

Summary:

One of the most enigmatic themes in scripture is the *abomination of desolation* referred to throughout the latter half of Daniel's visions (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It was the abominations committed by the Jewish people that led to the desolation of their land in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel - idols had been erected in the very heart of the temple (Jer 7:30; Ez 8:5-17). Referencing these prophecies, Jesus said, "when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Mt 24:15-16; Mk 13:14).

Jesus' reference to Daniel is particularly significant because he had just departed the temple grounds where he left the teachers of the law and the Pharisees with the words, "Look, your house is left to you desolate" (Matt 23:38). When Christ had spoken these words, he turned to leave the temple never to return – "you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt 23:39). The significance of these words, and of this occasion could hardly be overstated, for in Christ, God's Spirit was removed from the temple forever. Their house had truly been left desolate of God's spirit.

When we examine these difficult themes today, we might be tempted to make one of two mistakes. We might consider these prophecies to be fulfilled, and therefore, irrelevant. We might also consider these prophecies to relate to some future event, but again, irrelevant to our lives and circumstances. Yet this prophetic theme is as relevant today as God's people considered it to be in the time of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Maccabean period, and the first century. An "abomination" is what is considered vile and detestable before God – what he will not tolerate. Proverbs 6:16–19 lists seven things which are also abominations: "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers."

DANIEL

THE RESURRECTION

Daniel 12

1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. **But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered.** 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. 4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. 6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

8 **I heard, but I did not understand.** So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

9 He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 **Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.**

11 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise”

We may have received a glimpse of Michael’s responsibility in the opening six chapters of Daniel. The protection and intervention of an angel of God is manifested in the fiery furnace, the lion’s den, and perhaps even in the midst of Belshazzar’s banquet. So is Michael to be identified with Christ himself? Scholars disagree on this question. On the one hand, Hebrews 1:4 is often cited in an effort to distinguish Christ from the angels, yet the term “archangel” does this as well – there is no question that Michael, also, is described as superior to the angels. The term “angel” should also be understood not as a creature, but rather, as a function. This is why God himself is in view on at least a few occasions when the term “angel of the Lord” is employed (Ex 3:2-4 et. al). In the direct context of the resurrection of the dead, Paul writes in 1 Thess 4:11, *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel ...* It is clear in John 5:26-29, however, that this voice of an archangel is associated with the very command of Christ:

*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.
27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.
28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves
will hear his voice 29 and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and
those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

Whether we are to identify Michael with the Messiah or not, it is clear that the “arising” of both would be, at the least, concurrent. The intended emphasis of our text is not to identify Michael with the messiah, but rather to identify a period of time in which God’s people would be delivered. God, the angels, and ultimately, the messiah would accomplish this.

“But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered”

When a census was taken, a record of the citizens of each town were often kept in books – a book of “the living.” To have one’s name recorded in the “the book of life” would mean that they were therefore identified as citizens of a particular city or kingdom. This motif becomes important to the people of God who sought to be identified as belonging to his kingdom (see Ex 32:33; Ps 69:28; Mal 3:16; Lk 10:20; Rev 3:5; 20:12).

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”

There are few indications that those living in the time of the Old Testament had any idea about a hope of resurrection. The only clear reference to such a hope in the OT might be here in these closing verses of Daniel.¹ Not only do we have an indication that the righteous would be raised to everlasting life, but also that the wicked would be raised to “everlasting contempt.” Jesus appears to be referencing these passages when he says in John 5:28-30: *Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all*

¹ Commonly Job 19:25-27 has been cited as a reference to the resurrection and particularly a resurrection of the flesh (which would seem to conflict with 1Cor 15:50), but a closer look reveals that this is not the case at all. He says, *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.* In this confident affirmation, Job is merely repeating a confident hope that he expresses throughout the book- that before he dies, while he is still in the flesh, he expects God to come and vindicate him. This had been one of his final cries at the end of his words in chapter 31.

who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

As to the time and the nature of this resurrection, there has been a great deal of speculation and debate. Paul, addressing these diverse views does affirm, *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be* (1Cor 15:37), and *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (1Cor 15:50).

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever”

God’s righteous ones are repeatedly recognized by their wisdom and their instruction. Daniel 12:3 carries the same message that was previously conveyed in 11:32 - *the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Those who are wise will instruct many.* It seems likely that Paul may be reflecting on these verses as he writes, *so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life* (Phil 2:15-16).

“But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”

Where Daniel is called upon to Seal the book because the time of fulfillment was far off (8:26; 9:24; 12:4), John is called to do just the opposite: *Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near* (Rev 22:10-11). For this reason, and a number of others, many scholars have concluded that Revelation is intended to underscore the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecies in the events surrounding the revelation of the Christ and the final destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

“Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

Two other angels now appear before Daniel – one on either side of the Tigris river. Between them, hovering over the waters, was the great messenger dressed in linen. One of these asks, “how long?” The answer, *time, times and half a time* is an important time-period to the book of Daniel (see notes on 7:25), and also a central motif of John’s Revelation (11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

Before revisiting the significance or an identification of this time period, we should consider the implication of the “power of the holy people” being “finally broken.” This, after all, appears to be the grand event that would serve as the culmination of all of the scenes of these visions.

An alternate reading of verse 7 might be preferred. Anthony Bevan, serving as a Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge (1859-1933) renders the text, “When the power of the shatterer of the holy people shall come to an end ...” This translation would appear to be supported also by Daniel 7:25, and what would appear to be the general emphasis of Daniel’s visions. It would not be the power of God’s holy people that would ultimately be shattered, but rather, the power of the kingdoms over his people.

“Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”

We are told just prior to verse 9 that Daniel himself did not understand the vision. Then we are told that the wicked would not understand but that the wise would. This is, of course, not an indication that Daniel (or the reader today) did not somehow pass this test, but rather an indication that it was not for him to understand – the time of fulfillment would be well beyond the life of Daniel. These words would be sealed and preserved for the generation in which they would be fulfilled. At that time these prophecies would provide comfort, direction, and certainty in the midst of their crisis. The trials that they would face would only serve to purify them. Peter may have been inspired by these very words when he offered his opening exhortation to the diaspora of suffering believers of his time:

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:3-7)

“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.”

The general three and one-half year period is not new to the reader, but here another 45 days (one month) are brought into view as well. Revelation 12:6 appears to correspond to Daniel's prophecy here. John writes, “The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days” (Rev 12:6). But what are we to make of these three similar, yet apparently distinct periods of time? Why would John identify a 1,260 day time-period where Daniel speaks of a 1,290 day time-period? What would set an extra 45-day period (1,335 days) apart? These questions have plagued a number of scholars. They appear to be an enigma to Daniel as well.

I think it is wise to approach any proposal of fulfillment on these verses with a great degree of humility. Without question, this is a difficult matter in scripture. Still, there are a few reasons that I remain persuaded that the fulfillment of this time-period would likely involve the Roman-Jewish war of AD 67-70:

- The prophecies of Daniel appear to culminate in the coming of the Messiah at the time of Rome, the fourth empire that is illustrated in various ways throughout the book.
- The final destruction of the temple and the Jewish commonwealth is not only given great emphasis in Jesus' teaching, but this final war would also last, almost exactly, three and one-half years.
- Christ warned his followers of the disasters to come, associating these with the prophecies of Daniel. These early disciples appear to have observed his warning,² Eusebius records the flight of the Christians to the wilderness where they remained three and a half years; the duration of the Jewish revolt:

"The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth."³

This flight of the church in Jerusalem to Pella is well documented,⁴ and demonstrates not only an accurate fulfillment of the timing and nature of the escape of the woman to the wilderness in Rev. 12, but also their understanding and application of Jesus' prophecy and warning to them in the Olivet discourse.⁵

“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

The closing thought of Daniel is one of great hope. The “end of days” would likely reference the culmination of the seventy-weeks prophecy that has been the subject of the final vision. The messenger would essentially be telling Daniel, “these visions deal with events that will occur well beyond your own lifetime. Go your way, but rest in the hope that, with the coming of the messiah, you the kingdoms which have scattered God’s people will be dealt with, and death itself will be conquered (1Cor 15:26).

² *"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written"* (Lk 21:20-24)

³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.

⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:5; *Panarion* 30:2; *de Mens. et Pond.*, 15; *Haer* 29:7; 30:18. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29:7:7-8; 30:2:7; *On Weights and Measures* 15.

⁵ Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21.

DANIEL

Historical

Prophetic

1 Recruited to Serve

2 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Statue

3 The Fiery Furnace

4 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Tree

5 Belshazzar and the Writing on the Wall

6 Darius - Daniel in The Lion's Den

7 The Vision of Four Beasts

8 The Vision of The Ram & The Goat

9 Daniel's Prayer & The Seventy "Sevens"

10 21 Days of Prayer: God's Angels at War

11 Coming Empires & The "Abomination of Desolation"

12 The Resurrection



[Left] The account of Daniel in the Lion's Den was important to the early church. As a people living in a time of great opposition and hostility from the nations (spoken of as "beasts" in Daniel and Revelation, they identified with Daniel and his dependence upon God to shut the mouths of the Lions.

