

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

by  
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## Introduction

### Date

Liberals have attacked the date and authorship of Daniel as much as any book in Scripture. Because of the accuracy of Daniel's predictions those who do not believe in predictive prophecy suppose that Daniel must have been compiled (not written) *after* the events predicted. This means that instead of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Daniel must have been written during the revolt of the Maccabees against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (c. 175-163 BC). According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, no competent scholar should now hold to such a late date:

Hebrew and Christian tradition consistently ascribed the work to Daniel, who was held to have composed the book in the 6th cent b.c. Only in the 3rd cent a.d. was this position challenged by Porphyry, a Neoplatonist thinker who inveighed vigorously against Christian belief...the main feature of which was his statement that the book was written in the Maccabean age so as to encourage the Jewish people who were persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Porphyry arrived at this conclusion from the a priori position that prediction in prophecy was impossible....

All subsequent rationalistic thought about Daniel has repeated quite uncritically most if not all of Porphyry's arguments.... However, the dating of Daniel can now be settled at least negatively as a result of MS<sup>1</sup> discoveries from the Dead Sea caves from 1947 onward. Fragments from 1Q,<sup>2</sup> along with some complete scrolls of Daniel from other caves, have testified to the popularity of the work at Qumrân.... Since all the Qumrân fragments and scrolls are copies, the autograph of Daniel and other OT canonical works must of necessity be advanced well before the Maccabean period if the proper minimum of time is allowed for the book to be circulated and accepted as Scripture. Precisely how much earlier than the Maccabean period is, of course, the point at issue. Here again the Qumrân material provides invaluable assistance. When 1Q was excavated, two of the three fragments of Daniel recovered from the site proved to be related paleographically to the large Isaiah MS (1Qisaa). Since the book of Isaiah comes from a time several centuries prior to the earliest date to which 1Qisaa can be assigned on any grounds, it follows that the autograph of Daniel also must be several centuries in advance of the Maccabean<sup>3</sup> period.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MS means "manuscript."

<sup>2</sup> 1Q refers to the first cave discovered at Qumran. Qumran is the geographical area in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in several caves over a number of years.

<sup>3</sup> The Maccabees were Jewish rebels who took control of Judea, which at the time was part of the Seleucid Empire. They founded the Hasmonean (taken from the name of Hasmon, an ancestor of the leaders) dynasty, which ruled from 167 to 37 BC, and as an independent nation from c. 110 to 63 BC. The Maccabean period, then, was during the period between the writing of Malachi and Matthew. Sometimes called "the 400 silent years," because there was no Biblical writings produced, the period was far from silent as far as writings went. Much history is available on this period.

<sup>4</sup> "Daniel" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Gen. Editor.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

In addition, recent discoveries have shown that Daniel was written in a sort of “Imperial Aramaic,” which was the official language throughout the world in the 6th century BC, but which had undergone definite changes by the time the time of Antiochus.

Even liberals today should admit that Daniel was written much earlier than they had supposed.<sup>1</sup> Yet some continue to hold to the old arguments that, like broken cisterns,<sup>2</sup> can hold no water. Dr. Waltke answers the question as to why they continue do so:

But the question naturally arises, If the evidence for a sixth-century date of composition is so certain, why do scholars reject it in favor of an unsupportable Maccabean hypothesis? The reason is that most scholars embrace a liberal, naturalistic, and rationalistic philosophy. Naturalism and rationalism are ultimately based on faith rather than on evidence; therefore, this faith will not allow them to accept the supernatural predictions. Archer states the point well: “The committed antismaterialist, who can only explain the successful predictions of Daniel as prophecies after the fulfillment... is not likely to be swayed by any amount of objective evidence whatever.”<sup>3</sup>

Another means by which liberals have attempted to push the date of Daniel into the second century BC is by asserting that three of the musical instruments of Daniel 3 are Greek, and can only be imported into the Aramaic language after the days of Alexander the Great. Edwin Yamaguchi, a Professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio has ably refuted this view in his works.<sup>4</sup>

For the Bible-believing Christian no doubt can remain that Daniel wrote during his lifetime in the 6th century BC, and that his writings were preserved as a unit thereafter.

### Author

When taken captive in 605 BC,<sup>5</sup> Daniel was probably under 20 years old. He may have been as young as 12 or 13 years old. Dwight Pentecost summarizes what we know about Daniel:

Little is known of Daniel’s family background. From the testimony of his contemporaries he was known for his righteousness (Ezek. 14:14, 20) and his wisdom (Ezek. 28:3). He is mentioned in these passages with Noah and Job, who were historical people, so Daniel was also a historical person, not a fictional character.

Daniel was born into the royal family and was of noble birth (Dan. 1:3, 6). He was physically attractive and mentally sharp (1:4). He lived at least until the third year of Cyrus, that is, till 536 BC. (10:1). Therefore he must have been a young man when he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. (In 1:4

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Bruce Waltke’s excellent defense of the early date of Daniel entitled “The Date of the Book of Daniel” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 133, (October-December 1976): 329. Dr. Waltke discusses each of the objections to the early date for Daniel, and answers them in turn.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 2:13.

<sup>3</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr., “Old Testament History and Recent Archaeology from the Exile to Malachi,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127 (October-December 1970): 297

<sup>4</sup> Edwin M. Yamaguchi, “Archaeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Eras, Part I, The Archaeological Background of Daniel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (January, 1980) See also Yamaguchi’s work, *Greece and Babylon* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1967), where he discusses the general issue of loan words from Greek and concludes that Daniel’s sixth century BC Aramaic shows less influence by sixth century Greek than would be expected.

<sup>5</sup> 606-605 BC is the accepted date range for the capture of Jerusalem, and the first deportation of Israelites.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

Daniel was one of the “young” men of Israel.) If he were 16 when captured, he was 85 in Cyrus’ third year.<sup>1</sup>

### Languages

Daniel is the only work in Scripture that used two distinct languages in order to emphasize the distinctions between the audience of the writing in certain sections. From Daniel 1:1 – 2:4a the book is in Hebrew. From Daniel 2:4b – 7:28 one finds Chaldee or Ancient Aramaic.<sup>2</sup> In Chapters 8 – 12 the author reverts to Hebrew.

Hebrew was, of course, the language of God’s chosen people, Israel. Those portions written in Hebrew were written to native Hebrew readers, and emphasize the relationship of Israel to the Gentile nations.

Chaldee, or Ancient Aramaic, was the language of the eastern Gentile nations during Daniel’s day. This “Imperial Aramaic” was used in commerce and government throughout the civilized world in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Those portions written in Chaldee were written to Gentile readers, and emphasize the scope of Gentile rule during Israel’s period of domination by the nations.

### Purpose and Theme

In 605 BC Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon. This began an extended period during which Israel is under the yoke of Gentile nations, the “times of the gentiles” (Luke 21:24). God used the man Daniel as the focal point of the various prophecies and visions which dealt with this period. While Daniel did not receive all the predictive revelations himself,<sup>3</sup> he was God’s instrument in bringing about understanding of the general program God had established during the time Israel is under Gentile domination.

The purpose of the book, then, is to reveal the scope of Gentile world dominion, and the relationship of Israel to that dominion. The theme is “Israel Related to Times of the Gentiles.”

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel” in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (E-Sword, Electronic Edition).

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Aramaic found in the Bible is not identical to modern Aramaic. While undoubtedly the modern language is derived from a common source with the Biblical language, they are diverse enough to be considered distinct languages today. It should be noted that virtually all language scholars hold that modern Arabic is also derived from the same ancient Semitic source as Hebrew and Aramaic.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Daniel chapter 2, where the unbelieving king Nebuchadnezzar received revelation in a dream.

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## Geographical Information

The following map will help the student identify various locations mentioned in Daniel's prophecies. It is an American Bible Society map copyrighted in 2004, and provided in electronic format by E-sword's Graphic Viewer.

The Assyrian and Babylonian Kingdoms from c. 824 BC through c. 550 BC



# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## Synthetic Outline

Many outlines have been proposed for the book of Daniel. The most common are the three-fold outline which follows the language changes in the book, and the two-fold outline which attempts to relate the book to Daniel's career (1-6; 7-12). Both schemes seem somewhat artificial. The book is arranged topically rather than chronologically. The best outline for the book should logically reflect the topics presented. It appears that the chapter divisions of the book, with the exception of the final three chapters, provide the best division possible for the topics presented:

- I. Daniel's Situation in Nebuchadnezzar's Court – 1:1-21
  - A. Daniel's Capture – 1:1-7
  - B. Daniel's Decision – 1:8-13
  - C. Ashpenaz's Test – 1:14-16
  - D. God's Result – 1:17-21
- II. God's Presentation of Gentile Dominion – 2:1-49
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar's Anxiety – 2:1-3
  - B. The Chaldean's Failure – 2:4-13
  - C. The Prophet's Request – 2:14-23
  - D. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream – 2:24-35
  - E. Daniel's Interpretation – 2:36-45
  - F. Daniel's Promotion – 2:46-49
- III. God's Preservation of Daniel's Friends – 3:1-30
  - A. The Declaration of the King – 3:1-7
  - B. The Accusation against the Jews – 3:8-12
  - C. The Proclamation of the Young Men – 3:13-18
  - D. The Condemnation by Nebuchadnezzar – 3:19-23
  - E. The Salvation of the Young Men – 3:24-27
  - F. The Reaction of Nebuchadnezzar – 3:28-30
- IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Declaration to All Mankind – 4:1-27
  - A. The Introduction by Nebuchadnezzar – 4:1-3
  - B. The Presentation of the Dream – 4:4-17
  - C. The Expectation of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:18
  - D. The Explanation by Daniel – 4:19-27
  - E. The Denigration of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:28-33
  - F. The Conversion of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:34-37
  - G. The Restoration of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:36-37
- V. God's Revelation during Belshazzar's Feast – 5:1-31
  - A. The Situation Described – 5:1-4
  - B. The Inscription Observed – 5:5-9
  - C. The Prophet Summoned – 5:10-12
  - D. The Problem Expressed – 5:13-16
  - E. The Situation Explained – 5:17-24
  - F. The Inscription Explained – 5:25-28
  - G. The Prediction Fulfilled – 5:29-30
- VI. Daniel's Protection from the Lion's Hunger – 6:1-28
  - A. The Appointment of Daniel – 6:1-3
  - B. The Plot Against Daniel – 6:4-9

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- C. The Defiance of Daniel – 6:10-11
- D. The Betrayal of Daniel – 6:12-15
- E. The Incarceration of Daniel – 6:16-18
- F. The Deliverance of Daniel – 6:19-24
- G. The Proclamation about God – 6:25-27
- H. The Triumph of Daniel – 6:28
- VII. Daniel's Vision of Gentile Dominion – 7:1-28
  - A. The View of Four Beasts – 7:1-8
  - B. The Visualization of God the Father – 7:9-10
  - C. The Judgment of the Fourth Beast – 7:11-12
  - D. The Presentation of the Messiah – 7:13-14
  - E. The Interpretation of the Vision – 7:15-18
  - F. The Concentration on the Fourth Beast – 7:19-22
  - G. The Explanation of the Ten Horns – 7:23-27
  - H. The Consternation of Daniel – 7:28
- VIII. God's Description of Greece and Medo-Persia – 8:1-27
  - A. The Introduction to the Vision – 8:1-2
  - B. The Ram with Two Horns – 8:3-4
  - C. The Male Goat with the Conspicuous Horn – 8:5-8
  - D. The Horn of Transgression – 8:9-14
  - E. The Introduction of Gabriel – 8:15-19
  - F. The Explanation of Gabriel – 8:20-26
  - G. The Exhaustion of Daniel – 8:27
- IX. Gabriel's Prediction of the Seventy weeks 9:1-27
  - A. The Circumstances of the Inquiry – 9:1-2
  - B. The Prayer and Supplication of Daniel – 9:3-19
  - C. The Presentation of the 70 Weeks – 9:20-27
- X. God's Elaboration of Prophetic Events – 10:1-12:13
  - A. Introduction to the Vision – 10:1-21
  - B. The Substance of the Vision – 11:1-12:13

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## I. Daniel's Situation in Nebuchadnezzar's Court – 1:1-21

- This first chapter of the book of Daniel is not simply a history of Daniel's captivity and establishment in Nebuchadnezzar's court. It is actually a "set-up" for the rest of the book in which several elements of Daniel's relationship with the Gentile rulers is established. That relationship is based on his remaining faithful to the God of Israel; but beyond that, it is based on God's plan to reveal to and through Daniel the great plan of the times of the gentiles. Thus Daniel, and to a lesser degree Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are marked out as special and unusual among the captives brought from Israel.

### A. Daniel's Capture – 1:1-7

#### 1. The Time of the Capture – 1:1

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

- Jeremiah 25:1 says this event was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's<sup>2</sup> reign. At that time two ways of reckoning dates existed: Israelites started the first year of a king's reign with his first partial year; the Babylonians reckoned the first year as the first FULL YEAR, and discounted the part of the year the king reigned after his ascension to the throne.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Jeremiah counted the partial year of ascension as Jehoiakim's first year of reign, but Daniel, using the Babylonian method discounted the first partial year, and began year one with the first day of the next year. Therefore, Jeremiah places the event in Jehoiakim's fourth year, while to Daniel in Babylon it was only Jehoiakim's third year.
- When Jehoahaz, the fourth son of the godly king Joash (died 609 BC), his brother Jehoiakim became king, and reigned from 609-597 BC.<sup>4</sup>
- The year of the siege of Jerusalem was 605 BC. At that time, Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar's father, was still king in Babylon. Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar king here because he is writing some years after the event. Nebuchadnezzar had been called home from the siege of Jerusalem at his father's death to assume the throne. According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, he was crowned king on September 6, 605 BC.
- Nebuchadnezzar means "Nebo, protect my borders." Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years, from 605-526 BC. In 605 he defeated the Egyptians under Necho II at Carchemish and Hamath. He then went against Judah.

#### 2. The Circumstances of the Capture – 1:2

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

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical citations unless otherwise noted are from *The New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Jehoiakim means "Yahweh has establish." He was the second son of Josiah, and the eighteenth king of Judah, (609-579 BC). His original name was Eliakim. On the death of his father his younger brother Jehoahaz, also called Shallum (Jeremiah 22:11), who favored the Babylonians against the Egyptians, was made king by the people; but the king of Egypt, Pharaoh Necho, invaded the land and deposed Jehoahaz (See 2 Kings 23:33-34; Jeremiah 22:10-12), setting Eliakim on the throne instead, and changing his name to Jehoiakim.

<sup>3</sup> This is the view is commonly held today, and is that of Walvoord in *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*: (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 31.

<sup>4</sup> The genealogical chart below is taken from Wood, D. R. W., and I. Howard Marshall. *New Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed., "Jehoahaz" Page 554. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996)

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- No actual battle was fought at this time. Jeremiah had predicted the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, and had warned the people not to resist. Consequently, Jerusalem surrendered, and the first deportation took place in 605 BC.
- Jehoiakim did not remain loyal to Babylon. In 601 BC, despite warnings by Jeremiah, Jehoiakim transferred his loyalty to Egypt because they had defeated the Babylonians in a battle. Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's successor continued his brother's rebellious ways and subsequently the Babylonians besieged the city for almost 3 years. This precipitated the writing of the book of Lamentations by Jeremiah. Jerusalem fell in 586 BC and the final large deportation took place at that time.
- Jehoiakim's reign was not a success:

To pay the Egypt. dues Jehoiakim imposed heavy land taxes (2 Ki. 23:35). He built costly royal buildings, using forced labour (Je. 22:13–17), and is described as an oppressive and covetous ruler. The religious decay during his reign is noted by the contemporary prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Josiah's reforms were forgotten in the reversion to idolatry and introduction of Egypt. rites (Ezk. 8:5–17). Jehoiakim shed much innocent blood (2 Ki. 24:4) and had the prophet Uriah murdered for opposing him (Je. 26:20–21). He opposed Jeremiah (36:26) and personally burnt the scroll from which Jehudi read the words of the prophet to him (v. 22).<sup>1</sup>
- Nebuchadnezzar brought *some* of the temple vessels to Babylon. Jameson, Fausset, and Brown (hereafter, JFB) make the following comment:

Nebuchadnezzar took only “part of the vessels,” as he did not intend wholly to overthrow the state, but to make it tributary, and to leave such vessels as were absolutely needed for the public worship of Jehovah. Subsequently all were taken away and were restored under Cyrus (Ezr 1:7).<sup>2</sup>
- Shinar is an old name for Babylon. The comments in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (hereafter ISBE) are helpful:

The name given, in the earliest Hebrew records, to Babylonia, later called Babel, or the land of Babel (*bābhel, 'erec bābhel*). In Gen 10:10 it is the district wherein lay Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, cities which were the “beginning” of Nimrod's kingdom. In Gen 11:2 Shinar is described as the land of the plain where migrants from the East settled, and founded Babel, the city, and its great tower.<sup>3</sup>
- Nebuchadnezzar brought some vessels from Jerusalem and placed them in the “house of his god,” which probably refers to Bel, also called Marduk, or in Hebrew Merodach, the chief god of the Babylonians. By transferring some of the temple vessels, Nebuchadnezzar was signifying that Bel had defeated the God of the Israelites. Pagan temples often were used as treasury houses for the king. Concerning Bel, A. S. Wood states the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, D. R. *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Vol. 2, (Leicester, England; Wheaton, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 738. Hereafter IBD.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David and Brown. “Daniel,” *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Electronic Edition. E-Sword.

<sup>3</sup> “Shinar.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. s. v. electronic edition, (E-Sword).



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

MERODACH. The Hebrew form of the Babylonian divine name Marduk. By the time of HAMMURAPI (c. 1750 BC), on whose stela this god may be represented, the god Marduk...had taken over many of the attributes of the god Enlil. Marduk was the primary deity of BABYLON and was later called by his epithet *Bēl* (*Ba'al*....Merodach occurs as the divine element in the Hebrew rendering of Babylonian names, EVIL-MERODACH, MERODACH-BALADAN and MORDECAI.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Results of the Capture – 1:3-7

#### a. The Selection of Certain Youths – 1:3-4

<sup>3</sup> Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, <sup>4</sup> youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- That Daniel was a member of the royal family cannot be disputed. As such he was a perfect representative for God in a foreign land.
- With the other youths, Daniel was intelligent and able to learn. Here is reflected the common practice of conquerors in that era. Some leading captives, especially the youth, were well-treated with a view to causing them to accept their new government masters. There were inundated with the culture, language and literature of their captors. Daniel, with the others, appeared to be highly qualified in Ashpenaz's eyes and was therefore a good candidate for Nebuchadnezzar's service.
- It appears that the word *Chaldeans* here is used broadly of those who spoke and wrote the Babylonian language, rather than the group of "wise men" called by that name, although the young men were probably being educated so that they could join the group of wise men who served Nebuchadnezzar.

#### b. The Appointment of Specific Food – 1:5

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

- The captivity of the young men was not onerous. They were to have the best of food and drink which the Babylonians could offer, which was in keeping with their being groomed for personal service with the king.
- The three years of education, which was the equivalent to a college education today, included all the literature as well as the language of the Chaldeans, as mentioned in vs. 4 above.

#### c. The Naming of Certain Individuals – 1:6-7

<sup>6</sup> Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.<sup>7</sup> Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name *Beltshazzar*, to Hananiah *Shadrach*, to Mishael *Meshach*, and to Azariah *Abed-nego*.

- The changing to Babylonian names was another device used to infuse the young men with the Babylonian culture and language. It was a usually effective attempt to move captives away from faith in what would have been considered their local gods. In this case the attempts were unsuccessful.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, IBD. Vol 2, Page 982.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Currently there is much debate as to the meaning of the Babylonian names.<sup>1</sup> Pentecost reflects the most recent view of the name changes:

Daniel, whose name means “God has judged” (or “God is my Judge”), was given the name Belteshazzar (Bēlet-šar-ušur in Akkadian), which means “Lady, protect the king.” Eight of the 10 times “Belteshazzar” occurs in the Old Testament are in the Aramaic section of the Book of Daniel (2:26; 4:8-9, 18-19 [3 times]; 5:12). The other 2 occurrences are in 1:7 and 10:1.

Hananiah (“Yahweh has been gracious”) became Shadrach probably from the Akkadian verb form šādurāku, meaning “I am fearful (of a god).”

Mishael (“Who is what God is?”) was given the name Meshach, which possibly was from the Akkadian verb mēšāku, meaning “I am despised, contemptible, humbled (before my god).”

Azariah (“Yahweh has helped”) was named Abednego, “Servant of Nebo” (Nego being a Heb. variation of the Babylonian name of the god Nebo). Nebo (cf. Isaiah 46:1), son of Bel, was the Babylonian god of writing and vegetation. He was also known as Nabu (cf. comments on Daniel 1:1 on Nebuchadnezzar’s name).<sup>2</sup>

- As noted, the Babylonians were unsuccessful in weaning these faithful Israelites from their God through this pernicious act. The fact that Daniel retained his Hebrew name speaks to this failure. Furthermore, writing after the fact, it’s clear that the three Hebrew youths also retained their Israelite identities, though commonly today they are called by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

### **B. Daniel’s Decision – 1:1-13**

#### **1. Daniel’s Stance – 1:8**

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

- The food of the Babylonians undoubtedly contained “unclean” portions according to the Mosaic law. In addition, it was common for food to be sacrificed to the national gods of a land, which may have caused second thoughts by Daniel. This, however, was not contrary Mosaic law as some have contended, reading the New Testament problem back into the Mosaic code. Likely, the animals were not drained thoroughly when killed. Leviticus 17:10-14 forbids the eating of blood, so perhaps the Babylonians did not completely drain the blood from their kills.
- Devout Israelites diluted their wine with water because of the prohibition to strong drink.<sup>3</sup> Commonly the dilution was three parts water to one part wine; however, some went so far as to dilute wine 6 to 1 or even 10 to 1.<sup>4</sup>
- Daniel did not simply rebel. He asked permission to change diets. He had accepted the fact that the Lord wanted him in Babylon, but he was unwilling to succumb to the contamination

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<sup>1</sup> See Walvoord, *Daniel*, page 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Pentecost, “Daniel”. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

<sup>3</sup> See Proverbs 20:1 and Isaiah 5:11, for example.

<sup>4</sup> Pentecost, “Daniel”.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

that was involved in eating unclean food.<sup>1</sup> This request produced quite a consternation in the mind of the commander of the officials.

### 2. The Commander's Fear – 1:9-10

<sup>9</sup> Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, <sup>10</sup> and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

- The *commander of the officials* is probably Ashpenaz. Because of his direct link to Nebuchadnezzar he was afraid to grant the request. (Implicit in the statement is a denial of the request.) Since God had granted favor in his eyes, he explains why he is unwilling to change their diet.

### 3. Daniel's Request – 1:11-13

<sup>11</sup> But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

- Daniel now presents a proposal that will not endanger Ashpenaz. The test was only to be 10 days long, not enough time for the youths to become emaciated, but long enough to tell if their diet was not working.
- Daniel does not approach Ashpenaz again. The overseer was at least one step removed from the king. However, he could not have given permission for the test if Ashpenaz had not said that it was allowed. Perhaps Ashpenaz allowed the test because he could always blame the overseer if something went wrong. It would then be the overseer who paid with his head, not Ashpenaz. At the end of that time, the request to eat only vegetables could be again refused.
- The term *vegetables* also would have included grain, which was a staple then as now. There are no specific vegetables named, but all vegetables were allowed under the Mosaic code.

### C. Ashpenaz's Test – 1:14-16

#### 1. The Length of the Test – 1:14

<sup>14</sup> So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

- The word "he" undoubtedly refers to the overseer, not Ashpenaz. However, as previously stated, Ashpenaz must have given his permission for this test to take place. In reality, it was his test.

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<sup>1</sup> For a different view see Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel*. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 83. Baldwin holds that since all Gentile food was ritually unclean that could not have been Daniel's reason for refusing the rich food of the king. She bases his refusal to eat on the idea that to eat with someone was acceptance of his friendship, and to accept the king's "rich food" Daniel felt he would have been violating the covenant relationship with God. She concludes, "Those who had thus committed themselves to allegiance accepted an obligation of loyalty to the king. It would seem that Daniel rejected this symbol of dependence on the king because he wished to be free to fulfill his primary obligations to the God he served. The defilement he feared was not so much a ritual as a moral defilement, arising from the subtle flattery of gifts and favours (sic) which entailed hidden implications of loyal support, however dubious the king's future policies might prove to be."

Baldwin fails to explain if that were the case why Daniel and his friends in fact received very valuable gifts from Nebuchadnezzar as well as positions of high authority in his government.

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## 2. The Results of the Test – 1:15-16

<sup>15</sup> And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. <sup>16</sup> So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

- The Babylonians probably did not count on the results of the test being what they were. Perhaps the youths would look only a little less robust than their fellows who ate the king's food. Certainly they would not look better! God intervened, and the unexpected result allowed the young men to maintain their vegetarian diet.
- Walvoord's suggestion that there was no supernatural act of God in keeping the young men healthy because their diet was simply better for them is assumptive.<sup>1</sup> Probably the Babylonian diet contained some of the same flesh (lamb, for instance) they could have eaten under Mosaic law had it not be contaminated by being sacrificed to the Babylonian gods. It is likely that God graced them in this area so that they could maintain their position in Nebuchadnezzar's program.

### D. God's Result – 1:17-21

#### 1. The Quality of the Young Men – 1:17

<sup>17</sup> And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

- Note that while all four youths received from God "knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom" only Daniel "...understood all kinds of visions and dreams." At this point it is already clear that Daniel is God's chosen individual to deal with the Gentile authorities. Only he is ultimately equipped to deal with the various events that follow.

Daniel's capacity included distinguishing a true dream from one that had no revelatory meaning and also the power to interpret it correctly.<sup>2</sup>

- Keil compares the Babylonian education of Daniel and his friends to the Egyptian education of Moses. Both included study in foreign religion and illegitimate magic and sorcery. Nevertheless, such education for those in a foreign land was not without benefit as they were "able to put to shame the wisdom of this world by the hidden wisdom of God."<sup>3</sup>

#### 2. The Presentation to the King – 1:18

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

- The "end of the days" refers to the completion of the three year period of their indoctrination. The "commander of the officials" again probably refers to Ashpenaz.

#### 3. The Consultation with the King – 1:19

<sup>19</sup> And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

- Again God's hand is seen on the young men. Without fanfare, these four young men are clearly superior in their learning and wisdom from the others who succumbed to Nebuchadnezzar's kitchen.

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 41

<sup>3</sup> Carl Fredrick Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, p. 83.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Daniel, who undoubtedly wrote this narrative, refers to himself and the other three using their Hebrew names. Despite all the attempts by the Babylonians, these young men retained their relationship to Israel's God.

### 4. The Comparison of the Young Men – 1:20

<sup>20</sup> *And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.*

- As kings advisors, these young men were “ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.” How does one measure these qualities so precisely? Like today, “ten times” was an idiom meaning “a large quantity,” indicating that these young men were as advisors observably superior to the magicians and conjurers. Pentecost summarizes the various kinds of “wise men” in the Babylonian court. I have broken it into sections for easier reading:<sup>1</sup>

The king consulted magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, wise men, and diviners.

“Magicians” (ḥartūmmîm, Dan. 1:20; 2:2) was a general word referring to men who practiced the occult. (This word is also used in Gen. 41:8, 24; Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11.)

“Enchanters” (’aššāpîm, used only twice in the Old Testament, Dan. 1:20; 2:21) may refer to those who used incantations in exorcisms.

The word “sorcerers” (meḱaššepîm, 2:2) probably is from the Akkadian verb kašāpu, “to bewitch, to cast a spell.” (This participial noun, rendered “sorcerers,” used only here in Dan., occurs only four other times in the Old Testament: Ex. 7:11; 22:18; Deut. 18:10; Mal. 3:5.)

“Astrologers” (Hebrew, kašdîm, Dan. 2:2, 4; Aramaic, kašdā’în, 2:5, 10 [twice]; 3:8; 5:7, 11) seems to refer to a priestly class in the Babylonian religion (misleadingly rendered “Chaldeans” in the KJV) who depended on revelation through the stars, which were objects of worship.

“Diviners” (gāzerîn, 2:27; 4:7; 5:7, 11) may be those who sought to ascertain or decree the fate of others.

The practices of these five groups may have overlapped extensively. Several times Daniel referred to these men under the general rubric of “wise men” (2:12-14, 18, 24 [twice], 48; 4:6, 18; 5:7-8, 15).<sup>2</sup>

### 5. The Duration of Daniel's Ministry – 1:21

<sup>21</sup> *And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.*

- Daniel's service in the royal court of Babylon continued at least until the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus in 539 BC. In 536, four years later, the 70 year captivity came to an end. The statement here does not mean he died in the first year of Cyrus, but simply that he served at court that long. See Daniel 10:1.
- But why not refer to the later date? A reason is supplied by Young:

Why, then, is the first year of Cyrus mentioned? The answer is that this was a period of particular importance. It was, for the Jews the beginning of a new

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Pentecost is using the NIV translation for his base. This may make it difficult to follow in a more accurate translation such as the NKJV or NASB.

<sup>2</sup> Pentecost, “Daniel.”

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

era (cf. Isa. 44:28; 46:1), the year of their deliverance. This great event was witnessed by Dan., about seventy years after his own captivity.<sup>1</sup>

### II. God's Presentation of Gentile Dominion – 2:1-49

- The event of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the first of three events that tend toward the protection of Israel while in captivity under the Babylonians. God, through Daniel, establishes a relationship with the pagan king which will ultimately ensure Israel's survival. But it takes the events of chapters three and four to finally bring Nebuchadnezzar literally to his knees, and acknowledge the God of heaven's priority.
- Daniel 2 begins the treatment in Daniel of the scope of the time of the gentiles. This chapter, along with chapter 7, provide the reader with an overview of the period during which Israel is under the authority of the gentiles.
- Liberal interpreters of this chapter must reject it as being written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. They simply say that it is a second century forgery, and contend that the prophetic elements are the writer recording history rather than predicting the course of future events. Because of their rejection of God's revelatory material, they reduce the book to a historical curiosity that in no way provides the reader with information about God's program on earth.
- Those who hold the amillennial or postmillennial view, while holding to a 6<sup>th</sup> century date, reject a normal interpretation of the destruction of the Nebuchadnezzar's image and see the kingdom that grows to be the church rather than the restoration of Israel in God's plan.

#### A. Nebuchadnezzar's Anxiety – 2:1-3

##### 1. Nebuchadnezzar's Problem – 2:1

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

- The Hebrew says simply that Nebuchadnezzar “dreamed dreams.” Dreaming was as common then as now. Some have tried to explain the problem by saying that this was a recurring dream or nightmare.<sup>2</sup> This is because the statement is that he “dreamed dreams,” where the word dreams is plural. Perhaps, but the text indicates that the problem was not simply the dream itself, but that it caused “his spirit to be troubled”<sup>3</sup> and he couldn't sleep. The verb “left” is passive in the Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> It seems to indicate that the problem was out of Nebuchadnezzar's control. According to Walvoord, Leupold translates the verb “was done for.”
- The word “dreamed” is perfect tense in the Hebrew. It is possible that it refers back to the events of chapter one, in the sense of “had dreamed previously,” which is an allowable meaning for the Hebrew perfect tense. The second year of Nebuchadnezzar places this event prior to the completion of the three year period during which Daniel and his friends were being trained. Some have tried to claim that Daniel would not have been available to interpret this dream because he was still in training. Indeed, liberal critics try to say that this proves that chapter 2 is a forgery.

<sup>1</sup> Edward J. Young. *The Prophecy of Daniel, a Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949. p.51.

<sup>2</sup> So Pentecost, “Daniel.”

<sup>3</sup> The verb translated “troubled” is the *hitpael* imperfect of נָעַפְּ, *disturbed*. The imperfect tense probably is used to indicate an on-going problem.

<sup>4</sup> The verb is *nifal* perfect of נָעַפְּ which means “to be done, be finished, be gone” according to Strong.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Actually, it is highly likely that this dreaming took place before Daniel completed his training. The text does not include him or his friends as advisers to the king. They do not hear of the problem until the king's counselors have already failed. This is in keeping with the fact that they were not yet part of that group. This was probably part of the reason that Daniel and his friends were considered "10 times better" than the king's other advisers.

### 2. Nebuchadnezzar's Solution – 2:2-3

<sup>2</sup> Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. <sup>3</sup> And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

- This is a "call the experts" event. It turns out that the king's advisors were not able to perform under the conditions Nebuchadnezzar required.
- The four words which the NASB translates magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and Chaldeans have been interpreted a variety of ways. See Dr. Pentecost's statement quoted in the comments on 1:20 above.

### B. The Chaldean's Failure – 2:4-13

#### 1. The Chaldean's First Request – 2:4

<sup>4</sup> Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

- *O king, live forever* is a courtesy greeting given to a potentate during this period. This greeting occurs 4 times in Daniel: 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:21. In addition, the phrase, *Darius, live forever* occurs in Daniel 6:6.
- The Chaldean's spoke to the king in Aramaic. This begins the Aramaic portion of the text which continues through chapter seven. The change in language is because of the change of intended audience, the Babylonians rather than the Hebrews.
- The Chaldean's request to hear the dream was certainly reasonable, as they pointed out in their in verse 10 below.

#### 2. The King's First Response – 2:5-6

<sup>5</sup> The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. <sup>6</sup> "But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

- The translation "The command from me is firm" is a divergence from the KJV "The thing has gone from me." The problem in translation stems from the verb meaning, which has been debated by language scholars for some time. If the KJV translation is accepted, Nebuchadnezzar is claiming to have forgotten the dream. Whether he actually did forget or not is then debatable. If the NASB version, which we have supplied, is accepted, the king is affirming that he knows the dream but that he is testing the wise men to make sure they do not simply dip into their bag of tricks and come up with useful but inaccurate interpretation. After all, if they cannot come up with the dream, why should Nebuchadnezzar believe that than can interpret it correctly?
- The incentive of a bloody, not to mention painful, death would certainly be a motivating factor if the wise men were trying to hold out on Nebuchadnezzar. Of course they could not tell him the dream. They no more had supernatural abilities than the man in the moon. So

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

Nebuchadnezzar demands that they tell him both the dream and its interpretation. One gets the idea that Nebuchadnezzar was not as naive as some other potentates.

- Walvoord posits the idea that perhaps these men were older than Nebuchadnezzar, having served his father. According to Walvoord,

It would be understandable that the king might have previously been somewhat frustrated by these older counselors and may have had a real desire to be rid of them in favor of younger men whom he had chosen himself. Nebuchadnezzar might well have doubted their honesty, sincerity, and capability, and may even have wondered whether they were loyal to him. He may have also questioned some of their superstitious practices.<sup>1</sup>

Whether this is so or not, we have no way of knowing. But Nebuchadnezzar's overall attitude does not bespeak of trust or a willingness to accept them without some proof.

### 3. The Chaldean's Second Request – 2:7

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

- One can imagine the wise men shaking in their boots when asking the king to tell them the dream a second time. Monarchs of the day were not known for their compassion. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute ruler. In an instance he could bring about the threat which he had previously made.

### 4. The King's Second Response – 2:8-9

*8 The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,<sup>9</sup> that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."*

- This statement may go more to indicate Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward his counselors that has been sometimes understood. Possibly Walvoord is correct, and he is using the situation to provide a reason to rid himself of them. At any rate, it is clear that he did not fully trust them.
- The word "certain" is from the same root of the word "firm" in vs. 5. This seems to indicate that the king did remember the dream, but was simply unwilling to tell them. The king accuses them of conspiracy to "speak lying and corrupt words," hoping the "situation" would change.

### 5. The Chaldean's Immediate Disclaimer – 2:10-11

*10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean."<sup>11</sup> "Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."*

- This response of the Chaldeans supports the idea that the king had not simply forgotten his dream. If he had, given the alternative, they would certainly attempted to at least make up an answer. They seem, by this disclaimer, to believe that if they had made up a response, the king would know whether they were lying or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 50. Walvoord's commentary, while generally accurate, contains several of the speculative ideas.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- In effect, these men are caught in their own web of lies.<sup>1</sup> They had claimed magical power, which is now shown to be mere trickery. They had no supernatural ability. If they had, this situation would be the time to trot it out!

### 6. The King's Final Response – 2:12-13

*12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious, and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>13</sup> So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.*

- Clearly those in training such as Daniel and his friends are included in the group of wise men, at least from the perspective of punishment. It is likely a case of guilt by association. We can infer that not all the wise men of Babylon were present when Nebuchadnezzar made his terrible demands.
- The order to destroy all the wise men of Babylon is probably an order for a formal, public execution. Those who were in his immediate presence may have been spared until all the wise men could be rounded up and executed en masse. However, vs. 18 below seems to indicate that Daniel and his friends expected to be distinguished from the rest of the wise men of Babylon, who indeed either had by then been executed, or were certain to be executed in the near future.

### C. The Prophet's Request – 2:14-23

#### 1. Daniel Approaches the King – 2:14-16

*14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; <sup>15</sup> he answered and said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. <sup>16</sup> So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.*

- Daniel's reaction is cool, clear, and probably unexpected. Arioch was possibly the chief executioner as well as the captain of the body guard. The fact that he answered Daniel indicates, at least to some degree, the regard he had for Hebrew youngster.
- The question as to urgency was the perfect response by Daniel. He did not try to get out of his situation by claiming that he was not present and could not be included with the other wise men. Rather, he asked for time from Nebuchadnezzar. It may have been this very reasonableness which impressed the king enough to allow Daniel to proceed.
- Daniel's request indicates that he expected God to reveal the dream and its interpretation to him.<sup>2</sup> God's hand was on Daniel, and the young man gives evidence that he realized God's working through him.
- It is important to realize that this whole situation is based on a supernatural intervention in history, that is, in God's revelation to Nebuchadnezzar. This was no regular dream. God set up this whole scenario so that Nebuchadnezzar would realize a particular truth, as well as for presenting the revelatory material in such a way as to make it certain to be recorded and not

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<sup>1</sup> According to Oppenheim, dream manuals recorded previous dreams and events that followed them, and they were arranged for easy reference. This being the case, the wise men had the dream business down pat. But, of course, they needed to know the dream for their interpretations to succeed. See A. L. Oppenheim, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 46, Part 3, 1956, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Charles shows that Daniel is actually promising to give the interpretation to the king. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (OUP, 1929), p. 35.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

destroyed. As we shall see, even many years later under Nebuchadnezzar's successor, there was remembrance of Daniel's ability.

### 2. Daniel Confers with His Friends – 2:17-18

*17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, <sup>18</sup> in order that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.*

- In a time in which God directly and regularly intervened in history, Daniel's response was perfect. He enlisted his friends to request compassion from the God of heaven, which phrase is significant. Daniel well knew that God was not limited to heaven, but was unbound by time and space. The phrase "God of heaven" is one of respect and consideration for the Lord's transcendence. By expressing God's being in view of His stature of overseeing all creation, Daniel is making a statement of God's sovereign ability to interfere in the current situation, and apply His divine will. Also, the phrase "the God of heaven"<sup>1</sup> distinguishes the true God from the false gods of Babylon.

### 3. God Reveals the Mystery – 2:19-23

#### a. The Vision from God – 2:19a

*19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.*

- A night vision is not precisely a dream, but a vision given while Daniel was awake. It probably took place during the time that Daniel and his friends were invoking God's compassion on their behalf. That which had been a mystery was a mystery no longer.

#### b. The Blessing by Daniel – 2:19b-23

##### 1) The Blessing Articulated – 2:19-22

*19 Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; <sup>20</sup> Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. <sup>21</sup> "And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding. <sup>22</sup> "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.*

- Daniel's "blessing" is presented in what is clearly a "praise" mode.<sup>2</sup> Note the following elements:
  1. God's name, or reputation is praised "forever and ever." This is a general praise concerning God's character. It begins in general fashion which is further identified more specifically.
  2. "Wisdom" and "power" speak of the perfection God's activities. Not only does He have omnipotent power, but He has the wisdom to use it. This introduces the idea of God's sovereignty, which is germane to the situation at hand. It introduces one of the main themes of Daniel, not only that God is in control of all things, but that Daniel recognizes this fact, and submits to it personally.
  3. God controls the flow of history. He changes "times and epochs." This is the statement of one in captivity as a result of such changes. Daniel understood that God's program is not static, that it has changed from time to time, and will continue to do so.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "the God of Heavens."

<sup>2</sup> The Aramaic word כִּבְרָה means *to praise*, and is related to the same trilateral root as the Hebrew word for praise or blessing.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

4. God specifically controls political power. Kings, such as Nebuchadnezzar, may think they are in control, but Daniel knew otherwise. God, and God alone, controls the rulers of the world system. Again we see that the approach to Daniel's praise is situation specific. The ultimate outcome is not in doubt, as God is controlling the activities of human rulers.
5. God gives wisdom, it is not earned by experience. God gives knowledge to men so that they can understand. Here, and in the next statement Daniel begins to speak specifically to the immediate need, the need for information that only God has. If man is to have it, God must give it to men.
6. Finally, God controls the revelation of things that are hidden to men. He is omniscient in that nothing is hidden from Him by darkness. He Himself is the light that makes dark things known. This speaks to the specific need before Daniel, who desires such revelation.

### 2) The Reason Expressed – 2:23

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

- That which motivated Daniel's thanks and praise is the revelation of the king's dream. The result of this revelation gave Daniel two things he did not have before:
  1. Wisdom. Daniel now had the ability to explain something that was not previously available to him.
  2. Power. Daniel realized that knowledge is power. He, as a result of the specific revelation of God concerning Nebuchadnezzar's dream, had specifically the power to escape the wrath of the king. He was certainly more powerful than the wise men in this regard.

#### D. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream – 2:24-35

##### 1. Daniel Petitions Arioch – 2:24

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

- Daniel approaches Arioch rather than Nebuchadnezzar directly which, according to Daniel's statement, seems to have been to short stop the actual destruction of the wise men. Only then does he request to be taken into the king's presence.

##### 2. Arioch Takes the Credit – 2:25

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

- The way Arioch takes advantage of the situation indicates several factors:
  1. Arioch made haste (לְהַחֲזִיק – *b<sup>e</sup>hal*, a word meaning *terror*, and therefore reason to hurry), because of fear of the king. The situation, from his perspective, was serious.
  2. He was not above improving his own situation, shown by the words “I have found a man....” He took credit where little was due to him. Contrast this with Daniel's statements in verses 26 and following.
  3. He has trust in Daniel to do what he claims, perhaps because of the previous events dealing with him and his Hebrew friends.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### 3. Daniel Gives the Credit – 2:26-28a

#### a. The Question – 2:26

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

- The fact that Daniel’s Babylonian name is mentioned is significant in that it was probably the one Nebuchadnezzar used in addressing him. He considers Daniel to be a compliant hostage who has submitted to Babylonian rule. Little does he understand the immediate situation. In his arrogance, Nebuchadnezzar believes that he is in control.
- The king asks both concerning making known the dream as well as its interpretation. He hasn’t forgotten his requirement to prove authenticity.

#### b. The Answer – 2:27-28a

27 *Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. <sup>28</sup> “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days.*

- Daniel does not claim credit for his ability, but gives it to God. Notice again Daniel’s use of the phrase “the God of Heaven.” The idolatrous view of the gods were that they were not transcendent, but immanent, and indeed, were of the earth. Often they were represented in physical terms of man or animal. Not so the creator God whom Daniel served.
- In a sense, Daniel excuses the various Chaldean wise men who had disappointed the king. The simple fact of their inability makes it clear that even Daniel himself could not have told the dream without divine intervention. It is another way of contrasting faith in the genuine God from the false gods of the Babylonians. It is wise to keep in mind that Nebuchadnezzar thinks of the man before him not as God-honoring name Daniel, but as Belteshazzar, the name that brings to mind the false gods of Babylon.
- From perspective of Nebuchadnezzar’s personal need, Daniel’s statement is even more important than the telling of the dream and its interpretation. The source of this information is not one of the pagan gods of Babylon, but the true heavenly God. None of the wise men of Babylon have a relationship with the only one who can tell the dream. This is the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s education in the genuine God, not the powerless idols the Babylonians worshiped.
- The phrase “what will take place in the latter days” introduces the predictive nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The term “latter days” does not mean the end times exclusively, but “later days” than the one in which the dream is being given. The extent of the “latter days” could go to the final events of time, or they could (and do) stop short of those events.

### 4. Daniel Presents the Purpose – 2:28b-30

28b *This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. <sup>29</sup> “As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. <sup>30</sup> “But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.*

- The purpose for this entire process was so that Nebuchadnezzar could know something of the future. Why Nebuchadnezzar should be the vehicle for such revelation has been much debated. Certainly as potentate, he had the ability to preserve for later dissemination the

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

information which he himself had received. Also, this is most likely a setup for the things that will occur when Nebuchadnezzar goes insane later in his reign.

- Daniel’s disclaimer that the revelation was not given to him “for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other man” is not simply false modesty on his part. Daniel realizes that he was appointed by God as a vehicle for that part of the process that would cause Nebuchadnezzar to understand the significance of his dream. It lends to the later intervention in history that God pursues in bringing Nebuchadnezzar to faith in the true God of heaven.

### 5. Daniel Tells the Dream – 2:31-35

#### a) The Large Statue – 2:31

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

- Many conservative commentators correctly surmise that a human figure is ideal to predict the events under scrutiny. The figure represents man’s future governmental history, not God’s. God’s earthly kingdom is not represented by the image itself, except insofar as it is subject to God’s sovereign universal kingdom, of which the entire creation, terrestrial and extra-terrestrial are subject. The message here is that man’s attempt to rule the world will fail, and that ultimately only God’s intervention of His earthly kingdom will prove successful. His earthly kingdom will destroy the human attempts at earthly government.
- The size, splendor and awesomeness of the image must have impressed a man like Nebuchadnezzar very much. For a man at his stage of understanding, these qualities must have spoken of the importance of what was being revealed. It undoubtedly appealed to his arrogant assumption of his own importance.

#### b) The Unusual Description – 2:32-33

32 *“The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup> its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.*

- In verses 32 and 33 we have a detailed description of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw. Starting from the top and going down we have a step by step degradation of material from which the image is made. Starting with gold, the most precious of metals, we go to silver, only slightly less valuable, to bronze, of considerably less value, and finally to common iron and iron mixed with ceramic clay. Some have denigrated the clay as being of little value, but it more likely represents a state in human development where valuable ceramic clay represents the ultimate in human achievement. That should be especially meaningful today, where the common earthly substance silicone has produced billions of dollars of value! There’s even a high rent valley named after it.

#### c) The Strange Stone – 2:34

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

- The phrase “cut out without hands” is significant. This stone, as will be seen later, represents God’s intervention to end the times of the gentiles. No human hands involved. A common rock crushes all the valuable substances.<sup>1</sup>

#### d) The Total Destruction – 2:35a

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<sup>1</sup> This is certainly not a picture of the church gradually taking over the world spiritually. Rather it is a picture of a sudden destruction of the image representing human attempts at world governance by a non-human method, a method not represented by precious metals, or even by valuable porcelain produced by human effort, but by the most common of all substances, a rock!

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

35 *“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found.”*

- The entire metal and ceramic structure is destroyed instantaneously (“at the same time”) and is disintegrated to the point that it can be blown by wind as though it were chaff. This is not a gradual victory of utopia over failed human government. The destruction is so complete that “not a trace of them (the metals and clay) was found.” There is no residue from which to pick up and start over. Again we state, clearly is not a picture of the slow or gradual removal of negative elements of society brought about by the intervention of men.<sup>1</sup> This is the complete destruction of the entire Gentile governmental structure.

### e) The Amazing Growth – 2:35b

*But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*

- This is a statement of substitution. The statue is gone and the stone, which starts small, takes its place so that it fills the whole earth. As we shall see, this growth is highly significant to the nature of the government which the stone represents.

### E. Daniel’s Interpretation – 2:36-45

#### 1. The Representation of Nebuchadnezzar – 2:36-38

36 *“This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king.”*<sup>37</sup> *“You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory;”*<sup>38</sup> *and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.*

- The interpretation is simple and clear. The head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar. It was he who brought Babylon to its fullest height of power and largest extent of dominion. Oh, the glory, the preeminence of Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of all kings. A man who was soon to be brought low to the ground, to the point of grazing like an animal. But here, with the interpretation of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar must have been at the pinnacle of his pride.
- However, Daniel’s interpretation includes the statement that Nebuchadnezzar is not the ultimate source of his own victory. The God of heaven gave him what he has. It must be hoped that Nebuchadnezzar heard and understood this as well as the splendor of his reign.
- Still, Nebuchadnezzar’s power is absolute over his realm. As gold is the richest of all metals, Nebuchadnezzar is the most absolute of all autocrats. In the subsequent kingdoms, this power will degrade.

#### 2. The Representation of Subsequent Kingdoms – 2:39

39 *“And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.”*

- Inferiority is the emphasis here. Three metals follow, each indicating a kingdom inferior to its predecessor, as each metal is inferior to its predecessor. As we will see, the four kingdoms are, in term, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

#### 3. The Description of the Fourth Kingdom – 2:40-43

##### a. The Strength of the Fourth Kingdom – 2:40

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<sup>1</sup> The language of Daniel 2 does not support the view that social change is in view, which is held by both amillennialists and postmillennialists. It is clear that what is totally destroyed is the political structure that currently exists during the times of the Gentiles.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

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

- The fourth kingdom is unique in that it is both strong and weak at the same time. This probably will be resolved in the fact that it is strong and weak in different ways. Its strength is indicated in vs. 40. Like iron it beaks and shatters. This undoubtedly indicates the military force of this fourth kingdom.

### b. The Weakness of the Fourth Kingdom – 2:41-43

41 “And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. <sup>42</sup> “And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. <sup>43</sup> “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- The instability of the fourth kingdom is indicated by the “potter’s clay” which is a reference to ceramic clay that can be fired in a kiln. It is a product of human effort, and as such as a certain value. Its weakness comes from the fact that it will be divided, symbolized by the mixing of iron and clay. It has the toughness of iron, but the brittleness of fire-dried clay.
- Some have laid much emphasis on the fact that the image at this point has two legs, which they attempt to relate to the eastern and western portions of the Roman Empire. In fact, it is not the two legs that represent the division in the empire, but the iron mixed with an incompatible material, ceramic clay. Nothing in the text warrants identifying the two legs of the image with the division of Rome into east and west. The analogy of the ten toes represented ten kings cannot be read backward into the two legs representing two divisions. The two legs are no more relevant than the two thighs of the image, which no one wants to divide into two parts of Greece or the two arms which no one says represent two parts of anything.

### The Roman Empire in the Last Days

The problem of the existence of the Roman Empire in the last days has been answered in two ways: 1) the empire has continued in some form, unbroken, since its inception, and 2) the empire will be revived after the church has been removed.

The continuous empire view is represented by G. H. N. Peters in his work *The Theocratic Kingdom*. Pentecost follows Peters when he says, “It would seem best to view this Roman empire (the ten-toed form) as a continuous development from its form at the time of the first coming of Christ until its final form at the second coming of Christ.” (Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pg. 320.)

The revived Roman empire view is held by most premillennial scholars. Typical of this view is that stated by Walvoord concerning the vision in Daniel 7, “The ten horns represented a future Roman Empire which will reappear in the end time.” (John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, pg. 231) As with most premillennialists (this author included) Walvoord equates the ten horns of Daniel seven with the ten toes of Daniel two. In the revived Roman Empire, the future Roman empire is historically distinct from the original empire.

The second view seems the best to this author. It is difficult to see a continuity of the original Roman empire, when, by all standards normally used, it ceased to exist in the 400’s.

For a detailed discussion of the revived Roman Empire, see Dr. Walvoord’s discussion in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, “Revival of Rome,” Vol. 126, #504, October, 1969.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Actually, the period of time after the crucifixion of Christ is probably not represented at all in the image. From a prophetic viewpoint, the singularity of the image does not necessarily mean a continuity of the time period. It is in fact the empires themselves being represented, not their time periods. This view is not inconsistent with the fact that in vs. 44 Daniel uses a time reference “in the days of those kings.” The reference to a specific event in time is not the same as saying that the image represents a continuous period of time. We know from Daniel 9 that there is clearly a gap in God’s program, specifically with reference to the Roman Empire. We are in that gap today, and it will continue until the current age comes to an end. Dr. Walvoord is undoubtedly correct when he says, following King who rejects any significance to the two legs:

Probably the best solution to the problem is the familiar teaching that Daniel’s prophecy actually passover the present age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ, or more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church. There is nothing unusual about such a solution, as Old Testament prophecies often lump together predictions concerning the first and second coming of Christ without regard for the millennia that lay between (Lk 4:17-19; cf. Is 61:1-2).<sup>1</sup>

- The meaning of “they (the iron and clay) will combine with one another in the seed of men” is unknown to this author.<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of this phrase in depth, see Walvoord, pg. 70f. Whatever the specific meaning, Dr. Walvoord’s statement is well taken:

The final form of the kingdom will include diverse elements whether this refers to race, political idealism, or sectional interests; and this will prevent the final form of the kingdom from having a real unity. This is, of course borne out by the fact that the world empire at the end of the age breaks up into a gigantic civil war in which forces from the south, east, and north contend with the ruler of the Mediterranean for supremacy, as Daniel himself portrays in Daniel 11:36-45.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. The Description of the Stone Kingdom – 2:44-45

*44 “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.”<sup>45</sup> “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*

- The phrase “in the days of those kings” has caused much concern. It does seem to relate to the bottom part of the image, rather than the entire image. Daniel 2:34 states that the stone strikes the image on its feet. The kings mentioned then must relate to the feet in some way.

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 72.

<sup>2</sup> During my research into other writers, I have found a great predilection to speculate about the meaning of the phrase. Several authors give their view, but without any historical, literary, or archaeological support. It seems to me to be honest and say, “I don’t know” rather than to speculate without any evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 71.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The amillennial interpretation, accepted by Young<sup>1</sup> as indicated by Allis is that the kings are the kings of the four empires. This ignores the fact that previously Daniel specifically says that the stone strikes the feet, not the entire image. If the image represents the entire scope of Gentile rule, then the feet surely represent the last stages of that rule. “The days of those kings” clearly relates to the time of the striking of the stone and establishment of the kingdom. Young goes out of his way to point out that the ten toes are not mentioned by number and therefore the ten kings cannot relate to the Daniel 7 prophecy. However, since both prophecies appear to be referring to the same kingdom structure, which Young admits refers to Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, it is difficult to understand his objection to the kings referring to the 10 kings of the 10 horns of Daniel 7. Perhaps to Young the 10 toes of the image are simply a happy accident which just happen to fall in line with the Daniel 7 prophecy. Or perhaps, which is much more likely, the idea of an image was chosen by God because it had 10 toes which could be seen as analogous to the 10 horns.
- Therefore, the most plausible explanation as to which kings are meant is by analogy with the ten horns of the diverse beast of Daniel 7.<sup>2</sup> The beast is the Roman Empire and the ten horns are said to be ten kings who rule. If this analogy is sound, that means that the ten kings are more or less contemporaneous as represented by the ten toes of the statue. Dr. Pentecost makes the following statement:

“The time of those kings” (NIV) may refer to the four empires or, more likely, it refers to the time of the 10 toes (v. 42) since the first four kingdoms were not in existence at the same time as apparently the toes will be (cf. comments on the 10 horns of the fourth beast, 7:24).<sup>3</sup>
- Concerning the striking of the stone at the base of the image, several elements present themselves:
  1. The stone clearly represents the kingdom of God on earth. It starts small, and grows to fill the whole earth. The God of heaven Himself sets up this kingdom, represented by the stone being cut out without hands. The hands clearly represent human effort in establishing a human kingdom. *No human effort is used in the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.*
  2. This kingdom, unlike the human kingdoms, is unending. It will never be destroyed. It will endure forever.
  3. The kingdom will not be overtaken by another people. It will be retained by the original people who inhabit it. This is certainly a reference to the Israelites who will perpetually inhabit this kingdom.
  4. It is the sudden and instantaneous destruction of the Gentile domination of Israel that ultimately is in view. Vs. 45 makes it clear that the entire metal/clay structure being crushed is a certainty of the future. Nothing that man can do will change this future process of destruction. Nor is the destruction of Gentile rule a long, drawn out process. If this dream means anything, it means that God will *replace* Gentile world rule with the kingdom of God, not develop a kingdom within or coinciding with Gentile rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, *Daniel*, p. 78. Young alludes to Allis favorably in his statement about the days of the kings. Presumably he is referring to Allis’ book *Prophecy and the Church* published in 1945. It is the only book by Allis listed in his bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, this view presupposes the unity of the book of Daniel. When the final draft was done, certainly Daniel knew that he had made statements in Chapter 2 that would be recalled when the reader reached chapter 7, especially since the two passages deal with the same topic.

<sup>3</sup> Pentecost, “Daniel.”

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The amillennial and postmillennial view of this passage are strange indeed. These views see the kingdom of God established at the first coming of Christ, and the growth of the stone the growth of the church. Somehow the fact that Gentile world dominion was not destroyed is missed. Somehow the destruction of the Roman Empire is made to be equivalent with the destruction of Gentile dominion. Somehow the church is viewed as the cause of the destruction of Rome. The actual statements of the text are ignored. Walvoord's words are worth repeating:

The principal difficulty is that as a matter of fact Christianity was not the decisive force that broke the Roman Empire. The main reason was its internal decay and the political conditions which surrounded it. Further, the decay of the Roman Empire extended for more than a thousand years after the first coming of Christ. In other words, the time factor was greater than the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Christ. To have such a long period of time described in the symbolism of a stone striking the feet of the image and the chaff being swept away by wind simply does not correspond to the facts of history.<sup>1</sup>

### F. Daniel's Promotion – 2:46-49

#### 1. The King Honors Daniel – 2:46

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

- Daniel must have gotten the dream right, because Nebuchadnezzar is overwhelmed with respect and admiration for Daniel. For someone like Nebuchadnezzar to prostrate himself before a captive boy is certainly unprecedented. Only God's intervention can account for this act.
- The offering<sup>2</sup> and incense notwithstanding, Nebuchadnezzar is not worshiping Daniel as a god, as some have contended. It's clear from the next statement that Nebuchadnezzar realized that Daniel was a representative of God, not a god himself. Presentations were honorifics of valuable commodities as is explained in vs. 48 below.

#### 2. The King Recognizes God – 2:47

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

- Nebuchadnezzar gets it partly right. He attributes the abilities of Daniel to Daniel's God. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have elevated Daniel's God to the place of supreme importance among all gods (a God of gods). Even given the amazing accomplishment of telling Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king is not yet convinced of the ultimate superiority of the God of heaven over his own false deities.

#### 3. The King Elevates Daniel and His Friends – 2:48-49

*48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>49</sup> And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.*

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> The Aramaic word מִנְחָה refers to a grain offering, not an animal sacrifice. Nebuchadnezzar was giving Daniel food, perhaps quite a lot of it stored away somewhere. It is likely that enough grain was given Daniel to make him a wealthy man if he chose to sell it.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The significance of this event is beyond dispute. This is the first step in elevating Daniel and his friends to positions where they can be influential in preserving Israel during their Babylonian exile.
- Daniel is not made ruler over the entire kingdom, but over the most important part of the kingdom, the province of Babylon itself. In addition he becomes the chief advisor to the king, having authority over all the wise men, which we will see, probably evoked massive jealousy on their part. The statement that Daniel was at the king's court distinguishes him from his friends, who were probably lower level bureaucrats.
- Daniel's friends, here designated by their Babylonian names because of their assumption of official duties, also reap the benefit of God's using Daniel. They are given authority as administrators over the province of Babylon at Daniel's request. The jealousy of the wise men of Babylon will spill over on them, with the results which are seen in the next chapter of Daniel.

### III. God's Preservation of Daniel's Friends – 3:1-30

- This chapter marks the second of three events designed to show God's protection of Israel while in captivity. While the preservation deals with only three individuals, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the implication of their salvation from the fiery furnace extends well beyond them personally. This incident promotes the ultimate protection of Israel in two ways: 1) the three youths are placed in positions of authority and honor as one of its results, and 2) Nebuchadnezzar learns more about Israel's God, which will ultimately bring about a declaration that will preserve Israel from harm during the Babylonian period.
- This chapter lays the groundwork for a doctrinal appreciation by Nebuchadnezzar of God. One sub-purpose of the book of Daniel is to show that even Gentile kings are susceptible to God's grace. Several elements stand out in this chapter:
  1. Nebuchadnezzar's pagan arrogance in establishing and requiring worship of the golden image.
  2. The Chaldean's obvious jealousy against the Jews.
  3. The faithfulness of the three young men to the God of Israel.
  4. The direct supernatural intervention by God to preserve the young men which was in essence a signal of the preservation of Israel itself.
  5. The acknowledgment of the pagan king of the God of the young Israelites.

#### A. The Requirement of the King – 3:1-7

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not "patriots" in the modern sense of the word. They are not to be taken as examples of ultimate patriotism because of their defiance of King Nebuchadnezzar. Rather the issue to them was spiritual in the sense that it dealt with their relationship to the God of heaven. Indeed, they had by the time of the events related here already agreed to serve in the government of Nebuchadnezzar in the province of Babylon. They had, with Daniel, accepted positions of authority, even while their own country was still in existence, at least nominally, and which still had a king, if not a righteous one. In the eyes of some today, these men had already committed treason, and could be charged with collaboration with the enemy.
- What is sometimes forgotten is that Daniel and his friends were undoubtedly familiar with the prophets in Israel, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah. They looked on their captivity as a fulfillment of God's program of righteousness, and realized that Israel could not exist in the

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

theocratic sense if God had decided otherwise. They looked on their captivity as the result of a national, not personal, judgment and were determined to remain faithful, not to Israel, but to God. That faithfulness included their acceptance of the captivity God had brought upon them.

- A major theological theme of Daniel is subservience to God, no matter what the consequences. This happened with the problem of the king's food, with the interpretation of the king's dream, and here with the willingness to die rather than violate their faith in God. It will occur later in the incidence of the lion's den. True faith does not consider the consequences of obedience to God, but accepts even the negatives associated with it.

### 1. The Image of Gold – 3:1-2

*1 NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

- Much has been made of comparing this image with that of chapter 2.<sup>1</sup> The fact that it is evidently an image of a man, though not so stated, and that it was of gold which is analogous to the gold head of the previous image, seems to indicate Nebuchadnezzar's purpose of promoting himself as the ruler of the world. However, it may not have been a man's image, and obelisks that were carved were quite common during the time. One wonders if it might not have been an obelisk carved with the image of a man, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar. There is actually no way of telling.
- Going back to Hippolytus of Rome<sup>2</sup> it has been supposed that this is a representation of the king deified. Jerome also held this position.<sup>3</sup> Many have held that it is an expression of his arrogance because of the previous vision. Others hold different views. According to Newell,  
Opinions differ as to his purpose in this; some believe it to have been done in honor of his father, Nabopolassar; others think it was erected as a tribute to Bel, the principal divinity of Babylonian paganism; still others are sure that the king built it in honor of himself.<sup>4</sup>
- The size of the image was impressive. According to both ISBE<sup>5</sup> and *The New Bible Dictionary*<sup>6</sup> a cubit was from 19.5 to 20.5 inches in length. If the royal cubit is in view, as is most likely in this circumstance, and using the shorter measurement, the image would have

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<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic words are the same. The word ܐܘܢܐ is related to the Hebrew word "image" found in Genesis 1:26.

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus was a second-third century Christian theologian who wrote prolifically.

<sup>3</sup> Young, *Daniel*, pg. 84.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Newell, *Daniel, The Man Greatly Beloved and His Prophecies*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 45. W. C. Stevens in his work on Daniel suggests it is an image of Merodach, "the lord of battles" (pg. 46). Opinions abound.

<sup>5</sup> "Whereas the average Egyptian cubit was about 20.5 in (52 cm.), the Mesopotamian average was only about 19.5 in (49.5 cm.). Small differences also existed between Sumerian and later Babylonian cubits." ISBE, "Cubit."

<sup>6</sup> "This *standard Hebrew cubit* was 17.5 inches (44.45 cm), slightly shorter than the common Egyp. cubit of 17.6 inches (44.7 cm)... The *long* or 'royal' *cubit* was a hand breadth ('palm') longer than the standard cubit of 6 palms (Ezk. 40:5), *i.e.* 20.4 inches or 51.81 cm. With this compare the Babylonian cubit of 50.3 cm (of 30 fingers length marked on a statue of Gudea) which was '3 fingers' shorter than the Egyp. cubit of 52.45 cm (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1. 178)."

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

been 97.5 feet tall! Using the longer measurement, the image would have been a staggering 102.5 feet tall; it would have been a little over 10 feet wide.

- The location of the plain of Dura is unknown. Three sites in the general area of Babylon have been offered. The most likely seems to be an area known as Tutul Dura, south of ancient Babylon.<sup>1</sup> The word comes from ancient Akkadian meaning a wall or circuit. It is possibly a reference to a city wall. Walvoord says “The consensus of conservative scholarship is that...its location is...six miles southeast of Babylon.”<sup>2</sup> A large mound of dirt is there, which some think could be the pedestal for Nebuchadnezzar’s image.
- Some have objected to the image being “of gold” as being too expensive. It was undoubtedly not solid gold, however, but was likely plated with gold. The ark of the covenant was so plated.
- Undoubtedly Daniel knew the distinction between the eight titles of government officials given here. The following discussion includes supposition by various authors, without actually proving their case. In fact, we do not really know the function of these officials. The eight types of officials that were called together by Nebuchadnezzar are as follows:
  1. Satraps – Probably a reference to the main district rulers under Nebuchadnezzar. The word is actually a Persian loan word which is not unusual given the interaction between the two kingdoms at this time. In the Persian system, satraps were virtually sub-kings.
  2. Prefects – Pentecost says the prefects were military commanders, while the next word, governors, were civil authorities. He gives no reason for the military association with the word prefect, but probably got it from Keil<sup>3</sup> who supposes this is the meaning.<sup>4</sup>
  3. Governors – Keil supposes that this position involved a civil administrative function.
  4. Counselors – The KJV translates the word “judges”. Keil thinks they were *arbitrators*.
  5. Treasurers – Most think this word relates to one who oversaw the king’s treasure, or the public treasury.
  6. Judges – Probably lawyers of some kind. Perhaps those who interpreted governmental decrees, as our supreme court judges.
  7. Magistrates – Thought to be derived from an old root meaning one who judges at law, a magistrate. Perhaps of a lower rank than the “counselors” above.
  8. Rulers of the Provinces – Probably sub-rulers of political districts. Perhaps operated under satraps.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “More likely is Tutul Dura, a series of mounds or tells a few miles S of Babylon (J. Oppert, *Expédition scientifique en Mésopotamie*, I [1863], 238ff). However, Akk *dûru* (“circuit, wall, walled place”), from which the name is derived, is a common element in Mesopotamian place names. It can indicate a circular enclosure or fortress...as implied by the LXX reading *peribolos* “enclosure.” Identification of the site thus remains uncertain; the author of Daniel may have neither known nor intended a specific reference, nor may it have been significant for the narrative.” ISBE, “Dura”.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Keil, *Daniel*, pg. 120-121.

<sup>4</sup> Akkadian loan word. “Akkadian (Accadian) is now used as a convenient term for the Semitic Assyrian and Babylonian languages...” *The New Bible Dictionary*, “Accad, Akkad”. Accad was an ancient name for the territory later taken over by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. It was found toward the north from Babylon, but the actual boundaries are not known.

<sup>5</sup> As can be inferred from the *perhaps* and *supposes*, no one is certain what these words mean.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### 2. The Obedience of the Officials – 3:3

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

- The importance of the event is probably the reason for calling all these officials together. Nebuchadnezzar was displaying his power. It was a convenient way to make known to all officials who was in charge.
- The word “dedication” during the times of the Maccabees was used in the consecration of the temple. The tone of this passage is religious throughout.

### 3. The Commandment of the King 3:4-6

*4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: “To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, <sup>5</sup> that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship<sup>1</sup> the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. <sup>6</sup> “But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”*

- The address is not limited to the officials, but to all that were assembled. Subjugated people from the far reaches of the empire are included.
- The list of musical instruments in this passage has prompted much study. Beyond the issue of the dating of Daniel (see Introduction) the actual type of instruments is debated. Below is a chart showing one approach to the instrumentation of Nebuchadnezzar’s orchestra:

KJV Translation	NKJV Translation	Aramaic Word	Type of Instrument
Cornet	Horn	<i>qeren</i>	wind
Flute	Flute	<i>mash-ro-qee</i>	wind (pipe)
Harp	Harp	<i>qeet-ros</i>	stringed (lyre)
Sackbut	Lyre	<i>sab-bekh-a</i>	stringed (horizontal harp?)
Psaltery	Psaltery	<i>pis-an-te-reen</i>	stringed (vertical harp?)
Dulcimer	in symphony	<i>soom-po-ne-ya</i>	unknown (drum, bagpipe?)

- The **horn**,<sup>2</sup> was possibly an animal horn, but Assyrian reliefs from the late Assyrian period show metal or wooden horns being used, which was probably the case in Nebuchadnezzar’s time.
- The **flute** (from a word root meaning “to hiss”) probably referred to the “double reed pipe” since such an instrument is prominent in archaeological findings of the time. No actual flute has been identified, though it is possible at a later day such an instrument will be discovered. At this time the best evidence is a form of the double reed pipe rather than the flute.
- The **harp** is undoubtedly a type of lyre, a stringed instrument. This instrument and the three that follow have evoked much discussion as they are thought to be loan words from Greek.

<sup>1</sup> Some believe that sections of Daniel such of these are predictive of the future. Philip Newell holds this specious view, stating that these events are, “themselves a forecast of conditions which will prevail during the chief time period set forth in the prophetic portions, the end of this age” (Newell, Daniel, 47). Such a practice throws disrepute on normal interpretation of Scripture. A strong distinction between predictive and non-predictive passages must be maintained, else all becomes chaotic.

<sup>2</sup> The information on musical instruments is summarized mainly from Charles H. Dyer’s article “The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 147 (October, 1990). Some material is taken from Yamaguchi’s work.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

The Greek form of the word is *kitharis*, an old Ionic form of the Attic word *kithara*. Some believe that this word came into Greek as a loan word from another language, and then was exported to other areas. The instrument may not have been of Greek origin at all.

- The **sackbut** is of particular difficulty. Three different origins for the word have been suggested: 1) Greek from *sambuke*, a four-stringed horizontal harp triangular in shape, 2) from the Semitic language root *sabak*, meaning to interwind or interweave, perhaps because the instrument was a large harp which looked like lattice work, and 3) from the Akkadian *sabi,,tu*, referring to a seven stringed lyre. Dyer suggests the Greek *sambuke* is most likely but thinks that the instrument may have been imported into Greece from Mesopotamia, not the other way around.
- The **psaltry** is also probably some kind of harp similar to the current middle eastern dulcimer, probably trapezoid shaped, although perhaps a triangular shape. Some suggest that it would be plucked rather than strummed, and may have been used with a plectra.
- The **bagpipe** is the most difficult of all. The word bagpipe is applied to it from later evidence, primarily in the fourth century BC. “There is no evidence for bagpipes in Mesopotamia at any time.”<sup>1</sup> The word might not refer to an instrument at all, but to a chorus, or to the sounding of all instruments together, as reflected in the NKJV translation of “in symphony”. It is from the Greek word *symphonia* (sounding together, music) which has come into English as *symphony*, a type of musical presentation by an orchestra. But this identification is doubtful because immediately following the word is the phrase “all kinds of music.” Thus we would have the redundancy “music, and all kinds of music.”
- Wellesz suggest this word is actually in apposition to the previous instrument and describes it. He makes the two words together mean a “concord harp,” that is a harp of many octaves. Dyer points out, however, that no such instrument is known, and in no other place is such an association made. While this view is attractive in solving the problem of the *symphonia*, it does not have sufficient evidence to support it.
- A final view, and one that has gained much popularity, is that the word is not actually the Greek word *symphonia*, but the word *tymponia*, which refers to a drum. The letters “s” and “t” are closely related in Greek, changing between dialects. In addition, when taken into a Semitic language, the change of “t” to “s” is not unlikely. Dyer points out that in reliefs from the Mediterranean area, drums are depicted as a regular part of a musical scene. It would be unusual, he says, for a list from Babylon not to include a drum with other instruments. For these reasons, the *symphonia* of Daniel 3 is best associated with a percussion instrument, probably a drum as pictured in reliefs of the time. Still, one cannot be absolutely certain of this identification.
- Finally, there is the furnace. Of course, the threat of the furnace of blazing fire is no idle one. The furnace was most likely a kiln for baking bricks. Fired ceramic bricks were used as building material throughout the Mesopotamian area. Here is tyranny at its most dire. Perhaps it is the idea of the golden head that has produced this most arrogant attitude in Nebuchadnezzar. There is simply no justification for such a threat.

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<sup>1</sup> Dyer, “Instruments.”

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## 4. The Obedience of the People

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

- No great surprise here. When the king says, “bow down” the fearful subject bows down! Should we infer that this kind of event was normal in the life under a Mesopotamian potentate? The king actually makes a dual command, “bow down and worship.” The act of bowing in worship is clearly what the Hebrew youths objected to. The religious significance cannot be denied. Just as Nebuchadnezzar had earlier honored the God of Daniel, he now expected all people to honor his god image.

### B. The Accusation against the Judeans – 3:8-12

#### 1. The Basis for the Charges – 3:8-11

*8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.<sup>9</sup> They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever!<sup>10</sup> “You yourself, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.<sup>11</sup> “But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.*

- Evidently not all the Chaldeans were in on this, as the text indicates that “certain Chaldeans” brought the charges against the Jews. The term “brought charges against” translates an Aramaic word which means to “tear in pieces.” It is a severe word, and indicates the emotional state of the Chaldeans.
- This is the first time the term “Jews” is used in Daniel. At this point the word probably was used simply of the captives because they were from the tribe of Judah and therefore “Judeans”. However, once the Israelites were scattered, the term “Jew” is easily applied beyond the tribal reference by association, which is what one observes on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.<sup>1</sup>
- Concerning execution in a furnace, ISBE says,

The fiery furnace in Dnl. 3 has been thought to be a kiln for baking bricks or smelting metal. The fire which killed the guards has been attributed to a sudden gust of flame or an explosion. Execution by being cast into a furnace is attested by documentary evidence from Babylonian times (cf. J. B. Alexander, JBL 69 [1950], 375f).

#### 2. The Nature of the Charges – 3:12

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

- The limitation of the charges to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego causes us to wonder where Daniel was at this time. Certainly he was not among those who bowed down to the image. As a member of the king’s court one would expect to see him in this scene. Two possibilities arise: 1) for some reason he may have been elsewhere, 2) perhaps the Chaldeans did not think it wise to bring a charge against Daniel because of his undoubted popularity with Nebuchadnezzar.

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<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic plural form of the word (Jews) is found only twice in Daniel and eight times in Ezra. The singular is not used in either Daniel or Ezra. All other times in the Old Testament the Hebrew form of the word is used.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The religious nature of the offense is brought forth in the words that the youths “do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.” This was no mere “civil disobedience” as some might suggest. There are spiritual ramifications that outweigh the civil in this event. It is often true of dictators that religion is claimed as the basis for their authority. Newell quotes Herr Baldur Von Schirach, director of German youth, as reported in the *London Times* for July 29, 1936,

One cannot be a good German and at the same time deny God, but an avowal of faith in the eternal Germany is at the same time an avowal of faith in the eternal God. If we act as true Germans, we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the Führer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God.<sup>1</sup>

### C. The Bravery of the Young Men – 3:13-18

#### 1. The Threat of the King – 3:13-15

*13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? <sup>15</sup> “Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”*

- Nebuchadnezzar was not a man of mild manners. In his rage he demanded and got the youths brought into his presence. He then asks a rhetorical question in vs. 14. The text gives no indication that he expected them to answer. Rather the question was a rhetorical device of charging them with not serving Nebuchadnezzar’s gods, nor worshipping the golden image.
- That Nebuchadnezzar gave the youths another chance has been taken to mean that he may not have trusted those who brought the accusation, but wanted to see with his own eyes what would happen. Perhaps this is so, as we have seen his attitude toward the wise men earlier.
- A second rhetorical question in vs. 15 expresses the current “theological” view of the pagan world at the time.<sup>2</sup> Nebuchadnezzar did not believe that any god could deliver the youths from the fiery furnace. Gods of Nebuchadnezzar’s day were weak and vacillating things. They were animistic expressions of nature and natural forces. Pagans did not expect the supernatural to extend beyond the “magic” which the diviners and magicians provided. Nebuchadnezzar was certain that the furnace would devour anyone who was thrown into it.

#### 2. The Response of the Jews – 3:16-18

*16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. <sup>17</sup> “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> “But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*

- The force of this paragraph is lack of fear on the part of the three men. It appears that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not even give Nebuchadnezzar time to order the

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<sup>1</sup> Newell, *Daniel*, 46.

<sup>2</sup> Note the similar attitude of Rabshakeh king of Assyria in Isaiah 36:13-20. Such passages should not be taken simply as arrogant boasts, but they reflect the pagan view of how the gods operated. Pagan kings had no basis to think that Israel’s God was any different.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

sounding of the music. They responded to him directly, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.” The statement indicates that to the young men Nebuchadnezzar’s consideration was irrelevant. They did not care what Nebuchadnezzar wanted or was able to do to them. This is the correct attitude toward governmental authority that all true believers in the God of heaven should have when confronted with the requirement to violate their responsibility toward Him.

- Vs. 17 and 18 indicate the correct view of God’s intervention in history: 1) God is able to intervene and 2) God is not required to intervene. It is significant that the answer contains a theological certainty. It is noteworthy that the youths did not ask God for deliverance, but accepted the consequences of their act with bravery and fortitude.
- Nor did the young men ask for time to think over the proposition. They had already thought through their doctrine and had determined to stand on it. No immediate situation could cause them undue alarm. The threat of death, while certainly onerous, carried no great concern because they believed in the God of heaven in the ultimate sense. Under no circumstance or threat would they change their theology to suit any man, even one who could throw them into a furnace. And since their theology was set, their actions could only be consistent with it. They would not compromise, they would not bow down, they would not worship.
- Some have suggested that from time to time spiritual compromise is necessary. They say, “If you don’t compromise, you will lose opportunity to do further good. You will not continue in your position, and many will not receive the benefit of your ministry.” This is not the way it works, spiritually speaking. Certainly the Hebrew youths did not think this way. If death is onerous, compromise is more so. It renders the life of the one who compromises meaningless. His influence is lessened the moment he compromises. Evidently Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed they were better off dead than giving in to a command that reduced God to a platitude, a by-word, a convenience. Potential consequences should never be a cause of compromise of one’s faith.

### **D. The Condemnation by Nebuchadnezzar – 3:19-23**

#### **1. The Expression of the Sentence of Death – 3:19-20**

*19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.<sup>20</sup> And he commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.*

- Nebuchadnezzar’s physical reaction shows his fury. His facial expression, undoubtedly an automatic reaction in light of the young men’s refusal, displayed his madness at their attitude.
- If this were a brick kiln, it is easy to see how Nebuchadnezzar could command that it be heated seven times hotter than usual. Kilns were heated with a measured amount of combustibles. By simply using seven times more, the effect would cause a flame approximately seven times hotter. King suggests that when Nebuchadnezzar lost his temper, he began to act foolishly. Instead of heating the furnace, he should have cooled it, thus prolonging the torment of his victims.<sup>1</sup>
- According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, the fiery furnace was most likely a brick kiln:  
The ‘fiery furnace’ into which Daniel’s three friends were cast as punishment...was very likely a brick-kiln, one of those that must have

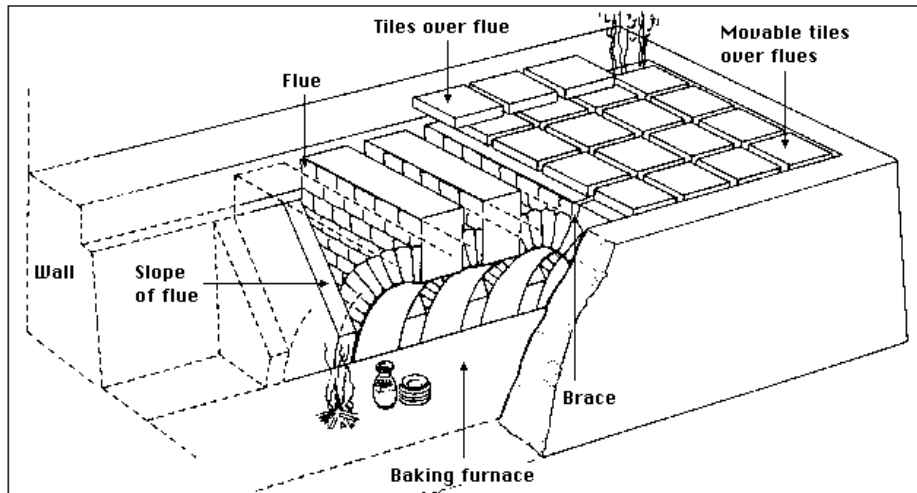
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<sup>1</sup> G. R. King, *Daniel*.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

supplied burnt bricks to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon.... Outside of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's cruel punishment is attested not only in Je. 29:22 but also by actual inscriptions: in a Babylonian letter of c. 1800 BC and in an Assyrian court regulation of c. 1130 BC. People were (or might be) thrown into a furnace as a punishment.... The practice is used as a comparison in Ps. 21:9.... The brick-kilns of ancient Babylonia may have looked like the large pottery kiln excavated in Nippur....

A pottery kiln, excavated at Nippur. (NBD p. 149)



### 2. The Execution of the Sentence of Death – 3:21-23

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. <sup>23</sup> But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

- The young men's statement interrupted the opportunity to again bow down to the image, and execution of sentence is carried out immediately. In their haste, the "mighty men" of Nebuchadnezzar's army did not strip off the clothes of their victims, which was the usual practice. This oversight will give evidence of the nature of the miraculous event later.
- The death of the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is significant. Some believe that the furnace must have "exploded" or a sudden gust of wind caught it. However, the text indicates that the reason they were killed was because the kiln had been made extremely hot. The point is this: the kiln was deadly even at something of a distance. The young men should have been dead before they were actually landed in the furnace.
- That he stated they were still tied is Daniel's setup to Nebuchadnezzar's response in the next verse. There should have been no movement to observe.

#### E. The Salvation of the Young Men – 3:24-27

##### 1. The Amazing Sight in the Fire – 3:24-25

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he responded and said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The amazement of Nebuchadnezzar is understandable. Daniel caught it well by presenting the silly question Nebuchadnezzar asked. He shouldn't have seen three men walking around in the furnace, much less four!
- Finally the king gets to the point. He saw where no one should be moving four men walking around loosed and unharmed in the fire. The fact that they were loosed may have indicated to Nebuchadnezzar that the ropes holding them had burned. At any rate, they themselves were not burning.
- The "fourth like a son of the gods" may have been the pre-incarnate Christ, but this view is not required by Nebuchadnezzar's statement, the KJV translation notwithstanding. Unless we can attribute to Nebuchadnezzar insight beyond human sight, his statement cannot be taken as a testimony to the Trinitarian doctrine of the Son. In fact, his statement indicates that the fourth individual is simply different than the three, and he took that difference to be supernatural. It may have been an angel of God who are sometimes tasked with visiting earth and performing miraculous deeds. At least vs. 28 below indicates that Nebuchadnezzar thought so. He may have been correct, for certainly the young men do not correct him.
- God does not require an agent to perform miraculous events. The fourth individual was primarily for Nebuchadnezzar's benefit, not the young men's. And it is Nebuchadnezzar that we see responding to this miraculous image. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar and his advisors to see a fourth figure so that they would come to the obvious conclusion that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is in the process of delivering them, a thing he had just previously stated was impossible. The intention of God in allowing a pagan king and his advisors to see the fourth image, whether of the pre-incarnate Christ, or of an angel, is to prove to them that He had in fact intervened as the young men said that He could.

### 2. The Strange Command of Nebuchadnezzar – 3:26a

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

- Certainly Nebuchadnezzar could never have thought he would make such a strange command. The young men should be dead, not able to respond to even a king's command. Yet we find Nebuchadnezzar calling into a furnace and commanding the youths to come out.
- Again, the reference by Nebuchadnezzar to "the Most High God" does not mean that he had abandoned his polytheistic assumptions. He was, at this time, still a believer that the God of Israel was simply the highest of all Gods, not the only God, the God of Heaven as Daniel had called Him in chapter 2.

### 3. The Total Deliverance of the Israelites – 3:26b-27

*26b Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.*

- The purpose for the description of the delivered youths is clear. Their condition coming out of the furnace was as though they had not been in the furnace at all. The miracle extended beyond the saving of their lives. It included evidence that they had not come into contact with the fire. And that is probably what happened. God had, through His agent, kept the heat, the flames and the smoke away from them.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### F. The Reaction of Nebuchadnezzar – 3:28-30

#### 1. The Blessing of Nebuchadnezzar – 3:28

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

- Nebuchadnezzar blessed God because He sent His angel (messenger) to deliver the youths. This was exactly the response God had intended and determined that Nebuchadnezzar would have. The agent of deliverance convinced Nebuchadnezzar of the unique character of the Hebrew God. It did not necessarily bring him to a place of exclusive faith in God, but it brought him to the place of acknowledging the supernatural character of God.
- The nature of this blessing is that Nebuchadnezzar is holding the God of the youths in high esteem, not that he has become an exclusive believer in Him as were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. However, God is bringing Nebuchadnezzar along. He is undoubtedly being given information about the God of Heaven that will affect the entire rest of his reign and even result, perhaps in his own faith for justification. The immediate result is a typical potentate’s decree, but one which was brought about by the sovereign intervention of God.

#### 2. The Decree of Nebuchadnezzar – 3:29

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

- The ultimate result of this decree was the protection of Israelites under Babylonian rule. No longer could individuals or groups such as the Chaldeans bring accusation against an Israelite because he operated in the name of Yahweh or acted in accordance with Yahweh’s requirements. Whatever the provocation, Israelites were now free to practice their faith apart from any interference. This situation only lasted as long as the Nebuchadnezzar ruled. Later, under the rule of the Medes and Persians, this principle of protection for God’s people had to be reaffirmed.

#### 3. The Prosperity of the Young Men – 3:30

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

- As befitting his new respect for the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar now made the three young men prosper. The fact of their prosperity, however, is not the point to the story. This event is not to be taken to teach that if a person is faithful to God, God will automatically cause him to prosper in his physical or financial circumstances. Rather, this event, and its aftermath, is a segue into the set events presented in the next chapter.

### IV. Nebuchadnezzar’s Declaration to All Mankind – 4:1-27

- This chapter records the third of three events that indicate God’s protection of His people while in Babylonian exile. The first two are the dream event in Chapter 2, and the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Chapter 3. This chapter continues the process.
- The events of this chapter are thought to be some years after the events of chapters two and three. Nebuchadnezzar is “at ease” and “flourishing in his palace” (verse 4).
- The attempt by some conservatives to make this chapter actually be a “type” of the destruction of the Gentiles, or else the end of the Babylonian empire, sound weak when

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

placed in the historical situation in which they are found. Nebuchadnezzar was “flourishing<sup>1</sup> in his palace.” His wars of conquest were done, and he had, from his perspective, built a wondrous empire.

- The obvious result of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience is the preservation of the people of Israel because of the determination by Nebuchadnezzar that Israel’s God was not to be opposed.

### A. The Introduction by Nebuchadnezzar – 4:1-3

#### 1. Salutation – 4:1

*1 NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: “May your peace abound!”*

- Nebuchadnezzar identifies himself as king. The term, in this case, is absolute. He is the potentate of the Empire. There were other kings in the empire, but they were vassals to Nebuchadnezzar. In that sense he may be considered the first true emperor, although the Chaldean language had no word for that position.
- The recipients of this declaration include all that Nebuchadnezzar had conquered, or had control of. Interestingly he mentions men of every language, which causes one to wonder if this decree were not translated and circulated through the empire to every language group.
- The phrase “in all the earth” indicates the king’s understanding of the extent of civilization. To him, in his personal ignorance, Babylonian was all there was. Yet, from a civilization perspective, Nebuchadnezzar had a point. God had chosen His people Israel to inhabit land in Nebuchadnezzar’s part of the world, which brings the importance of the Near East to the world in perfect focus.

#### 2. Explanation – 4:2-3

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

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

- The term “Most High God” does not mean either that Nebuchadnezzar has come to justifying faith in the God of heaven, or that he hasn’t. Only the context of this chapter can answer that question. The Aramaic words use correspond to the Hebrew *Elyon* or *El Elyon*, and are uttered in Daniel 3:26 by Nebuchadnezzar. The question is whether Nebuchadnezzar evidences belief in God, not the phrase he uses to identify God.
- Five statements indicate Nebuchadnezzar’s *faith system*.
  1. God’s signs are great, probably meaning that they are beyond misunderstanding or other interpretation. This is quite an admission from someone who had dealt all his life with the vagaries of the pagan system of Babylon. He understands that God performed these miracles for him personally, which, in his mind, would have put the person of Nebuchadnezzar under an obligation.
  2. God’s wonders are mighty. This is a recognition of God’s power. Unlike the idols of Babylon, the God of Israel actually performs wonders outside the ability of man, wonders which the king had personally experienced.

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<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic word translated “flourishing” comes from a root that means “to be green.” While it is too much to say, as Walvoord and others do, that this word anticipates the dream of the tree, etc., it does show the Chaldean way of thinking about prosperity. Inherent in the Semitic language approach to general prosperity is the comparison to a healthy growth of green plants.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

3. God's kingdom is everlasting. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes two things in this statement: a) Israel's God is king over this creation, and b) this kingship authority will not come to an end. Nebuchadnezzar thereby recognizes Yahweh's sovereignty over His universal kingdom, that kingdom which consists of all creation, and every being within the creation.
4. God's sovereign dominion continues from generation to generation. The statement indicates that Nebuchadnezzar had realized that he is one in a long line of those in authority who are actually operating under God, whether they realize it or not. It appears that the king of Babylon is coming to understand his mediatorial responsibility to the God of heaven.
- This statement is a far cry from the self-assured arrogance that marked Nebuchadnezzar previously. There is definitely a theology shift in the king's thinking. Herein is evidence that Nebuchadnezzar had come to faith in God. Some object to this because of the phraseology he uses later, namely the phrases "spirit of the gods," and "my god" referring to Bel. They believe that he is not believing in the God of Israel in the justifying sense at all. They make the statement in this verse simply an acknowledgment that God is the best of many Gods. However, see the comments below on vs. 8.
- It is likely that the events that follow in this chapter happened before Nebuchadnezzar's statement in verses 1-3.

### **B. The Presentation of the Dream – 4:4-17**

#### **1. Nebuchadnezzar's Alarm because of a Dream – 4:4-5**

*4 "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. <sup>5</sup> "I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.*

- As stated above, this event seems to be some time after the close of Nebuchadnezzar's wars of conquest. While there is nothing directly stated in the context to indicate the exact date, it must have been some years into Nebuchadnezzar's reign. He was evidently otherwise untroubled, which indicates that there were probably no serious enemies on the horizon, at least internationally. Probably most of his enemies were in his own court, but he was so well established that even after his lapse into insanity, they dared not attempt to usurp his authority, or even quietly put him out of the way.
- This second dream of Nebuchadnezzar's (see chapter 2 for the first) would be classified today as a nightmare. The emotional reaction of the king is reminiscent of someone waking from a terrible dream in fear and alarm.
- Nebuchadnezzar's immediate reaction was to lie awake, unable to sleep, and remain in an alarmed state.

#### **2. Nebuchadnezzar's Orders for the Wise Men – 4:6-7**

*6 "So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. <sup>7</sup> "Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in, and I related the dream to them; but they could not make its interpretation known to me.*

- At this point the king returns to his old patterns. He calls for the ineffective group known collectively as wise men to interpret the dream from him. However, they fail to do so. Again Daniel is not among the wise men. It seems that Daniel kept himself separate from this group, over which he had charge. The wisdom of this is apparent. Their failure as a group enhances Daniel's success as a true interpreter of dreams. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar did not want Daniel present. He probably recognized the ominous import of the dream, and

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

may have even recognized Israel's God as the source of the dream. As Young says, "With this God Neb[uchadnezzar], as yet, wanted no dealings."<sup>1</sup>

- The king tells the wise men his dream, in contrast to his practice in the second chapter. He knew by this time that they could not tell him the dream.
- Some have pointed out that the wise men do not attempt to foist an interpretation on the king. Perhaps the events of chapters 2 and 3 had taught them caution. For whatever reason, the providence of God is evident in the situation, which can only be resolved through one man, Daniel.

### 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Reliance on Daniel – 4:8-9

*8 "But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, <sup>9</sup> 'O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.*

- At the time of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar's god was Bel, sometimes called Marduk. All indications are that Nebuchadnezzar changed gods after spending seven years in insanity.
- Both the Hebrew *Daniel* and the Babylonian *Belteshazzar* are used undoubtedly to make sure that the recipients knew to whom Nebuchadnezzar was referring.
- As "chief of magicians" Daniel was undoubtedly held to a high standard. The term as used by Nebuchadnezzar is a positive one, indicating his confidence in Daniel's abilities. It also indicates Daniel's authority, being in charge of the wise men. The term "magician" probably has here more than an occult or religious meaning. Daniel held a position that today we would call "chief scientist" or "chief scholar."<sup>2</sup> Still, the word translated magician carries a definite mystical sense. It evidently had originally the idea of a writer or scribe, someone who was an intellectual in some sense, and perhaps that is from where Leupold and Walvoord derive their idea. But the word came to be used of magicians, and perhaps astrologers, as ones who advised the king. Evidently some modern minds find this uncomfortable.
- That Daniel was the chief of magicians indicated authority over others. But it was a position to which Daniel was appointed, and from his perspective, the title was probably held ironically. He certainly held no superstitious views, which was the basis for the false Babylonian religion. Daniel was a man with a high view of Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He held no truck with the false religion, which Nebuchadnezzar may have ascribed to him. It is to Daniel's credit that he never took advantage of his exalted position for personal gain. Nor did he ever attempt to mislead or otherwise provide information designed to give Nebuchadnezzar comfort. He always told the truth, as a prophet of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, *Daniel*, pg. 100.

<sup>2</sup> To this Leupold evidently concurs. See Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 101. It seems to me to be stretching for a comforting point because of who Daniel was, and because of his relationship to God. Daniel himself was not responsible for the title given him, and there is no basis for believing that he would have rejected the position just to console modern thinkers.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Dr. Pentecost and others hold that because Nebuchadnezzar uses the phrase “spirit of the holy<sup>1</sup> gods<sup>2</sup>” in his appreciation of Daniel, that the king was not a true believer, but still a polytheist. Is he? The reader must realize that the king is recounting an event *before* his insanity, and is recounting that experience after the fact. This statement does not necessarily reflect Nebuchadnezzar’s belief after his insanity is relieved.
- It is difficult to see how Nebuchadnezzar could make the statements attributed to him later in this chapter and remain a polytheist *in the same sense that he was before*. Does the lapse into the conventional language of the time prove that Nebuchadnezzar was an unbeliever and destined to the resurrection of unbelievers? Such a view is highly doubtful. The ultimate question is what did God require by way of faith in order for a pagan such as Nebuchadnezzar to be justified. Does He require a complete and total theology as a correct object of faith? No conservative would argue such, as all of us grow in our understanding of God after salvation.
- Some argue, perhaps assume, that God did, at this time, require a pagan to give up his polytheistic assumptions. The question then arises, “To what extent must they be given up?” A culture such as Babylon was inundated with references to the gods. Must all these expressions and references be given up totally, in order for a person to be justified in God’s sight? This smacks of “works salvation” and is a conclusion devoutly to be avoided. How much must one “clean up his language” in order for him to be considered sincere in a culture when such a “clean up” is virtually impossible?
- Is Nebuchadnezzar’s required object of faith that the God of Israel is, as He claims, the sovereign God over the affairs of men? Or is it that He is the only God who exists? Or is it a combination of these two? The question becomes more difficult when put in this light. Certainly no direct statement is made in Daniel itself as to what the object of faith was, unless we take for granted that God’s revelation of Himself and His program for the Gentiles is indeed the object of faith. Today it is certainly correct to say that a person cannot hold to more than one God and be justified. But was that the requirement that God laid on Nebuchadnezzar? Is it possible that the object of faith was simply that Israel’s God was who He claimed, and it was to be left for later teaching by Daniel and others that would bring Nebuchadnezzar further into line with a correct view of who God actually is?
- The most likely conclusion to which one can come is that as a result of the events of this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar became a justified individual in the sight of God. While undoubtedly not perfect in his understanding of God or all that God requires, that Nebuchadnezzar must hold to all the tenants of a modern monotheist system in order to be justified is untenable. And nothing in his statements after his recovery precludes the idea that he did indeed become a monotheist.

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<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic word translated *holy* (קֳדִישׁ) corresponds to the Hebrew word of the same English translation (קֳדֹשׁ). Concerning the use of the word here, Young states, “The epithet *holy* does not here have reference to moral purity, but is, rather, roughly equivalent to our word “divine.” *Daniel*, pg. 99. He gives no reason for this assumption. The basic meaning of *holy* is *separated*, and therefore *unlike anything else*. In the ultimate sense, it can only be used of the true God, for the gods of Babylon were very close to the gods of other pagans, not at all unique.

<sup>2</sup> Young (*Daniel*, pg. 99), along with Montgomery, holds that the word “gods” is rightly taken as a singular “God.” This is certainly possible because middle eastern Semitic languages do recognize such use, as is seen in the Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים. However, the Babylonians had multiple deities, and the plural seems more fitting, and even more accurate.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Nebuchadnezzar had absolute confidence in Daniel's ability to interpret the dream, which Daniel proceeds to again demonstrate.

### 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Description of the Dream – 4:10-17

#### a. The Large Tree – 4:10-12

10 *'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. <sup>11</sup> 'The tree grew large and became strong, And its height reached to the sky, And it was visible to the end of the whole earth. <sup>12</sup> 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, And all living creatures fed themselves from it.*

- Evidently in the dream the tree<sup>1</sup> started large and grew larger. In the imagery of the dream, since the tree “reached to the sky” it was visible everywhere on earth. The tree had beautiful leaves and fruit was sufficient to feed everyone, including animals and birds, as well as “all living creatures.”
- As we will see, the tree clearly represents Nebuchadnezzar himself, not his kingdom, though some have extended it to the political realm of the feeding of all living creatures. The purpose of the overall experience is to bring Nebuchadnezzar to a new understanding, not to punish him, or remove him from power.

#### b. The Angelic Command – 4:13-17

##### 1) The Identity of the Holy Messenger – 4:13

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

- The identity of the “angelic watcher”<sup>2</sup> has been much debated. Suffice it to say that a spirit being of some kind appeared to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream. The fact that he does not tell how he knows it to be a spirit being is irrelevant. It is the nature of dreams that such information is built into the imagery. It is not necessary to tell how one knows something, one simply knows! However, realize that this is not an actual angelic visitation, but simply a dream in which a spirit being of some kind appears.<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary to take the significance beyond this.
- The clear statement that the messenger “descended from heaven” indicates that the dream had *heavenly significance* which Nebuchadnezzar was to grasp.<sup>4</sup>

##### 2) The Command of the Holy Watcher – 4:14-16

14 *'He shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it, And the birds from its branches. <sup>15</sup> "Yet*

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<sup>1</sup> In Ezekiel 31 a cedar of Lebanon is used to symbolize the leaders of Egypt and Assyria. Such imagery was evidently common in ancient times. See Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 101 for several examples.

<sup>2</sup> The term “angelic watcher” is an inaccurate translation of the Aramaic. A better rendering would be “a holy watcher.” The Aramaic word “watcher” comes from a root that means to be wakeful, perhaps a play on words referring to the result of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, i.e. his sleeplessness.

<sup>3</sup> “Watcher” is probably Nebuchadnezzar's expression to refer to a supernatural creature. His theological background was pagan, and the term “angel” as we use it today would have been foreign to him.

<sup>4</sup> That heaven was the place of the divine was held by several pagan religions as well as by the true biblical faith. Nebuchadnezzar would have understood that the message he received is from heaven, and therefore divine in origin. Add to this the fact that Daniel and his friends had used the phrase “God of heaven” to Nebuchadnezzar to refer to Yahweh, it is likely that the king put the correct significance on the idea of someone from heaven.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

*leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.* <sup>16</sup> *“Let his mind be changed from that of a man, And let a beast’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.*

- The dream is extremely detailed. That Nebuchadnezzar would remember the detail is amazing, as most dreams begin to fade as soon as the person awakens. This detail speaks to the fact that this is an important revelation from God and his memory supernaturally induced. The intricate interpretation below also indicates its importance.

### 3) The Purpose of the Holy Watcher – 4:17

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

- Even though the dream entails predictions concerning Nebuchadnezzar, the purpose is not simply to foretell events. The whole sequence is to develop an understanding about God. In other words, the purpose is doctrinal and theological, not historical.
- The purpose has a three-fold emphasis:
  1. The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind. This is a statement of God’s universal kingship. The very title *Most High* presents the uniqueness of the God of heaven. Clearly this purpose was realized as indicated by Nebuchadnezzar’s acknowledgment in vs. 2 above.
  2. The Most High bestows His rule on whom He wishes. Nebuchadnezzar is intended to realize that his arrogance is misplaced. He is the recipient of God’s bestowal of his position.
  3. God sets over the realm of mankind the lowliest of men. The KJV translates the word *lowliest* as *basest*. God’s clear intention is to bring Nebuchadnezzar down from his arrogant heights. He is but the lowliest of men, and certainly did not receive his kingship because of high personal qualities.

### C. The Expectation of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:18

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

- Nebuchadnezzar repeats his confidence in Daniel. Again he makes the statement that the spirit of the holy gods is in Daniel. Whatever he means by “the holy gods” (see above) Nebuchadnezzar clearly distinguished between his wise men as a group and Daniel as an individual.

### D. The Explanation by Daniel – 4:19-27

#### 1. Daniel’s Concern – 4:19

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

- Literally, Daniel was “astonished for an hour.” The phrase is probably a figure of speech indicating an uncomfortably long period. How Daniel reacted externally is not recorded, but he evidently delayed telling Nebuchadnezzar the bad news.
- Daniel’s concern has been variously interpreted.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

1. Some think he was afraid for himself, which is highly unlikely.
  2. Others hold that he was concerned for Nebuchadnezzar personally. This is possible, but his concern must have gone beyond his personal concern for Nebuchadnezzar.
  3. Yet others believe that Daniel was concerned for his people, Israel. This is the most likely reason for his hesitation. Knowing as he did the meaning of the dream, he must have been concerned that for seven years he and his people would be without the direct protective oversight of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Nebuchadnezzar's indication to Daniel that he not be alarmed probably shows that Nebuchadnezzar realized through Daniel's deportment that the interpretation was not a positive one. Nevertheless, he wanted to know its meaning.
  - Daniel's statement indicates that the dream applies to Nebuchadnezzar and not his enemies. That a man in Nebuchadnezzar's position would have enemies, let no one doubt. His despotism is well established both biblically and historically. Naturally, Nebuchadnezzar's enemies would have been against Daniel and Israel, as the events concerning the fiery furnace prove.

### 2. The Tree's Symbolism – 4:20-22

20 *'The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth,* <sup>21</sup> *and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—* <sup>22</sup> *it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.*

- The basic elements of the dream are clear. The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar. His rule is prosperous for all who enjoy its benefits. His kingdom is to the ends of the earth. Such hyperbole is understandable in such a situation.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Messenger's Statement – 4:23-26

#### a) The Command Expressed – 4:23

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

- This simple repetition of the dream is to remind the king and the reader of the previous explanation by Nebuchadnezzar. The iron and bronze band on the stump is probably a symbol that the tree will be preserved.<sup>2</sup>

#### b) The Interpretation Provided – 4:24-26

24 *this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> that you be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and*

<sup>1</sup> People of Nebuchadnezzar's day realized that there was land area and people over which Nebuchadnezzar held no sway. Nevertheless, the "civilized world" as they saw it is accurately, if hyperbolically, addressed as that which extends to the "ends of the earth."

<sup>2</sup> Tatford sees the band as a way of keeping the stump from splitting, therefore preserving it for later restoration. Joyce Baldwin says, "...Too little is known of tree culture in the Ancient Near East for the practice of placing metal bounds round the stumps of trees to be verifiable or its purpose explained." However, later Baldwin seems to adopt the idea that the band was placed around the tree stump for protection.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

*bestows it on whomever He wishes.* <sup>26</sup> *‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.*

- Daniel asserts that this is the decree of the Most High. Note that Daniel uses the same phrase to refer to God as Nebuchadnezzar did earlier.
- The following elements make up the interpretation of the dream:
  1. Nebuchadnezzar would no longer live among men, but among beasts.
  2. Nebuchadnezzar would not eat the food of men, but grass in the field.
  3. Nebuchadnezzar would live and sleep in the open.
  4. All this would take place for seven “periods of time,” presumably years.
  5. Nebuchadnezzar would acknowledge God’s sovereignty over the earth, the realm of mankind, and gives it to whomever He decides.
  6. After the seven times, Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to power, having come to recognize the priority of heaven over the earth.
  7. Heaven rules! This is the only time in the Old Testament that the term “heaven” is used for the idea that God rules over earth. By New Testament times this concept was well founded, perhaps being taken from this statement. The idea is simply that the rule of heaven is superior to the rule of earth. It is a way of putting the earthly dominion of Nebuchadnezzar in its rightful place.

### 4. Daniel’s Application – 4:27

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

- Daniel’s counsel to the king has two parts: In order to “prolong his prosperity” Nebuchadnezzar must cease sinning, and begin doing righteous acts. This is a general requirement. Specifically, because of Nebuchadnezzar’s position as king, he must show mercy to the poor. It was the common view of the day that the poor got what they deserved.
- The issue is not the king’s salvation, but his being prolonged in prosperity. Daniel does not say that by performing righteousness the king will be justified.

### E. The Denigration of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:28-33

#### 1. The King’s Royal Arrogance – 4:28-30

*28 “All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. <sup>29</sup> “Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. <sup>30</sup> “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’*

- Evidently Nebuchadnezzar ignored Daniel’s encouragement to turn from his sins and iniquities. Even a year later that attitude which prompted the dream remained. The key is found in Nebuchadnezzar’s claim that he built Babylon by his own might and for his own glory. He had learned nothing from the dream. But he was about to learn a great deal.
- Flat roofs were used as “patios” for the inhabitants. Certainly Nebuchadnezzar’s was the best view in the city.
- Archaeological evidence confirms the magnificence of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. It was a huge city, made mostly of ceramic bricks, but with some stone work. In the city were the famous Semiramis gardens. They were built on building terraces, evidently in the administrative center of the city, which would also house Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. The so-

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

called “hanging gardens of Babylon” are considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They served not only a decorative purpose, but they helped keep the interiors of the buildings cool in the extreme heat of the Mesopotamian summer.

- Joyce Baldwin remarks concerning Nebuchadnezzar’s statement that he built Babylon:

Labourers on the project might have been excused, however, for regarding with some cynicism the king’s claims to have built the city, and oppression did not to increase the glory of his majesty.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. God’s Sovereign Determination – 4:31-32

31 *“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, <sup>32</sup> and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’*

- Note the statement by statement fulfillment of the dream:
  1. Nebuchadnezzar’s personal sovereignty is removed.
  2. He will be driven from mankind.
  3. He will live in the open with animals.
  4. He will eat grass like a bovine.
  5. The time period for this is seven periods of time.
  6. He will learn intended the lesson concerning God’s rule over the realm of men.
- This six-fold lesson will be learned, and Nebuchadnezzar’s viewpoint will change perceptively.

### 3. The Prophecy’s Immediate Fulfillment – 4:33

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

- Added to the previous descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar’s condition is the fact that his hair and nails had grown to resemble a bird’s. The emphasis is on the degradation of the proud monarch. Not only does he act like a beast, he begins to look like a bird.
- Many scholars believe that Nebuchadnezzar actually spent this time of insanity in the palace gardens and out of public sight. However, the text states that he was driven from the presence of men. Probably he was exposed to the elements and his enemies simply expected him to die out in the fields.
- “He was driven” implies an outside agent. No statement indicates that the agent was human, and indeed, when the period of time was over, the people around Nebuchadnezzar had not moved to remove him from office. This may have been of Daniel’s doing, seeing his high position in the court of the king. At any rate, the best explanation is that it was God who drove Nebuchadnezzar, not human beings.
- As noted, one wonders if Daniel did not take the lead in caring for Nebuchadnezzar’s affairs during this period. Someone must have preserved Nebuchadnezzar’s place who knew of the prophecy, and could see its literal realization. The most likely person was Daniel himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, *Daniel*, pg. 114.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Nebuchadnezzar's insanity was supernaturally ordered. There are cases of similar behavior in modern medical texts, but it is unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar was suffering from what is called either *zoanthropica* or *boanthropy*. Nebuchadnezzar's condition came and went on the proclamation of God, not as the result of an illness entered and subsequently cured.

### F. The Conversion of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:34-37

#### 1. The Return to Reason – 4:34a

34 *“But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me.*

- “At the end of that period” refers to the predictive period. Clearly Nebuchadnezzar, having realized the events predicted in his dream, believed that his insanity was not a normal disease, but the result of supernatural intervention for a prophetic period of time.

#### 2. The Blessing of God – 4:34b-35

*And I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> “And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’*

- Tatford says concerning Nebuchadnezzar's recovery and subsequent blessing:

The lesson had been finally and completely absorbed, and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God as the one whose dominion was everlasting and Whose rule extended through all generations, permanent and immutable in character. All other rule...must be derived from Him and the Babylonian monarch no longer boasted of *his* kingdom or *his* might, since he realized the complete supremacy of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup>
- It is difficult to see anything other than a legitimate conversion on Nebuchadnezzar's part. Those that object to this view indicate that there is not enough evidence to form this conclusion. How much evidence is necessary to prove his conversion is left unsaid. What would Nebuchadnezzar have had to say to convince people that he had become a justified believer in the God of Israel? Nothing in this statement refers to his previous belief that the God of heaven is but one of many Gods. It is not only possible, but highly likely, that, instructed by Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar became a believing, and therefore justified, Gentile.

### G. The Restoration of Nebuchadnezzar – 4:36-37

#### 1. God Restores Nebuchadnezzar's Earthly Sovereignty – 4:36

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

- In fulfillment of the prediction of his restoration, Nebuchadnezzar regained control of Babylon. The specific mention of his “counselors” and “nobles” indicate the complete restoration of his authority over Babylon.

#### 2. Nebuchadnezzar Recognizes God's Heavenly Sovereignty – 4:37

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

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<sup>1</sup> Fredrick A. Tatford, *Daniel and his Prophecy*, pg. 78.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Nebuchadnezzar “honors the king of heaven.” This is not a formulaic and therefore pagan response to his condition. The whole incident is designed to bring Nebuchadnezzar to the conclusion that God is the king of heaven, and that heaven rules over the earth. Baldwin states, “This impersonal reference to God keeps Him at a distance, and this last word of Nebuchadnezzar in the book, while formally acknowledging the power and justice of God, appears to fall short of penitence and true faith.”<sup>1</sup> Such a view is without foundation, and misunderstands the purpose for the entire chapter. Again, one wonders what Nebuchadnezzar must say to convince people of his faith in God.
- God brought Nebuchadnezzar literally to his knees for certain purposes, namely:
  1. To establish in the king’s mind the sovereignty of God, and thereby;
  2. To lay the groundwork in history for the preservation of exiled Israel. God’s purposes were fulfilled in the most dramatic and straightforward way possible. The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to the sovereign God of heaven ensured a positive appreciation of Israel’s God, and therefore of Israel itself during the remainder of the Babylonian period.<sup>2</sup>

### V. God’s Revelation during Belshazzar’s Feast – 5:1-31

- The kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire are as follows:
  1. Nebopolassar (627-605 BC).
  2. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC).
  3. Evil-Merodach (562-560 BC).
  4. Neriglissar (560-556 BC).
  5. Labashi-Marduk<sup>3</sup> (May-June 556 BC).
  6. Nabonidus (556-539 BC) with Belshazzar (553-539 BC)
- Chapter four took place sometime before 562 BC, the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Chapter five takes place in 539 BC while Belshazzar was co-regent with his father Nabonidus. Therefore, there is some twenty-four to twenty-five years between chapters four and five.
- Chapters seven and eight also fit during the twenty-five year gap between chapters four and five.
- The purpose for chapter five is to show the historical continuity through which captive Israel went in order to be in position for their soon return to the land of Canaan. The supernatural event of the handwriting shows that these events are both providential and supernatural, and are in line with God’s preservation of His people Israel.

#### A. The Situation Described – 5:1-4

##### 1. The Thousand-Guest Feast – 5:1-2

*1 BELSHAZZAR the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. <sup>2</sup> When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver*

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, *Daniel*, pg. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Both the story of Daniel in the den of lions, and the book of Esther were written to show how God preserved Israel during the period of the Medo-Persian empire.

<sup>3</sup> Also called Laborosoarchod. He was the son of Neriglissar. Authorities differ in the length of the young man’s reign, ranging from two to nine months. The shorter span is given in this paragraph. However long his reign, he appears to have been beaten to death by a group of conspirators, Nabonidus, his successor, being among them. Nabonidus was defeated by Cyrus the Persian in battle, and fled Babylon to Borsippa, where he surrendered to Cyrus.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

- Chapter five begins with the introduction of a new king. Nebuchadnezzar was dead, and Belshazzar, who was presumably his legitimate successor, is king. Three previous kings had reigned before Belshazzar and his father Nabonidas became the co-rulers of Babylon. Belshazzar does not know Daniel, as becomes clear by subsequent statements.
- Modern scholarship generally holds that Babylon was under siege by Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, a province of the Medo Persian Empire.<sup>1</sup>
- The strange picture of a great feast being held during the last days of a great war may well speak to the fatalism of Belshazzar and his guests. Some believe that Belshazzar had undue faith in the thickness of the city walls,<sup>2</sup> and the fact that there was plenty of food available to hold out during the siege.
- Who was Belshazzar? Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century his identity was unknown. Many liberal critics assumed that he was a fictional character. Since the discovery of the “Nabonidus Cylinder” such criticism can no longer be sustained.<sup>3</sup>
- Was Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar’s father as mentioned in vs. 2? He was most probably the direct son of Nabonidus. But it is possible that Nabonidus married Nebuchadnezzar’s widow to legitimize his claim to the throne. If this were true, Belshazzar would have been Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson. Since there was no separate word for “grandfather” in Chaldean, the word “father” also meant “grandfather.” It is also possible that the word is being used metaphorically. Even Elisha called Elijah his father, even though there was no direct lineage between the two. It was used in the sense of “legitimate successor” and perhaps has that meaning here.
- A thousand guests was not necessarily a huge feast for an oriental king of that time. Compared to Alexander’s later feasts of 10,000 or more, it seems somewhat modest.

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<sup>1</sup> “Ugbaru, a former general of Nebuchadnezzar who had defected to the Persians, is not to be confused with Gubaru, a governor of Babylon under the Medo-Persian empire. The term ‘Darius the Mede’ may have been applied to both men. Some think that the name “Darius” is a title rather than a proper name. According to Gleason L. Archer, ‘No cuneiform record states the nationality of Gubaru as Persian; this assertion is found only in the Greek historians, Herodotus and Xenophon, who are demonstrably inaccurate regarding the capture of Babylon in 539. They confused the elderly general, Ugbaru of Gutium (who performed this feat by stratagem and who died a few months afterward) with Gubaru, the ruler who governed Babylon after the death of Ugbaru and continued in office at least until the fifth year of Cambyses (525 BC). Aalders endorses this interpretation of the data, pointing out that Gubaru-Darius probably did not carry the title of king beyond a few months, or possibly a year. Cyrus himself, having completed his military operations elsewhere, was then able to make a proper triumphal entrance into Babylon and formally receive the crown and title of king over all the Babylonian domains. Gubaru remained on as his deputy, however, even after that event. Daniel therefore refers to no later year of Darius’s reign than his first (9:1), and thereafter dates his public service (1:21) and his visions (10:1) by the reign years of ‘Cyrus, king of Persia.’ Hammer takes no notice of the dictum of Albright: ‘It seems to me highly probable that Gobryas did actually assume the royal dignity along with the name “Darius,” perhaps an old Iranian title, while Cyrus was absent on a European campaign.’” (*Biblioteca Sacra*, Vol. 136 #542, April 1979, “Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel” q. v.)

<sup>2</sup> The city was surrounded by a 17 mile long wall, of great enough thickness that chariots could travel over its top. Periodic towers as high as one hundred feet helped defend the city. In addition, the Euphrates River ran through the city’s middle with tree lined on both sides.

<sup>3</sup> R. P. Dougherty discusses this issue at length in his work *Belshazzar and Nabonidus* (Yale Oriental Series, XV, 1929.) It is typical of liberal “scholarship” that they remain unconvinced of truth unless it conforms to their natural understanding. They have been shown repeatedly to be wrong, yet they persist in their unbelief.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

According to Walvoord, “M. E. L. Mallowan mentions the great feast that Ashurnasirpal II gave to 69,574 guests when he dedicated his new capital city of Calah (Nimrud) in 879 BC.”<sup>1</sup>

- According to Pentecost, “Archaeologists have excavated a large hall in Babylon 55 feet wide and 165 feet long that had plastered walls. Such a room would have been sufficient to house a gathering of this size.”<sup>2</sup>
- The gold and silver vessels of the Jerusalem temple were brought out for this feast. The implication is that they had been held in storage in the King’s treasure house until then. One can assume that Nebuchadnezzar was to be disciplined to mock God and Israel by having drinking bouts using them.

### 2. The Valuable Temple Vessels – 5:3-4

*3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. <sup>4</sup> They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*

- By this time, whatever good will that Nebuchadnezzar had for the Israelite captives had disappeared. The scene is one of disrespect and debauchery.
- The desecration of the temple vessels is seen in the praise of pagan gods of various materials. This probably refers to the material out of which these idols were made, rather than the significance of their worship.

### B. The Inscription Observed – 5:5-9

#### 1. A Man’s Fingers – 5:5

*5 Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.*

- The sudden appearance of fingers writing is specifically stated to be “opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall.” The light from the lampstand would therefore have illuminated the event for all to see.
- Two parts of the hand are identified, the fingers and the back of the hand. One presumes they were of normal size, but disembodied. For such a superstitious people the effects must have been enormous.

#### 2. The King’s Response – 5:6-7

*6 Then the king’s face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together. <sup>7</sup> The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, “Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me will be clothed with purple, and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom.”*

- The almost comical reaction of the pagan king is described in vs. 6. The physical description of his terrible fear is vivid, and any who have been greatly afraid can empathize with the pale face, and the weakness in the hips and knees. Evidently Belshazzar was shaking in fear to the extent that his knees literally began knocking together.
- Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar calls for his “wise men.” The reward for reading the inscriptions and telling its interpretation is ample. Being clothed with purple, the royal color,

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg 117. (The well-known archaeologist M. E. L. Mallowan was the 2<sup>nd</sup> husband of the great mystery novelist Agatha Christie.)

<sup>2</sup> Pentecost, “Daniel,” in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Electronic Edition. E-sword. Hereafter BKC.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

and having a gold necklace were both symbols of authority. Belshazzar could only make the interpreter third in the kingdom because Nabonidus, his father, was first, and Belshazzar himself was second.

### 3. The Wise Men's Inability – 5:8-9

*8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. <sup>9</sup> Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.*

- Since the wise men could not read or interpret the writing Belshazzar was even more fearful. The unprecedented nature of the event baffled not only the wise men, but the nobility at the feast.

### C. The Prophet Summoned – 5:10-12

#### 1. The Identification of the Queen – 5:10

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

- Who was this queen? Various ideas exist as to her identity.
  1. She was Belshazzar's main wife. But, because she was not at the feast, it is thought that she was not Belshazzar's wife. His consorts are mentioned in vs. 2 as his wives and concubines. His main wife, who would be designated queen, would have been one of these.
  2. She was Nebuchadnezzar's widow, and possibly either Belshazzar's mother or grandmother, Nabonidus' wife. This is more likely. Her knowledge of Daniel, whom Belshazzar and his entourage did not know, indicates someone intimately familiar with earlier events. According to this view, she the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, whom Nabonidus had married to legitimize his reign.
  3. She was a sister of Nebuchadnezzar, and possibly Belshazzar's mother, whom Nabonidus had married, also to legitimize his reign.
  4. She was one of the two preceding, but not Belshazzar's mother. According to this view Belshazzar's mother would have been another wife of Nabonidus, and he had no children by this queen.
- Clearly no definite answer can be given regarding the identity of this queen. She was not at the feast, and is not included as one of Belshazzar's wives, so number 2 above is the most likely identification. It is implied that she is older than the ignorant Belshazzar. Whoever she might have been, she was bold and decisive, and had information about Daniel that Belshazzar and his younger generation lacked.
- The appearance of the queen is providential. As part of God's program of keeping Daniel in the eyes of the leadership, He had maintained in this woman the memory of Daniel's achievements years before.

#### 2. The Recollection Concerning Daniel – 5:11-12

*11 "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners. <sup>12</sup> "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned, and he will declare the interpretation."*

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Daniel was quite an old man by this time. A 70 year period had elapsed since the events of chapter one. Daniel was at least 85 or 86 years old when called before Belshazzar.
- The queen expresses her knowledge of Daniel in very similar words which she possibly heard Nebuchadnezzar utter concerning him. He had “wisdom like the wisdom of the gods.” She specifically mentions the interpretation of dreams, and explanation of “enigmas” or mysteries, and the solving of “difficult problems. The queen had a very high view of Daniel, perhaps because of her previous experiences with him.
- Significantly, she know both his Hebrew name “Daniel” and the name given by Nebuchadnezzar, “Belteshazzar.” This fact argues in favor of her being Nebuchadnezzar’s wife.

### **D. The Problem Expressed – 5:13-16**

#### **1. The Association by Belshazzar – 5:13**

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

- The king asks this question for confirmation. No answer is given, but presumably Belshazzar was satisfied with Daniel’s identity.
- Since the queen does not mention Daniel’s being an exile from Judah, some have suggested that Belshazzar recognized the name and remembered the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s dealing with him. However, such need not have been the case, as any fairly well educated person, which Belshazzar undoubtedly was, would have recognized the name Daniel as being Hebrew. He would have then associated it with the well-known facts of the history of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest.

#### **2. The Presentation by Belshazzar – 5:14-16**

*14 “Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. <sup>15</sup> “Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. <sup>16</sup> “But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.”*

- Belshazzar claims prior knowledge of Daniel. This is perhaps because of the Queen’s pronouncement, though some have supposed that Belshazzar’s memory was jogged, and he remembered the stories about the amazing problem-solver.
- Belshazzar gives Daniel the same promise he had made to his wise men. One can imagine Daniel’s air of patience as he again listens to promises of glory, as he had from Nebuchadnezzar. For an old man of over eighty, such a promise must have been somewhat amusing.

### **E. The Situation Explained – 5:17-24**

#### **1. The Example of Nebuchadnezzar – 5:17-21**

##### **a) Nebuchadnezzar’s Magnificence – 5:17-19**

*17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. <sup>18</sup> “O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. <sup>19</sup> “And because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations, and*

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

*men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed, and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled.*

- It is noteworthy to realize that Daniel did not reveal the enigma to Belshazzar because of the promised riches. Daniel was again operating as God's ambassador to the Gentiles in dealing with this situation.
- Daniel begins by explaining the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar in terms of God's work. It was God who was responsible for raising up Nebuchadnezzar. The result of this exaltation by God was that Nebuchadnezzar was truly sovereign over his realm. He needed no court of law to determine whom to kill or to keep alive. He needed no one's permission concerning whom he exalted or whom he humiliated.

### b) Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation – 5:20-21

*20 "But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken away from him. 21 "He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.*

- Daniel briefly tells the well-known story of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity. He includes the purpose for Nebuchadnezzar's degradation. It was to convince him of the doctrinal truth of God's sovereignty over mankind.

### 2. The Failure of Belshazzar – 5:22-24

*22 "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified. 24 "Then the hand was sent from Him, and this inscription was written out.*

- Though he may have been unaware of Daniel's part in the story of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, he otherwise knew the story well, including the purpose behind it. Undoubtedly he had heard, or read, the proclamation published by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar probably made sure that the nobility of Babylon was kept reminded of his faith in the God of Israel. But Belshazzar had ignored the truth behind the story. He had dishonored Nebuchadnezzar's faith in Israel's God, and had engaged in idol worship and glorified gods made of various materials.
- The statement that Belshazzar's "life-breath and ways" are in God's hands expresses the purpose for the handwriting. Belshazzar needed, even this late in his story as king, to come to a knowledge and faith in Israel's God. It was for this reason that the hand was sent and the inscription was written.
- Daniel's use of the phrase "Lord of heaven" is again significant. God who is in heaven rules over the affairs of men, including kings. Like Nebuchadnezzar before him, Belshazzar did not understand this simple point of theology.

### F. The Inscription Explained – 5:25-28

*25 "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENÊ, MENÊ, TEKÊL, UPHARSIN.' 26 "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENÊ'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27*

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

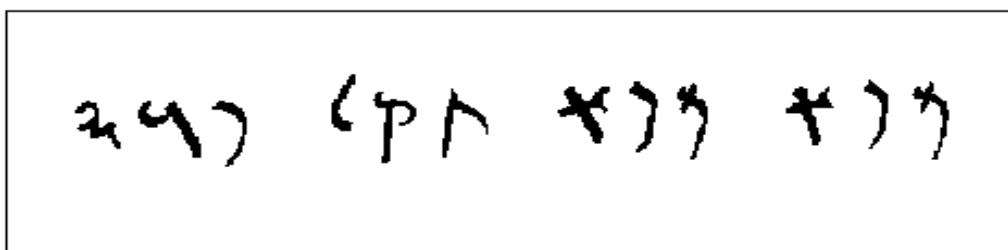
“‘TEKÊL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. <sup>28</sup> “‘PERÊS’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

- The inability to read the inscription was not because of its language, but probably because of the arrangement of the letters. The Chaldean language of the time was like Hebrew in that it was consonantal, and read from right to left. No vowels were written. Young suggests that the writing may have been in vertical rather than horizontal form, though there is no direct evidence of this. If so, it would have appeared as follows:

P	T	M	M
R	Q	N	N
S	L	'	'

- The ' represents a letter in the Chaldean alphabet that has no English equivalent. It is a consonantal stop and is virtually silent. For people who read from right to left across the line, such an arrangement would have been virtually unintelligible. See the forms of the Chaldean script of the day in the next chart.
- The following representation, scanned from *The New Bible Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> shows what the handwriting may have resembled in Chaldean:

Chaldean Script of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.



- Note that the four words read from left to right have three letters each. No vowels are represented. However, if this had been written in the alternative script cuneiform the vowels would have been written.
- Dr. Pentecost ably summarizes the meaning of the words written on the plaster:

*MENE* *m<sup>e</sup>ne<sup>7</sup>* is an Aramaic noun referring to a weight of 50 *shekels* (a *mina*, equal to 1¼ pounds). It is from the verb *m<sup>e</sup>nah*, “to number, to reckon.” *Tekel* (*t<sup>e</sup>qel*, is a noun referring to a shekel (2/5 of an ounce). It is from the verb *t<sup>e</sup>qal*, “to weigh.” *Parsin* (*parsin*) is a noun meaning a half-mina (25 shekels, or about 2/3 of a pound). It is from the verb *p<sup>e</sup>ras*, “to break in two, to divide.” The word on the wall was actually *U<sup>7</sup>parsin* which means “and Parsin.”

### G. The Prediction Fulfilled – 5:29-31

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

<sup>1</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary* has been re-edited and presented as a three volume work now entitled *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. It has virtually the same entries, but has many more pictures. When I wrote these notes originally, *The New Bible Dictionary* was in the seminary library where I was teaching, and is what I used. Subsequently, I purchased *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, which I now have in my personal library. Some of the new references in this edition of *Notes on the Book of Daniel* are taken from the newer work.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

*kingdom.* <sup>30</sup> *That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.* <sup>31</sup> *So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.*

- Belshazzar, to his credit, fulfilled his promise to Daniel. While he had no way of knowing how soon the destruction of his city would come, it had to be soon, given the current military circumstance.
- In fact, the very night the Medes and Persians entered Babylon and killed Belshazzar. It was, according to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the sixteenth day of Tishri, which would have been eleventh or twelfth of October, 539 BC.
- Darius, the Mede, at about age 62 took over the empire. For a further discussion of this historical character, see the notes chapter 6.
- The fall of Babylon was predicted by both Isaiah (13:17-22; 21:1-10) and Jeremiah (51:33-58). God's dealings with Babylon are part of His revelatory program as well as His providential program. Even the fact that the rulers of Babylon would be drunk is foretold.
- Cyrus' armies surrounded Babylon, which may have thought itself safe for an extended siege. But according to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Persians diverted the water of the Euphrates to a small lake. When the water lowered to a level where it was fordable, the Persians entered the city from both up-stream and down-stream positions.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### VI. Daniel's Protection from the Lion's Hunger – 6:1-28

- Two important conservative approaches have been taken to this chapter of Daniel:
  1. The presentation to children usually emphasizes the truths of Daniel's faithfulness in prayer and his deliverance from the lions. With young children especially, such a presentation is required because of a lack of maturity. This "storybook" approach is very helpful in introducing the character of Daniel at a young age.
  2. The popular adult Sunday School lesson generally includes the children's presentation, often with an allusion to Hebrews 11:33, but goes on to include the historical development of the book of Daniel. The slighter weakness of the Medo-Persian Empire is emphasized by pointing to the fact that Darius could not contravene the law of the Medes and Persians. The Medo-Persian Empire is thus portrayed as weaker than the previous Babylonian Empire in fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image in chapter 2. These truths are often presented as the purpose for which the chapter is written; however, such a purpose is rarely related to the purpose of the entire book.
- Therefore, while these presentation methods contain truth, and they are valid interpretations of parts of the chapter, they do not adequately answer three closely related questions:
  1. Why is this incident included in the narrative of Daniel?
  2. Why does it precede the visions of chapters 7 and 8, which it actually followed historically?
  3. What is the relationship of this event to the purpose for which the book was written?
- The answer to the third question leads logically to the answers for the first two. Note the following:
  1. The purpose of the book is to show the relationship of exiled Israel to the Gentile powers, and further, since that purpose includes the preservation of Israel, chapter 6 provides clear progress of that purpose. God provides a specific circumstance resulting in positive relations between Israel and the Gentile government, the promotion of Daniel position of what today would be called "prime minister."
  2. Those relations are cemented through a foiled plot, wherein God shows His power in preserving the representative of Israel in the Gentile government.
  3. Consequently, chapter 7 specifically follows this event to again show the place of Israel in relationship to the four-fold Gentile world structure, even though the vision that teaches it happened some years before the events of chapter 6.
  4. Finally, we see that this chapter is included in the narrative not so much to teach spiritual truths concerning Daniel, though those truths are there, but to again push to the front truth concerning God's purpose in maintaining His program of Gentile world domination until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled.
- While the previously mentioned spiritual truths concerning Daniel are indeed part of the purpose of this chapter, the primary truth relates to the previous events in this book. Namely, servitude to God and faith in His program results in negative circumstances. Nevertheless, the genuine believer will not compromise his faith, no matter how dire the consequences, up to and including death. The faithfulness of Daniel and his friends in refusing the king's food, the fiery furnace episode, the prediction of Nebuchadnezzar's madness, and the writing on the wall episode all culminate in the events in this chapter, where again Daniel must stand faithful to God.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### A. The Appointment of Daniel – 6:1-3

#### 1. Darius Reorganizes His Government – 6:1-2

*1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, <sup>2</sup> and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.*

- This reorganization providentially provides the basis for the promotion of Daniel. He is one of 120 satraps raised to authority, and further he is one of three raised to the position of commissioner. Daniel was quite old at this time, during a period when age was highly esteemed. How Darius came to know of Daniel is unstated, though it may have been related to him about the feast and Daniel's reading of the handwriting.
- At any rate, the elevation of Daniel was providential, clearly part of God's program for not only Daniel himself, but for Israel as a captive nation. The program of God for Israel is on-going and not to be interrupted by the various historical events. Darius, like all rulers, considered himself in charge, while Daniel would have realized that his elevation to his current position was not ultimately of Darius' doing.
- Who, then, was the Darius? Pentecost summarizes the various views:

Critics have long questioned the historicity of Daniel. They challenge Daniel's reference to the accession of Darius (vv. 1, 28; 9:1; called Darius the Mede in 5:31) because there is no historical evidence outside the Bible for his reign. However, several explanations are possible:

(1) Darius may have been another name for Cyrus. Daniel 6:28 may be translated, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian." It was common for ancient rulers to use different names in various parts of their realms. Thus Darius may have been a localized name for Cyrus. (This is the view of D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 12-14.)

(2) A second explanation is that Darius was appointed by Cyrus to rule over Babylon, a comparatively small portion of the vast Medo-Persian Empire. According to Daniel 9:1 Darius "was *made* ruler over the Babylonian Kingdom." This suggests that he ruled by appointment, rather than by conquest and thus would have been subordinate to Cyrus, who appointed him. The historical situation leading to this appointment, based on the Nabonidus Chronicle, was that Babylon was conquered by Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, who entered the city of Babylon the night of Belshazzar's feast. After Ugbaru conquered Babylon on October 12, 539 BC, Cyrus entered the conquered city on October 29 of that same year. Ugbaru was then appointed by Cyrus to rule on his behalf in Babylon. Eight days after Cyrus' arrival (Nov. 6) Ugbaru died. If Darius the Mede is another name for Ugbaru, as is entirely possible, the problem is solved. Since Darius was 62 years old when he took over Babylon (5:31), his death a few weeks later would not be unusual. According to this view (presented by William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20. Autumn 1982, pp. 229-47), Gubaru is another spelling for Ugbaru, with the name Gobryas being a Greek form of the same name and appearing in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* 4. 6. 1-9; 7. 5. 7-34.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

(3) A third explanation is that Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, conquered Babylon, and that Gubaru, alias Darius, was the man Cyrus appointed to rule over Babylon. (This is the view of John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *Darius the Mede*. Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974.)

(4) Still others suggest Darius the Mede should be identified with Cambyses, Cyrus' son, who ruled Persia 530-522 BC. (This view is held by Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 142-55.) Any of these four views may be correct, but perhaps the second one is preferable.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Daniel Distinguishes Himself – 6:3

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

- Given the opportunity provided by the reorganization, God again uses Daniel to gain ultimate authority, and thereby oversee the Gentile government. The result of this, however, is unexpected from a historical perspective, though clearly part of God's divine plan.

### B. The Plot Against Daniel – 6:4-9

#### 1. The Plotters Lack Success – 6:4-5

*4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. <sup>5</sup> Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."*

- Jealousy again raises its ugly head. Men who were themselves corrupt looked for corruption in another, but could not find it. So in order to win the day, these men entered into a conspiracy to find fault with Daniel the only way they knew how, that is, by plotting against him in the area of his faith.

#### 2. The Plotters Manufacture Evidence – 6:6-9

*6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!" <sup>7</sup> "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. <sup>8</sup> "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.*

- In order to manufacture evidence against Daniel, the plotters must manufacture evidence against his faith in God. In their subtlety they appealed to Darius to pass a law that he would not have otherwise considered. It was a temporary measure of only thirty days, but surely in that time Daniel could be counted on to violate it by praying to his God. The idea of an injunction against worshiping anything besides himself must have appealed to Darius' vanity, so he signed the injunction, which apparently the plotters had already provided.
- Darius was not Nebuchadnezzar and was legally constrained in a way that Nebuchadnezzar had not been. The "law of the Medes and Persians" is used here not to illustrate the relative weakness of the Medo-Persian Empire to the Babylonian, but as a means of requiring Darius

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<sup>1</sup> Views two and three are probably the most likely. Dr. Whitcomb provides a compelling case for making Darius the same as Gubaru. Dr. Whitcomb's book *Darius the Mede* is recommended reading for the curious.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

to go through with the law even when presented with unforeseen results. While it certainly illustrates that Medo-Persian was not as dictatorial as Babylon, its specific purpose was to condemn Daniel.

- It was providential that the execution for violation built into the law was being cast into a lion's den. While God undoubtedly could have saved Daniel from execution by a more direct means, such as by sword, or hanging, being sealed in a den of wild lions allowed for an extended deliverance which was, in its way, even more startling to Darius and the conspirators.

### C. The Defiance of Daniel – 6:10-11

#### 1. Daniel Purposes Prayer – 6:10

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

- The specific point to verse ten is not only that Daniel was faithful to God, but that he purposefully violated a law that was otherwise legitimate. The truth being presented is the same as that which was presented in the case of the Hebrew youths being thrown into the furnace. The biblically righteous man will keep all the laws of the government except those that require him to violate his righteous relationship to God. The consequences of such a violation are not to be considered. This general principle is still valid today, in a time of relative liberty. But times change, and the biblically mature believer will keep in mind that God is in control, even during the most difficult of circumstances.

#### 2. The Plotters Observe Daniel – 6:11

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

- That these plotters “came by agreement” indicates the conspiratorial nature of their enterprise. They found what they expected to find, Daniel continuing his regular practice.

### D. The Betrayal of Daniel – 6:12-15

#### 1. A Question – 6:12

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

- The question by the plotters is designed to logically argue the case of the conspirators. They are laying down the first premise in a syllogism of evil. And of course the king has already fallen into their trap.

#### 2. An Accusation – 6:13

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

- The second premise in their syllogism is provided by the plotters. The argument is from the general to the specific, as is true in deductive reasoning.

#### 3. An Anxiety – 6:14

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

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Darius does not need to be told the conclusion of the syllogism. He knows that by law he must cast Daniel into the lion's den. But, to his credit, he agonizes over the act, realizing that he has been duped into destroying the most effective administrator in the kingdom. He further must realize that he has been "set up" by the conspirators.

### 4. A Reminder – 6:15

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

- The plotters do not need to remind the king of the conclusion drawn from their carefully crafted syllogism. Rather they remind him that the original law upon which the syllogism was based cannot be changed. Clearly, unless he is willing to break the law, Darius must execute sentence on Daniel. There is no logical alternative.

### E. The Incarceration of Daniel – 6:16-18

#### 1. In the Lion's Den – 6:16-17

*16 Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." <sup>17</sup> And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel.*

- In executing sentence, the king reveals that he has already been aware of and somewhat influenced by Daniel's devotion to God. Whether he actually believed his words is doubtful, which is attested by his difficult night.
- The sealing of the mouth of the den with a signet ring was a legal warning. Its unchangeableness was reinforced by the addition of the signet rings of Darius' nobles.

#### 2. In the King's Palace – 6:18

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

- If Darius believed his injunction to Daniel about God delivering him, he did not show it. There are three specific statements of his consternation.
  1. He spent the night fasting. This means more than he did not eat. It was the regular practice of rulers to have large meals with their nobles and other companions each night. This did not happen, and evidently Darius went to his chamber immediately.
  2. Consequently, he did not have entertainment brought before him. Along with the meal, performers were in regular attendance for the entertainment of the king and his guests. Again, this did not happen that night.
  3. Finally, Darius spent a restless, sleepless night.

### F. The Deliverance of Daniel – 6:19-24

#### 1. The King Calls to Daniel – 6:19-20

*19 Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup> And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"*

- The anxiety of the king is evident by three facts:
  1. He rose early at the dawn, at the break of day.
  2. He was in a hurry, going in haste to the lions' den.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

3. His voice was troubled. Darius' question to Daniel, while recognizing his devotion to the Lord, indicates his doubts in Daniel's God.

### 2. Daniel Gives Credit to God – 6:21-22

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!"<sup>22</sup> "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

- "O king live forever" were the first words Darius heard. One wonders if Darius sagged in relief at the voice. Daniel indicates that since he was innocent God spared him. But Daniel's innocence was not only in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of Darius. Such statement may have caused anguish in Darius. Perhaps he thought of himself as a just man, a righteous ruler.
- God sent an angel. This is the second instance when a spirit being acted as an agent in preventing harm. It may seem that the danger of the furnace was greater than the danger of the lions, but that is problematical. It seems that the regular practice was to keep such lions hungry. Only by supernatural intervention could disaster have been prevented. The use of an angel rather than direct intervention was probably for Darius' benefit, as was the "one like a son of the gods" in the fiery furnace for Nebuchadnezzar's benefit.
- "I have committed no crime," is the righteous statement a believer makes against an ungodly law. The principle is clear. No legitimate law can be passed or enforced righteously that violates the biblical requirements for the believer's godly practice.

### 3. The King Gives Orders about Daniel – 6:23

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

- Darius' action was immediate. When Daniel came forth from the den, he was without injury. The reason for this cannot be found in some natural phenomenon. Hungry lions are controlled by their hunger! Daniel retained his faith in God, who sent an angel, who in turn stopped the mouths of the lions.

### 4. The King Brings Justice to the Plotters – 6:24

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

- The casting of the plotters' families into the den has caused consternation in the eyes of some. Why did not Daniel stop this obvious injustice? The reasons are multiple:
  1. It is only an injustice to the modern mind. The plotters knew, their families knew, the king knew, and Daniel knew that families were held culpable in the actions of the leader of that family. From the viewpoint of the day, the plotters were considered guilty of the death of their families, not the king.
  2. Daniel could not have stopped Darius if he had wanted to. While the specific statute is unknown, Darius actions were likely legally required by the law of the Medes and Persians, which was unchangeable.
  3. Unlike today, the common wisdom of the time was that the execution of evil men and their families was a deterrent to further evil of the same kind. Undoubtedly that wisdom was correct!

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### G. The Proclamation about God – 6:25-27

#### 1. The Introduction to the Proclamation – 6:25

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

- One's mind is immediately brought back to Nebuchadnezzar's statement in Daniel 4:1. That another universal proclamation happens is not a coincidence. The purpose of both proclamations is the same, although sent out under different governments. In fact, the purpose of Daniel's writing is seen here. God is preserving His people through both miraculous and providential circumstances. See the book of Esther for the same teaching in a different context and with a later king of Persia.

#### 2. The Content of the Proclamation – 6:26-27

26 *"I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever."* <sup>27</sup> *"He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."*

- As in Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation, it is the God of Daniel who is extolled. The statement that Daniel's God is living does not simply mean that God is alive. At the time, the concept of living referred not to simple existence, but to activity that was observable, which was certainly true here. The phrase "enduring forever" is Darius' way of acknowledging eternal nature. It appears that Darius had been influenced by Daniel's theology. For the same reason that we believe Nebuchadnezzar became a believer in Israel's God, we hold that Darius did likewise.
- Significantly, the king recognized God's universal kingdom. Such a kingdom cannot be destroyed, for it is not simply political, but relates to the entire universe. This reflects one of the great themes of Scripture, the sovereignty of God over creation. Darius says Daniel's God is active by not only delivering and rescuing Daniel, but by performing wonders throughout the universe, which is the normal meaning of the phrase *heaven and earth*. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Darius was planning to return the Israelites to the land, which was to be accomplished in the days of Cyrus. However, the situation is changing for the better from Israel's perspective.

### H. The Triumph of Daniel – 6:28

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

- How long Daniel actually lived into the reign of Cyrus is not certain. But he lived a successful life in the service of Gentile kings because of his faith in God. This short statement indicates a change in not only Daniel's situation, but is looking forward to the reign of Cyrus, during which Israel is to be returned to the land of promise.

## VII. Daniel's Vision of Gentile Dominion – 7:1-28

- Chapter 7 of Daniel is parallel, but not identical to, the vision of chapter 2. Again the scope of Gentile political dominion is in view, but not strictly from a narrow Babylonian viewpoint. The broad perspective presented here actually carries more detail than that of chapter 2, but from the larger Jewish perspective. The vision is given to Daniel, not to a Gentile king, and the purpose is to give the Jewish exiles encouragement in view of the soon change of political masters.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- While chronologically this chapter and the following precede chapter 6, logically both are placed logically following it. This is no accident, but the plan of God in maintaining a doctrinal rather than chronological perspective throughout Daniel's writings. If chapter 6 presents Daniel as the representative of displaced Israel, chapter 7 presents the Gentile nations as the carrier of Jewish hopes.
- The content of this dream is not simply a repetition of Nebuchadnezzar's in chapter 2. Besides being more detailed, the emphasis on the beastly nature of Gentile dominion would carry a different message to his Jewish audience. The image of chapter 2 was an altogether positive one meant for the Gentile ruler. The visions of chapter 7 are altogether negative. Israel is to remain under the heel of the beastly Gentile world structure until the kingdom of God is established. This vision is not to be considered a comfort to the Jews, but a warning of difficult times ahead.

### A. The View of Four Beasts – 7:1-8

#### 1. Introduction to the Dream

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

- Chronologically, this vision, and the one in chapter eight take place before the events of chapter 5, as Babylonia had not yet been invaded and Belshazzar deposed.
- By Belshazzar's first year, 553 BC, Daniel was quite old, possibly nearing eighty. That he was to live a number of more years is apparent in the previous chapter. God gives this revelatory dream and visions to the Jew Daniel so that he could pass it on to his fellow exiles. The fact that the language continues to be Aramaic is not a definitive reason to think that the audience was strictly Gentile. By this time the Israelites had at least 2 generations of being under Chaldean authority and the generation of Daniel's day would have lost their Hebrew tongue, and would have been fluent in Aramaic. Probably only a few of the older generation such as Daniel himself would have retained fluency in Hebrew.
- Apparently Daniel had a dream with four separate but connected visions.<sup>1</sup> The four visions are found in the following:
  1. 7:2-6, the first three beasts;
  2. 7:7-8, the fourth beast;
  3. 7:9-14, the judgment of the fourth beast;
  4. 7:13-14, the one like the son of man.
- The interpretation of the visions given in 7:15-28 are not a separate vision, but a continuation of the dream.
- Technically, outline numbers 2-4 below contain a single vision, while vs. 7 begins a new vision.
- This is a summary of Daniel's dream. Do not think that Daniel left out anything of importance. The original Aramaic text actually states that he wrote the "head things" that is the important elements. Like all dreams, Daniel's undoubtedly carried background and other

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<sup>1</sup> The word "dream" is singular and the word "visions" is plural. Beyond the simple change in number, the words do not mean the same thing. Apparently a vision was an apocalyptic element within the dream. Following the four apocalyptic visions we have an extended interpretation which concluded the dream.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

elements that did not relate to the meaning of the vision but which were needed for visual clarity.<sup>1</sup>

- The importance of this dream is made obvious by the fact that Daniel wrote it down and related a main point summary of it. This was not just any old dream, but an important apocalyptic event.

### 2. The Lion-like Beast – 7:2-4

*2 Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.”<sup>3</sup> “And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.”<sup>4</sup> “The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.*

- The great sea is the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> The stirring of the sea is an apocalyptic way of defining the geographical area under discussion. The beast emerge from the sea, meaning that they Mediterranean based kingdoms. The idea that these beasts indicate “world” dominion is tenuous at best. They represent a series of Mediterranean kingdoms that held sway over civilized men (from their viewpoint). Even in their day, the people of these kingdoms realized that they did not encompass all of humanity. The geographical limitations of the kingdoms is discussed more fully in chapter eleven of these notes.
- Each of these beast is grotesque in some way. Each one is “like” a real beast, but not identical. The fact that Gentile dominion is viewed as “beastly” indicates the Jewish viewpoint of this set of visions.
- The lion-like beast represents Babylon. Like the head of gold of chapter 2, the lion is superior in majesty to the other beasts. Babylon was symbolized by a lion in Jeremiah 4:7.
- The most likely symbolism of the eagle’s wings is Nebuchadnezzar himself and his swift take over of Babylon. In Jeremiah 4:13, the prophet symbolized Babylon by an eagle. The fact that its wings were plucked likely refers to the insanity period in Nebuchadnezzar’s life. His recovery is seen in that the beast is caused to stand like a man, and a human mind being given to it possibly refers to his conversion in chapter 5 as well as his recovery from insanity.

### 3. The Bear-like Beast – 7:5

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

- The bear is a strong but not swift beast. As silver is inferior to gold (Daniel 2) the bear is inferior to the lion in the world of beasts. However, bears can kill lions, if they can catch them. Like the silver of Daniel 2, the bear-like beast of Daniel 7 represents the Medo-Persian empire.
- That the beast was raised on one side probably indicates that the Persian element of the Medo-Persian empire was stronger than the Median element.
- The three ribs in the beast’s mouth has been variously interpreted.
  1. Some think that the ribs represent Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, did Daniel dream in color? He gives no indication, but he mentions the “great sea” without indicating its normal color, as well as the various beasts without describing them as to color or any other unimportant detail.

<sup>2</sup> See J. K. Hoffmeier’s interesting article in ISBE entitled simply “Mediterranean Sea.”



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

2. Others hold that they represent Susiana, Lydia, and Asia minor, which Medo-Persia conquered before taking over the Babylonian empire.
3. Still others believe that the ribs represent Media, Persia, and Babylon.
4. In fact, no specific interpretation is given to the three ribs, and speculation, as always, is fruitless. Undoubtedly the meaning would have been clear to the original Jewish readers, but distance in time has made the meaning unclear to the modern interpreter.

### 4. The Leopard-like Beast – 7:6

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

- The leopard-like beast represents Greece. The leopard was the swiftest of the beasts known at this time.
- The four wings probably emphasize the extraordinary speed of the Greek conquests. Greece conquered more territory more quickly than any previous empire. The Greek army was renowned for its ability to march great distances without rest. Its speed of march was not matched until the armies of Napoleon performed similar and even greater feats of endurance.
- Most commentators believe that the four heads of this beast represent the short lived four-fold divisions of the Greek empire after Alexander the Great’s death. Each of four generals took part of the Greek empire:
  1. Seleucus took Syria (not modern Syria, but the entire eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean sea, including Canaan).
  2. Ptolemy took Egypt.
  3. Cassander took Macedonia.
  4. Sysimachus took Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

### 5. The Incomparable Beast – 7:7-8

7 *“After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup> “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts.*

- Daniel’s terminology “I kept looking in the night visions” indicates a both a continuation and a distinction. The continuation is obvious. The fourth beast is in the series of beasts. The distinction is somewhat more difficult. It appears that a new vision is beginning. Daniel again uses the word “visions” in the plural.
- While this beast differs from the other beasts, it is still a beast, and therefore still represents a Gentile nation, the Roman empire. However, it is unique. From Daniel’s viewpoint it is indescribable because he was unable, in the visualization, to compare it to a real animal. Why? The enormous power of the Roman empire is presented in this vision. By its exercise of military and political power Rome outstripped the previous empires in its size and strength.
- The iron teeth correspond to the iron legs of the image of Daniel 2. Iron was the strongest metal in the world at that time.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The Roman legions truly “devoured and crushed.” It had the most effective military machine seen to that time.
- It seems clear that the ten horns represent the same “kings” as the ten toes of the image of chapter 2. As the times of the Gentiles come to an end, the Roman empire will be revived. Some kind of confederation made up of 10 kings will rule for an unspecified period of time.
- The little horn refers to the man (the horn has eyes like the eyes of a man) commonly, but inaccurately, called “The Antichrist.” He is the “Roman prince” of Daniel 9, the man of sin, the son of perdition of the 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This individual dispossess three of the kings and becomes the dominant prophetic figure of the remaining seven. It is he who will occupy the final form of unbelieving Israel during the first half of the time of Jacob’s trouble.
- His character is succinctly summarized in the statement that the horn had a mouth uttering great boasts. Arrogance is his basic characteristic.
- Beginning with 7:9 and continuing verse 11, a vision of the judgment of the fourth beast, including the little horn, indicates several questions must be considered.

### **B. The Visualization of God the Father – 7:9-10**

9 *“I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.”*<sup>10</sup> *“A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.”*

- Does vs. 9 indicate the beginning of a new vision, or is it the continuation of the previous vision? While it is impossible to know for sure what Daniel intends here, because of the scene change it seems best to see vs. 9 as a distinct apocalyptic vision that carries the narrative on to the discussion of the judgment of the fourth beast.
- Who is the Ancient of Days? The picture here is not of the Lord Jesus Christ but of God the Father on His throne in heaven. The term “Ancient of Days” indicates not so much God’s eternal being, as His continued control over the days of men. His physical description is designed to produce awe in the viewer, with the emphasis on the color white, indicating His righteous purity.
- What is the significance of the scene and the throne? The heavenly throne room is in view, with a specific description of the heavenly throne which indicates judgment, as fire is often used symbolically of such. As in Ezekiel, God’s throne is described as having wheels. Wheels indicate that God is not static. He moves and works consistently and accurately as conditions change, and His judgments are always righteous. The picture of judgment is continued with the description of the river of fire that comes out from before Him. Moving water is often related to life processes, in this case the movement is of fire. On-going judgment is in view.
- What is the meaning of the word *court* in the vision? The *court* refers to the entourage of thousands who are attending God, and the myriads upon myriads<sup>1</sup> who were standing before Him. It is the ultimate royal court, of which the courts of human kings are insignificant in comparison. The best interpretation of these thousands upon thousands is that these are spirit beings who attend in the throne room of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> The Aramaic word translated myriads means an uncountable number. Strong defines it as meaning, “ten thousand times ten thousand.”

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Why is this particular court convened? It is a court of judgment. The books probably indicate the keeping of records from which the judgment will come forth. The opening of books, then, indicates that the proceedings beginning, which is confirmed in verses 11-12.

### **C. The Judgment of the Fourth Beast – 7:11-12**

#### **1. The Boasting Causes Judgment – 7:11**

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

- The court has pronounced judgment, and the execution of sentence takes place. The destruction of the fourth beast is because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. The Roman Empire is destroyed, but this does not automatically end the time of Gentile domination over Israel. Indeed, the man of sin appears to survive the fall of Rome, as his destruction is associated with the actual second coming of Christ.

#### **2. The Beasts Receive an Extension – 7:12**

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

- The best interpretation of the fact that the beasts’ collective life being extended is that while the beasts have their individual supremacy removed, Gentile supremacy over Israel remains. It will not be removed until the coming of Christ (Romans 11:25-27).

### **D. The Presentation of the Messiah – 7:13-14**

#### **1. The Arrival of the Son of Man – 7:13**

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

- The perspective of this event is heavenly. The phrase “One like a Son of Man was coming” introduces one of the most important phrases in the Bible. The Son of Man is the Messiah of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ’s favorite for himself was “Son of Man.” The BKC comment on this event is helpful:

Jesus Christ, taking the title “Son of Man” from this prophecy, frequently used it to refer to Himself.

- With this identification Walvoord agrees, “Conservative scholars are agreed that the Son of man is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ rather than an angelic agency. The description of Him as being worthy of ruling all nations is obviously in keeping with many passages in the Bible....”<sup>1</sup>
- The coming of the One like the Son of Man is not Christ’s second coming to earth. The scene is His coming into the throne room in heaven, where a specific event takes place.

#### **2. The Kingdom of the Son of Man – 7:14**

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

- When the Son approaches the Ancient of Days, He receives universal dominion and glory which never ends. This is, as it were, the coronation of the new King. It must be kept in mind that Christ is not yet “King of kings.” He will become that once He is crowned king and begins His reign on the Davidic throne.

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 167.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- God's kingdom comes into existence *after* the Gentile kingdoms are destroyed. The church is *not* His kingdom, since Gentile rule continues today. God's kingdom replaces Gentile rule on the earth, and is therefore earthly.

### **E. The Interpretation of the Vision – 7:15-18**

#### **1. The Question Asked – 7:15-16**

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

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

- From Daniel's terminology in vs. 15 it appears that the visions were now ended, and Daniel was seeking enlightenment. That he is still in a dream state is clear, but the technical apocalyptic nature of the series of visions is ended. The visions distressed and alarmed him, so he began searching for interpretive answers.
- Who is "one of those who were standing by"? Some say he is an angel. Others say that he is a human being who is part of the vision. Actually no information is given and any speculation is pointless. The only thing we really know is that he is the interpreter of the visions.

#### **2. The Five Kingdoms Explained – 7:17-18**

*17 "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. <sup>18</sup> "But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come."*

- The four beasts are said to be kings, and no other information concerning the first three is forthcoming. Most conservative commentators recognize that these four kings represent the same series of kings as chapter two: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Others, who reject the possibility of predictive prophecy and see Daniel being written during the Maccabean period, see these four kings all coming into power prior to the Roman empire.
- The fifth kingdom is certainly sequential to the first four. According to the image vision of chapter two, the four kingdoms are destroyed by the coming of the "stone kingdom," that is, the kingdom of God.
- Who are the saints of the Highest One? Some think that they are all believers because the resurrection of believers takes place before the establishment of the kingdom. However, the original recipients would not have thought so. It is most likely they would have thought that the term "saints" refers to Israelites. Certainly, the term cannot be stretched to include the church.

### **F. The Concentration on the Fourth Beast – 7:19-22**

#### **1. Daniel's Specific Description – 7:19-20**

*19 "Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet, <sup>20</sup> and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates.*

- The concentration on the 4<sup>th</sup> beast indicates its importance. Unlike the other beasts, this beast is diverse and resembles not so much a single beast, but a dreadful apparition with several elements.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Further, the concentration on the “horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts” indicates the importance of the individual so identified. This is, of course, a reference to the man of sin who will rise up during the time of “Jacob’s trouble” to afflict Israel, and fight against the various other world powers.

### 2. The Ancient of Day’s Sovereign Judgment – 7:21-22

21 *“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them”<sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.*

- The saints here are to be identified with Israel during the 70<sup>th</sup> week (See Daniel 9:27). While Gentile believers might also be in view, it seems likely that God is giving Daniel a taste of what will occur to Israel. It will be Israel that will be overcome during the 70<sup>th</sup> week. The saints here cannot be a reference to the church, as some have thought. Such a meaning would not have occurred to Daniel or his initial readers. (See note on vs. 17 & 18 above.)
- The coming of the Ancient of Days is not a reference to the coming of Christ. Rather it is the Father’s coming in judgment. The method the Father will use, of course, is the second coming of Christ to set up the kingdom, but the emphasis here is not on the establishment of the kingdom, but of the victory of the Father and the saints of the Highest One.
- At the time of this judgment, Israel (the saints) will take possession of the kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom begins with the 1,000 year period, but extends beyond the final judgment. There is no end to kingdom once established, though the first thousand years of that kingdom, the millennial period predicted by John, is on the old earth, where unbelievers still exist, and judgments still occur.

### G. The Explanation of the Ten Horns – 7:23-27

#### 1. The Fourth Kingdom Distinguished – 7:23

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

- The term “the whole earth” is not a reference to the totality of the globe. Rather it refers to the revived Roman Empire, and specifically the land of Israel. Contrary to popular belief, direct political control over the entire world will not take place during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. It is throughout the revived Roman Empire that the man of sin will be active. The treading down and crushing of the earth may, in fact, refer only to the land of Israel during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the week. Or if it is broader, the area of warfare is strictly limited to the revived Roman Empire.

#### 2. The Eleven Horns Clarified – 7:24-25

24 *‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.’<sup>25</sup> ‘And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*

- Each horn represents a single king. Originally there are ten kings over the revised Roman Empire. Then an eleventh arises, and subdues three which brings the total to eight.
- Except for the general order of the kingdoms in both chapter 2 and chapter 7 visions, the phrase “time, times, and half a time” is the first specific prophetic time reference in the book of Daniel. The phrase is used also in the book of Revelation, and refers specifically to the last 3 ½ years of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. One time plus 2 times plus ½ time equals 3 ½ times, or 3 ½ years.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The eleventh horn speaks out against God and Israel. This is a reference to an element of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, and referred to by Christ. Much has been made of the eleventh horn's alteration of times and laws. The simplest and most likely explanation is that this is referring to Israel's religious calendar and Mosaic code. If he proclaims himself to be God, which seems to be the teaching of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, he will attempt to modify Israel's calendar and laws to fit his personal agenda.

### 3. The Eleventh Horn Condemned – 7:26

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

- This appears to be a special tribunal set up specifically to try and convict the eleventh horn. It is not to be identified with any of the other judgments in Scripture. His judgment is total, and destruction unending.

### 4. The Heavenly Kingdom Established – 7:27

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

- The Davidic covenant will be fulfilled, the people of Israel will be established permanently in the land, and will hold dominion over all other nations.

### H. The Consternation of Daniel – 7:28

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

- Again Daniel has a physical reaction to the great themes of God's prophetic program. While Daniel wrote this prophecy, he did not discuss it. It was as though the revelation brought a recognition on Daniel's part that these events were for a later people.

## VIII. God's Description of Greece and Medo-Persia – 8:1-27

- The fact of language change from Aramaic to Hebrew should not be over-emphasized. The audience has not changed dramatically from Gentile to Jewish. Nor has the viewpoint changed between chapters 7 and 8. Both view the Gentile nations in a negative way. But the content from here on speaks more directly to the relationship of Israel to the Gentile nations than it did before.
- One significant reason for the change of language is the narrowing of the content. The two major visions of the scope of Gentile rule dealt with the broad structure of that rule. Starting in chapter 7 the content is narrowed to the relationship between two nations as they ultimately lead into the time of Antiochus IV. The highly important events predicted here eventually narrow to events that are relatively important to no one other than an Israel. The terror of Antiochus' reign had relatively little overall historical importance. But the rage and defeat of Antiochus produced the final great victory feast for the Jews, Chanuka, or the festival of lights.

### A. The Introduction to the Vision – 8:1-2

#### 1. The Time of the Vision – 8:1

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

- The date was 551 BC, some twelve years before the events of chapter 5.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The vision was probably a waking one, not like the visions contained in a dream in the previous chapter.

### 2. The Place of the Vision

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

- In his vision Daniel is transported to the citadel of Susa, or as it is called in the KJV Shushan. While relatively unimportant at the time the vision takes place, Susa became the winter residence of the Persian kings. Since the vision deals with events after the fall of Babylon, this is significant.
- The scope of the vision is about 200 years. It deals with events from the end of the Babylonian period until near the end of the Greek dominance over Syria.

### B. The Ram with Two Horns – 8:3-4

#### 1. The Description of the Ram – 8:3

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

- Again an animal represents a nation. Horns in visions in Daniel usually represent individual rulers of the nation. But here, the emphasis seems to be on the two parts of the Medo-Persian empire. The smaller of the two horns represents the Median element of the empire, which historically preceded the Persian element. The longer, Persian horn, overtook the Median element, to the extent that Medo-Persian eventually became simply Persia, with the Median element significantly disenfranchised politically. By the time of Babylon's defeat, the Persians were the stronger of the two elements. Cyrus, a Persian, was in power.

#### 2. The Activity of the Ram – 8:4

*4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him, nor was there anyone to rescue from his power; but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.*

- Persia under the leadership first of Cambyses, and later Darius, extended its domain in all directions except toward the east. History indicates that Egypt became a province of Persia as did the lands to the north and west. While Persia never actually conquered Greece, Greece paid tribute to Persia and was subservient to it.

### C. The Male Goat with the Conspicuous Horn – 8:5-8

#### 1. The Coming of the Male Goat – 8:5

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

- The male goat represents the Greek empire under first Philip of Macedon, and later his son Alexander, who is undoubtedly represented by the "conspicuous horn". The Greeks came from the west relative to the Persian hegemony. The speed of Alexander's conquests are indicated by the representation of the goat not touching the ground as he went over the surface of the whole earth.
- Alexander's father, Philip of Macedon, hired Aristotle to tutor his son. It was Aristotle who introduced Alexander to Homer's writings, which were of a highly military nature. Also, they were written in the Aeolic and Ionic dialects, and greatly influenced by the written form of Attic, which greatly influenced Alexander's approach to the language. Attic Greek was part of the Ionic dialect group.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The key to Alexander's conquest was the speed with which he covered ground. In a ground war that lasted about ten years, Alexander's armies defeated every enemy by speed of maneuver or by quickness in which he gained siege control. He conquered the land from the Greek peninsula (the west) eastward into and the western part of the Indian sub-continent.
- In doing so, he spread Greek culture, and with it the Greek language, simplifying it and bringing in the beginning of the Koiné (Common) Greek period based primarily on the Attic dialect, which is the language of the New Testament.

### 2. The Attack of the Male Goat – 8:6-7

*6 And he came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. <sup>7</sup> And I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.*

- By the time Alexander came to power (336 BC), the great power in the world was the Persian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great, c. 550 BC. The Persians extended their empire steadily until they defeated the Babylonian Empire, and occupied its entirety. At that time, the Persian Empire was the largest ever, extending from Egypt in the south, north through the Levant (including Tyre, which was considered secure – Alexander took it in six months), and into the land area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers south to the Persian Gulf.
- Alexander invaded the Persian Empire and, in a brilliant campaign, won a series of victories, culminating in the Battles of Issus (November, 333 BC) and two years later, Gaugamela (October, 331 BC). Thus Alexander “struck the ram and shattered his two horns” with the result that “the ram had no strength to withstand him.” This resulted in the complete dissolution of the Persian Empire under Darius, predicted by the words, “So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.”

### 3. The Destruction of the Large Horn – 8:8

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

- Following the victories over Darius, Alexander continued to campaign, eventually entering northern India, where he fought a number of battles, and exhausted his army. At the River Hyphasis, the army revolted and refused to go farther. Shortly thereafter, Alexander returned to Susa, the Persian capital in Southern Mesopotamia. From there he traveled to Babylon, and began to plan further campaigns, but died before he could implement them. Hence, the “large horn was broken.” His untimely death resulted in an unplanned division of his empire.
- The “four conspicuous horns” refer to Alexander's four main generals, who divided his empire among them. Referred to as the Diodoche (from διαδόχοι, *successors*) the subsequent kingdoms were as follows:
  1. Macedonia and Greece, ruled over by Cassander.
  2. Thrace, Bithynia and Asia Minor, ruled over by Lysimachus.
  3. From Levant (called Syria) east through the Babylonian area, ruled over by Seleucus.
  4. Egypt (probably including the southern part of the Levant, also including what eventually became called Judea), the Sinai and the Nabataean lands north to what is today Jordan (sometimes called Petraea), ruled by Ptolemy.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- This ultimate division followed much dispute and minor battles, and was unstable. After the death of Cassander and Lysimachus, following one another fairly rapidly, the Ptolemies and Seleucids controlled a large majority of Alexander's former empire, with a much smaller segment controlled by the Antigonid dynasty (Greek kings descended from Alexander's general Antigonus Monophthalmus ("the One-eyed"), which took over Asia Minor and northern Levant (Syria), which lasted until the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
- One can easily see the accuracy of Daniel's predictions. It was for this reason that unbelievers, who rejected the possibility of accurate prediction, placed Daniel's writings after the fact. The accurate predictions concerning Antiochus Epiphanes in 8:9-14 below, as well as in chapter 11, have placed the writings after his conquering of the land of Israel in 167-165 BC. See the Introduction, pages i and ii for a discussion of the late writing view.

### **D. The Horn of Transgression – 8:9-14**

#### **1. The Coming of the Grecian Little Horn – 8:9-10**

*9 And out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. <sup>10</sup> And it grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.*

- The phrase "out of one of them" refers to one of the four horns mentioned in the previous verse, specifically, from Seleucus. This little horn, not to be confused with the little horn of chapter 7, can be none other than a Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>1</sup> In 167 BC he invaded Israel ("the Beautiful Land"), defiled the sanctuary and dedicated it to Zeus Olympus. It was not cleansed until 164 BC. In the meantime, Antiochus attempted to eradicate the Hebrew faith. Vs. 10 refers to the war Antiochus waged against the godly Israelites (the host of heaven consisting of stars), who died rather than allow the deprivations of Antiochus to go unchallenged. According to Walvoord, even liberal commentators such as Driver recognize the stars as fallen Hebrew warriors.<sup>2</sup>

#### **2. The Transgression against Israel – 8:11-12**

*11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. <sup>12</sup> And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.*

- Antiochus set himself up as equal to God ("equal with the Commander of the host"), and caused the daily sacrifices in the temple to end. The words "from Him" refer to God, to whom the sacrifices were owed. Two months later he set up a pagan altar in the temple, by which "the place of His sanctuary was thrown down." It was not until Judas Maccabeus recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the temple that the evil came to an end (December, 165 BC).
- "The host will be given over to the horn" refers to Antiochus' victory over the people of the land. The regular sacrifice refers to the daily sacrifices that were to occur morning and evening.

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<sup>1</sup> Most conservative scholars, at least the one's in the author's library, agree with this identification. However, there are a great many conservatives who hold to a specious view, often identified with typology, that the period of time looks forward to the tribulation period. There is no need for this non-literal approach to the prophecy, of which conservatives, in their striving to make the prophecy yet unfulfilled in some way, fall into without justification.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 186.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- While a similar event will take place at the time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, this event is historically accurate as applied to the natural progression of Daniel's prophecy. It refers only to Antiochus, a vile individual who caused the "regular sacrifice" to cease for a particular predicted length of time.

### 3. The Question about the Time Length – 8:13-14

*13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one<sup>1</sup> said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?"<sup>14</sup> And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."*

- The unidentified "holy one speaking" refers to a spirit being, perhaps an angel,<sup>2</sup> and a second holy one responds, asking a question about how long the regular temple sacrifices would be stopped and the temple and the godly to be "trampled." The answer is "2,300 evening and mornings." This phraseology is difficult, because it does not refer to days, but to sacrifices.
- There were two regular sacrifices each day, totaling 23000 sacrifices, which indicates that the number of days involved was half that, 1,150 days. This is the period of time from the initial desecration of the temple until Judas cleansed it, including the two month period before the establishment of the pagan altar by Antiochus.

### E. The Introduction of Gabriel – 8:15-19

#### 1. The Need for Gabriel's Appearance – 8:15-16

*15 And it came about when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.<sup>16</sup> And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision."*

- Note the precision of the language. Daniel sees one who "looked like a man" standing before him, sent to explain the vision. From sight alone, Daniel would probably have continued to assume that a man had appeared. The initial impression is important, because the one Daniel supposed to be a man turns out to be an angel named Gabriel. Angels are indistinguishable from men when they appear, unless some form of identification is provided. The idea that angels have wings results in a confusion of angels with cherubim or seraphim, both of which appear with wings. But to men, angels look like men, unless identified as an angel.
- This identification happens in vs. 16, when an unidentified voice from between the banks of Ulai calls out and indicates Gabriel's purpose is to give Daniel understanding. Ulai is the river that runs near Susa (see map), where Daniel was at the time.
- This is the first of four appearances of Gabriel in Scripture. He was sent twice to Daniel, here and in 9:21. In both instances, he is identified as a man. It is only later that he is actually referred to as an angel. He was sent once to Zecharias, John the Baptist's father, in Luke 1:19, and once to the Mary, the Lord's mother, in Luke 1:26. In both those appearances he is identified by the word angel, meaning messenger.

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<sup>1</sup> The King James Version translates the Hebrew word for *holy* as *saint*, which previous English versions had also used. The word *saint* is best saved for human beings, as a distinguishing marker, so modern versions generally have *holy one* here.

<sup>2</sup> The spirit being is called a *holy* because he was separated out, perhaps for the very task mentioned here. He is probably an angel. The word angel is from the Greek ἄγγελος, (*aggelos*) meaning messenger. The Hebrew equivalent, מַלְאָךְ, (*melech*), also means messenger. Neither word occurs here, though most expositors believe the "holy one" is an angel rather than a *cherub*, spirit beings who only occasionally are related to the earth. For a discussion of the angel Gabriel, see the note on 8:15-16 below.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Other than Michael the archangel, Gabriel is the only other angel identified by name in Scripture. Gabriel's name means "man of God," and he is not an archangel, though popularly he is called one. There is only one archangel, and that is Michael. His name means "one who is like God." Michael appears in Daniel 10 and 12 as well as Jude 9 and Revelation 12. He is also referred to by title in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

### 2. The Results of Gabriel's Appearance – 8:17-19

*17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end." <sup>18</sup> Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright. <sup>19</sup> And he said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.*

- Gabriel's appearance had a striking affect on Daniel. If Gabriel had not been identified as an angel, one wonders if Daniel would have been so frightened as to fall on his face, as the Bible regularly identifies angels as appearing like men. Perhaps there was some visual element to Gabriel's appearance as a man that is not identified which frightened the prophet, but more likely it was the quality of his voice that produced Daniel's fear. At any rate, the angel pronounced that the subject matter had to do with "the time of the end." This does not mean, however, the end of time, but the events having to do with various kingdoms and persons that lead to the time of the end of the immediate subjugation of Israel, culminating with the cleansing of the temple by Jacob Maccabeus. This becomes clear as Gabriel speaks.
- During Gabriel's first statement, Daniel fell into a "deep sleep," and while he was facing downward, a touch by Gabriel made him stand. He identified the end previously mentioned as the "final period of the indignation." As the vision unfolds, the reader will learn what Daniel learned about those events having to do with "the appointed time of the end."
- By his statement, Gabriel has again encouraged Daniel regarding God's control the future events of history. Events that were to unfold hundreds of years in the future are predicted with supreme accuracy. Such prediction indicates control, not simply foresight. Hence, Gabriel uses the word *appointed time*,<sup>1</sup> indicating that the certainty is based on God's actions in determining the events.

### F. The Explanation of Gabriel – 8:20-26

#### 1. The Symbolism of the Vision – 8:20-22

*20 "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup> "And the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. <sup>22</sup> "And the broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.*

- Nothing can be clearer than the statements made by Gabriel. For this reason, unbelievers, as previously indicated, regularly deny the genuineness of the book of Daniel. Their denial of the supernatural causes them to place the writings after the events. Note the precision of the statements that the angel makes as he reiterates the meaning of the symbols:
  1. The two horns represent the kings of Media and Persia. The two-pronged kingdom remained in existence from the time of Cyrus until it was overthrown by Alexander the Great.
  2. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece. This refers to Greece as a world power. Prior to Alexander Greece was a collection of city states, and not a proper nation at all. Not

<sup>1</sup> "Appointed time" is one word, מוֹעֵד (mo, 'd), a noun indicating something appointed in advanced. The only reason to use the word in this context is to affirm the certainty of the predictions.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

only did Alexander unify Greece into a single nation, with himself as the ruler, but he expanded it into the greatest empire the world had seen until that time.

3. The large horn is the first king. This is Alexander, the one who unified Greece and expanded it into an empire.
4. The broken horn and the four horns that arise represent four kingdoms coming out of Greece. The broken horn represents the death of Alexander, and the four horns represent Alexander's four generals who divided the land among themselves. See the discussion of Daniel 8:8 above.

### 2. The Aggression of Antiochus IV Epiphanes – 8:23-26

23 "And in the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise Insolent and skilled in intrigue. 24 "And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. 25 "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency. 26 "And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future."

- This is a reiteration of the information about Antiochus IV by Gabriel. The opening phrase, "And in the latter period of their rule" refers to the 4 families of the generals who divided his kingdom. Antiochus was a member of the Seleucid dynasty.
- The clause "When the transgressors have run their course" refers to the fact that the time of the events is near the end of the Greek division of the empire. Rome was soon to rise and subjugate all the land area of which it consisted. It was at that time that "A king will arise." This was Antiochus IV, who, as a boy, had been held hostage in Rome (ISBE, s. v. "Antiochus IV")
- Gabriel describes Antiochus as "insolent and skilled in intrigue." The arrogance of such men brings them to think themselves able to do any act with impunity, such as Antiochus. As a result of several events, Antiochus declared himself king of Egypt. But Alexandria revolted, with the eventual result that Antiochus had to give up his claim. But he had also claimed Palestine as part of his rule, and he maintained that even after withdrawing from Egypt.
- On a second campaign against Egypt, Jerusalem was attacked, which prompted Antiochus to attack Palestine. As a result, He killed of the inhabitants and stole the treasures of the temple. According to Josephus in the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Vol IV, Antiochus, pretending peace...got possession of the city by treachery...and on account of the riches that lay in the temple...led by his covetous inclination (for he saw that in it was a great deal of gold and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value,) and in order to plunder its wealth...he left the temple bare, and took away the golden candlesticks and the golden altar of incense and the table of shewbread and the altar of burnt offering, and did not abstain from even the veils, which were made of fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures, and left nothing at all remaining; and by this means cast the Jews into great lamentation, for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God according to law.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Whiston, trans. *Josephus, Complete Works*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1964), 253. See also 1 Maccabees 1 and 2 Maccabees 5.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Josephus goes on to say,

And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried captive, together with their wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand.<sup>1</sup>
- Josephus continues to recount many other evil acts, which eventually brought about the insurrection of the Jews, under the Maccabees, against whom he made an unsuccessful war in 167-164 BC. Judas Maccabeus in 164 cleansed the temple, and restored the morning and evening sacrifices.
- Gabriel states that these works “were not by his own power,” indicating that they were part of the plan of God. Antiochus did indeed “destroy many while they are at ease.” The thousands he killed in Jerusalem, as well as those taken captive, attest to his ruthless devastation of Judea. He opposed the Prince of princes (God) by his violations of the temple and sacrifice, which he accomplished by ending the evening and morning sacrifices.
- Yet Antiochus ended up in exile, and “was broken without human agency.” He died in Persia in 163 BC, insane.

### G. The Exhaustion of Daniel – 8:27

*27 Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.*

- The experience with Gabriel rightly exhausted Daniel, and he was unable to continue his service to the king for a time. The vision “astounded” him, as it does still today. Dr. McGee makes the following statement,

The physical and psychological effect of this vision upon Daniel was devastating. At this point God was beginning to mesh the “times of the Gentiles” into the history of the nation Israel. That was the thing that puzzled Daniel at the first, and it still puzzles a great many people. How can God mesh His program with Israel into His program for the Gentiles in the world? And today to further complicate it, there is His program with the church. The answer is quite simple, of course. In our day God is calling out a people to His name—we label this called-out group “the church.” When that is concluded, and the church is removed from the earth at the Rapture, then He will again turn to His purpose with Israel and the gentile nations.<sup>2</sup>

## IX. Gabriel's Prediction of the Seventy weeks – 9:1-27

### A. The Circumstances of the Inquiry – 9:1-2

*1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—2 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.*

- For a discussion of Darius, see notes on Chapter 6.
- The “books” were scrolls which must have been brought from Jerusalem at some point, possibly in 605 BC, when Daniel was taken captive. It was based on Daniel's reading of Jeremiah 25 that the subsequent prophecy of the seventy weeks is given. He was an old man,

<sup>1</sup> Whiston, *Josephus*, 253.

<sup>2</sup> McGee, *Through the Bible*, “Daniel.” E-sword.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

and undoubtedly realized that he would not live to return to his beloved homeland. Therefore he supplicates to the Lord concerning the sins of Israel, and is rewarded by an angelic visitor who gives him the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

- The phrase “the desolations of Jerusalem” is a reference to the final defeat the southern kingdom. The city was the focal point of the captive Jews at the time of Daniel’s writing. When Jerusalem was reoccupied in the days of Nehemiah, it brought about the end of the Babylonian Captivity.
- The Babylonians, who had taken the southern kingdom captive in 586 BC, had been conquered by the Persians. The first year of Darius was, according to current scholarship, 538 or 539 BC, 48 years after Daniel had been taken captive if he were deported in the 586 BC deportation, which seems unlikely. More likely, Daniel and his friends were taken captive in the original deportation in 606-605 BC. That would make Daniel nearing 90 years old. Therefore, Daniel’s reading of the scrolls took place shortly after the “hand-writing on the wall” incident.
- Daniel had been reading Jeremiah 25:11 which concerned the length of time the Israelites would be in captivity:

*And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*

- In the year of 538 BC Cyrus made the actual decree allowing the Judeans to be set free. Calculating from the 606-605 initial deportation, 538 BC was the 68<sup>th</sup> year of captivity. It took approximately two years from Cyrus’ decree for the first returnees to enter the ruins of Jerusalem. According to Nehemiah 3:8, the foundation to the temple of Jerusalem was laid in the spring of 535 BC, which brought the 70 year captivity to an official close.
- Therefore, Daniel well knew that the period of desolation was soon to end, but also realized that the Gentile domination of his nation, and indeed the entirety of Israel as a whole was not about to take place. From history, today we know what Daniel must have realized, that the dispersed Israelites were now settled in their new homes, and that only a small remnant would actually return to the land. It was probably this realization that caused the prayer and supplication by the Prophet beginning in 9:3.

### **B. The Prayer and Supplication of Daniel 9:3-19**

#### **1. Daniel Confesses the Iniquity of Israel – 9:3-14**

##### **a) The Contrast between God and Israel – 9:3-11**

##### **1) Daniel’s Attitude in Prayer and Supplication – 9:3**

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

- In thinking about the soon end of the 70 year period, Daniel was not lead to rejoicing, but to further mourning, as indicated by his fasting, and the cultural idea of sackcloth and ashes. The name sackcloth indicates the material’s purpose. It was cloth used in making sacks or bags, a coarse fabric, of a dark color, made of goat’s hair, not intended to be worn, but as clothing was a symbol of mourning and repentance. Likewise, the spreading of ash over one’s clothing was a symbol of mourning for the dead.
- Prayer and supplication do not carry precisely the same meaning in Hebrew as do those words in the Greek New Testament, though there are common elements. Prayer in the Old Testament was, as in the New Testament, primarily an act of worship, indicated by the words

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

“I gave my attention to the Lord God.” The literal Hebrew statement is “I gave my face to the Lord God. Supplication was closer to the New Testament idea of intercession, asking for God to intervene.

### 2) Daniel’s Worship of the Lord – 9:4

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

- Daniel does not repeat himself when he says, “And I prayed to the Lord my God.” In the previous statement he uses the phrase *adonai elohim* to refer to God. But here he uses the more intimate *Yahweh elohim*. Further more, he adds the possessive *my* the word *elohim*. *Yahweh* is the personal name of God, while *elohim* indicates deity in the strongest terms. In later years, the Jews refused to even pronounce *Yahweh* to avoid violating the commandment not to take the name *Yahweh* in vain, thereby misconstruing the commandment. Daniel, on the other hand correctly uses the word by stating that *Yahweh* is “my God,” a clear distinction from the pagan God’s of the Gentiles.
- Daniel’s worshipful attitude continues with the words “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness.” God’s character is thus correctly stated, and done so in relationship to “His covenant.” Daniel must mean the Mosaic covenant, the violation of which caused the deportation to Babylon. God’s application of this Covenant through Jeremiah is about to come to fruition with the ending of the 70 years of desolation.
- But this application will only be “for those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Not all Israel will return to the land of promise, but only those who obey the order to return. The great majority of Israel remained in dispersion, a dispersion that continues to this day.

### 3) Daniel’s Contrast between God and Israel – 9:5-8

*5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. 6 “Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land. 7 “Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou hast driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against Thee. 8 “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee.*

- Verses 5-6 recount the situation that brought about the captivity of both the northern and southern kingdoms. Daniel’s consciousness of these facts is basic to his approach to *Yahweh elohim* at this point. He recognizes that his people, who he identifies in descending order as kings, princes, fathers, and all people of the land, ignored the prophets.
- In vs. 7, Daniel contrasts the righteousness of God with the open shame of the captives which was continuing “to this day.” He then identifies both the southern nation of Judah, along with the “inhabitants of Jerusalem,” and then “all Israel” which includes the northern kingdom of the ten tribes along with the two southern tribes.
- Daniel includes a comprehensive statement concerning the dispersion. It consisted of “those who are nearby,” as well “those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou has driven them,” a clear reference to the earlier deportation through the Assyrians.
- Vs. 8 consists of a summary confession of the sin which brought about the “open shame” of God’s people.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### 4) Daniel's Recognition of God's Justice – 9:9-11

9 *“To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 “Indeed all Israel has transgressed Thy law and turned aside, not obeying Thy voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.*

- Verses 9-11 consist of a recognition of God's compassion and forgiveness, even though His people rebelled and disobeyed God's teachings through the prophets (vss. 9-10). He continues in vs. 11 to identify the specific problem, the transgressions of the law of Moses. The result of the disobedience to God's voice is that “the curse has been poured out on us.”
- Deuteronomy 28 indicates both blessings (verses 1-14) and cursings (verses 15-68) associated with the Mosaic code. Because of Israel's disobedience, the cursings were applied by God to bring His people back to obedience. Note specifically verses 32-33:

*Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no strength in your hand. <sup>33</sup> A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. (NKJV)*

- Daniel here refers to the captivity. God warned Israel through the writings of the law by Moses, God's servant, and His justice was meted out, because “we have sinned against Him.”

#### b) The Confirmation of God's Righteous Judgment against Israel – 9:12-14

12 *“Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 “As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth. 14 “Therefore, the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.*

- The siege and destruction of Jerusalem was unprecedented (vs. 12). The book of Lamentations lays out the great suffering of the people.
- Yet this did not bring Israel to seek God's favor, and turn from their “iniquity” to Him. Consequently, God's righteous judgment against Israel continued, yet Israel had not obeyed (vss. 13-14).

#### 2. Daniel Appeals for the Forgiveness of God – 9:15-19

15 *“And now, O Lord our God, who hast brought Thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and hast made a name for Thyself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 “O Lord, in accordance with all Thy righteous acts, let now Thine anger and Thy wrath turn away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all those around us. 17 “So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary. 18 “O my God, incline Thine ear and hear! Open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we are not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Thy great compassion. 19 “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.”*



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- This final aspect of Daniel's communication with God recognizes God's past deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and again states the people's unrighteousness. Daniel appeals for God's forgiveness. Jerusalem again is the focus of Daniel's prayer, as it is characterized as God's "holy mountain," and is therefore primary in his request. It is where God's sanctuary exists, that is, the Temple, which is desolate.
- Again he addresses the Lord as "my God" and invokes His response (incline Thine ear and hear,") and presents his supplications based on God's compassion, rather than on the merits of the captives. His conclusion is that God should act because "Thy city" (Jerusalem), and "Thy people" (Israel, not just Judah and Benjamin) are "called by Thy name." It is, cries Daniel, God's reputation that is at stake.

### C. The Presentation of the 70 Weeks – 9:20-27

#### 1. Gabriel Appears to Daniel – 9:20-22

*20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 And he gave me instruction and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.*

- For the second time Gabriel appears (see 8:16), this time while Daniel was still praying. The timing is indicated, as it appears that Daniel had remained in prayer until late evening, the time of the evening offering. The result was his "extreme weariness."
- Daniel's supplication was specifically directed to "the holy mountain of God," a reference to Jerusalem. His concern is not simply for the city, but for the nation of Israel.
- Gabriel's purpose is to give Daniel "insight with understanding," concerning the nation Israel, and the return of governing power to Jerusalem. It is probable that Daniel, realizing the 70 year captivity was drawing to a close, was thinking that Jerusalem, as the place of government," would be restored immediately, with Israel as a unified nation, and with the tribal boundaries in tact. But this was not to be so.
- The subsequent presentation was to disabuse Daniel of that idea, and God's timetable for the establishment of the future restoration of Israel as the people of God.

#### 2. Gabriel Explains to Daniel – 9:23-27

##### a) The 70 Weeks Presented – 9:23-24

*23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision. 24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.*

- Daniel needed instruction concerning God's prophetic plan for Israel based on the prophets reading of the Jeremiah scroll. Without the further revelation, Daniel would not have understood the full implications of what God planned for the long-term future for Israel. As noted above, while the 70 years captivity was drawing to a close, the full restoration of Israel as the kingdom of God on earth was not to be established at that time.
- The prophecy deals specifically with two subjects: "your people" meaning Daniel's people Israel, and "your holy city," meaning Jerusalem. That Israelites would be the subject of this prophecy is not surprising. Again, Gabriel emphasizes the importance of the city of

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

Jerusalem as the symbol of God's established kingdom. From here on, and throughout prophecies dealing with Israel, Jerusalem becomes the focal point of the geographical elements of the revelation.

Even in ruins, Jerusalem remains the city set apart in the heart of God and Daniel shared this love for the city which is central in God's program for His kingdom both in the past and the future. Unlike the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, which primarily related to the Gentiles, this chapter is specifically God's program for the people of Israel, as Daniel would obviously interpret it.<sup>1</sup>

- Six elements are expressed by Daniel with reference to the purpose of the 70 weeks prophecy. Many attempt to find interpretations for these six elements outside the immediate historical contextual situation of Daniel and his reader, a very dangerous approach to take when interpreting any Scripture.
- Several of these six elements are given a soteriological (salvation) rather than an eschatological (future events) interpretation by some. In fact, the first five are very often given a soteriological meaning, even by dispensationalists who one would presume should know better! Several reasons, however, can be presented to show that such an approach cannot stand:
  1. The context does not deal with salvation but with prophecy and end times. In other words, the context is not soteriological, but eschatological.
  2. As a corollary to number one above, it must be stated that the original recipients of the prophecy would never have transferred its meaning from an eschatological to a soteriological perspective. The salvation work of Christ is not the subject of the prophecy.
  3. The six statements are associated with the entire prophecy of the seventy weeks, not the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.
- The completion of the entire period of 70 weeks is in view in these six statements. Therefore, the best understanding of each of these six elements associates them with the future kingdom period after the 70 weeks rather than the time period of the unfolding of the seventy weeks. Larkin, a much aligned author because of his excessive use of charts, makes this correct statement:

“We are told that these ‘Six Things’ concern only **Daniel’s PEOPLE** (the Jews), and the **HOLY CITY** (Jerusalem). This is very important. It discloses the fact that the ‘Seventy Weeks’ have nothing to do with the ‘**Gentiles**’ or the ‘**Church**,’ but only with the **JEWS** and **JERUSALEM**. While the ‘Messiah the Prince’ (Christ) when He was ‘**CUT OFF**’ (Crucified), as described in verse 26, made an ‘**End of Sin**’ (Hebrews 10:12), and ‘**Reconciliation for Iniquity**’ (Romans 5:6-10,) that was for the whole world. But the Atonement of Christ for the whole world is not in view here. It is the ‘putting away’ or ‘finishing’ of the ‘**Transgression**’ of one class of persons – **THE JEWS**.”<sup>2</sup>

- Larkin correctly states that when Messiah the Prince was “cut off” the passage deals not with the “Atonement of Christ for the whole world.” Rather, it deals with God's people, the Jews. Each of these six elements are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, pg. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel*, pg. 177.

# Notes on the Book of Daniel

## 1. To finish the transgression

- The concept of finishing transgression is taken by some to be a soteriological reference. However, the transgression here is not a general word for “sin,” but a specific word dealing with the Jewish economy. “To finish the transgression” then is not referring to Christ’s work on the cross to overcome sin.
- Some (Ryrie, Walvoord, Larkin, Tatford) believe this refers to ending the apostasy of Israel. That is, it is the twelve tribes’ transgression against God that is being brought to an end. This is a possible explanation, as the end of that apostasy will take place during the 70<sup>th</sup> week.
- However, *the transgression* (articular in the Hebrew) could refer to the transgression against Israel by her enemies. In this case, the phrase refers to establishment of the righteous rule of the Messiah in delivering His people from their enemies, and thereby ending the nations transgression against God’s people, Israel. This seems the more likely possibility.

## 2. To make an end of sin

- The soteriological interpretation of this statement refers it to the work of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, which, as previously stated, is *not* the context of the passage.
- Both Ryrie and Walvoord believe this *can* refer either to bringing sin to an end (the millennial period) or to bring final judgment on sin (perhaps Christ’s sacrifice, the soteriological interpretation, or, perhaps the tribulation period, an eschatological interpretation).
- Larkin, in the work already cited, says that the end of sins happens at the second coming when “God turns away ungodliness from Jacob and take away from Israel all their sins.” Tatford agrees, saying, “The people’s sins would come to a definite end.”<sup>1</sup> This is an eschatological interpretation that associates the ending of sin with the New Covenant for Israel of Jeremiah 31:31ff.
- To refer this to Christ’s sacrifice is unsound, as that is not what would have been in the mind of Daniel or his readers. Even after receiving the prophecy, the event of the Messiah’s being “cut off” does not refer to the 70 weeks period per se, but to the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks.
- The more likely understanding is to the millennial period, the end of the time during which Israel is dispersed because of failure to keep the Mosaic code. Daniel himself refers to this failure earlier in this passage (vs. 13). Thus Larkin’s and Tatford’s view that this takes place at the second coming of Christ seems the correct one. Once the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31ff is instituted, which will be at the beginning of the millennial period, God will remember Israel’s sin no more. Israel will be established in righteousness in the land.

## 3. To make atonement for iniquity

- The word “atonement” (NASB) is a better translation than “reconciliation” (KJV, NKJV) in this statement. Again we see that this is often taken to refer to the death of Christ (Ryrie, Walvoord, Tatford). However, Walvoord goes on to say, “While the basic provision for reconciliation was made at the cross, the actual application of it is again associated with the second advent of Christ as far as Israel is concerned, and an eschatological explanation is possible for this phase as well as an historic fulfillment.”

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Tatford, *Daniel and His Prophecy*, pg. 154

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- A better interpretation is to refer this to the culmination of the events of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (Larkin) during which Israel's final judgment (atonement) takes place, at the end of which the atonement is complete and the millennial period begins. The word atonement (Hebrews *kaphar*, covering) cannot be legitimately applied to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, which does not actually take place during the 70 week period, but in the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks. Even Walvoord recognizes the "eschatological explanation is possible." It is actually not only possible, but *required* by the context. No soteriological explanation can find a legitimate place here as this interpretation is not consistent with the historical circumstance nor viewpoint of the author or original readers.

### 4. To bring in everlasting righteousness

- Strangely, Walvoord and others attempt to make this a reference to Christ's first advent and His work for the "justification of the sinner." This approach is simply not possible, as the original writer and readers could not have understood such an idea, which violates normal interpretive procedure. Walvoord goes on to say, "The many Messianic passages, however, which view righteousness as being applied to the earth at the time of the second coming of Christ may be the ultimate explanation." He goes on to refer to Jeremiah 23:5-6, Isaiah 11:2-5, etc. which support this approach.
- The only legitimate interpretation is the eschatological one. Daniel and his readers would undoubtedly have understood this in the Messianic sense of the establishment of God's rule on the earth. (Larkin, Ryrie, Tatford hold this view.)

### 5. To seal up vision and prophecy

- Walvoord identifies this as: "The cessation of the New Testament prophetic gift seen both in oral prophecy and the writing of the Scriptures," a very strange view, indeed, for a dispensationalist.
- However, the statement must refer to the ending of prophecy during the 70<sup>th</sup> week, during which prophets will again work among the people of Israel. During the millennial period no prophesying concerning God's people Israel activity will occur, as no new revelation will be necessary. (Larkin, Ryrie, Tatford hold this view.)

### 6. To anoint the most holy.

- The term "most holy *place*" (NKJV) is better than simply "the most holy" (KJV). However, the most correct translation from the Hebrew is "Holy of Holies." This refers to the inner room of the sanctuary in the Temple in Jerusalem where in the Old Testament the presence of God dwelt as manifested by His cloud of glory over the ark of the covenant.
- The ultimate "anointing" of the Holy of Holies will take place when the "anointed one" (Messiah) returns to take up His appointed residence in the Sanctuary in Jerusalem. Again, the millennial period will see the Messiah of Israel ruling from the Temple in Jerusalem, seated on His throne in the most holy place. This is the view held by virtually every premillennialist.

### b) The 70 Weeks Divided – 9:25-26

25 "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### 1) The Beginning of the 70 Weeks

- The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem begins the time-table. Four different decrees have been suggested:
  1. The Decree of Cyrus that the Temple be Rebuilt (2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5)
  2. The Decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:6-12)
  3. The First Decree of Artaxerxes to Rebuild the Temple (Ezra 7:11-26)
  4. The Decree of Artaxerxes given in Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city (Nehemiah 2:1-8)
- As can be seen by a careful reading of Scripture, the first three decrees deal with the temple, not with the city itself.
- Only the decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8 fulfills the conditions of Daniel's prophecy. The actual building of the city and the wall did not begin until Nehemiah's time. It is this decree that actually begins the 70 weeks.

### 2) The Structure of the 70 Weeks

- The First 69 Weeks, or 483 years, is divided into two parts of 7 weeks (49 years) and 62 weeks (434 years).
- The first 49 years is the period during which the city and wall were being rebuilt.
- The subsequent period of 434 years is that long period during which no prophecy occurred referring to the coming of Messiah. Those post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi bring to a close the prophetic statements dealing with the nation of Israel. In a real sense, the historical narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke express the events leading up to the culmination of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, to which Jesus alludes during His earthly ministry (Matthew 24:1ff; Mark 13:1ff; Luke 21:5ff).
- Further, the 70<sup>th</sup> week is itself divided into two parts, as is seen by the term "*in the middle of the week.*"

### 3) The End of the Sixty-Ninth Week

- The most likely event which terminated the 69<sup>th</sup> week was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Other events have also been suggested: 1) the second cleansing of the temple by Christ, 2) the crucifixion of Christ, 3) the ascension of Christ. Number 1) is at least possible, but the crucifixion and other events seem clearly to be after the culmination of the 69<sup>th</sup> week. The most significant element of the time table, however, is that the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week took place during the latter part of Christ's earthly sojourn.

### 4) The Gap between the Sixty-Ninth and Seventieth Weeks

- After the 69th week, Messiah is cut off. This refers to the death of Messiah. By application we understand this to refer to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Note that the crucifixion is *not* part of the timetable of the 70 weeks, but is in a gap period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Daniel 9 does not say that the Messiah is cut off DURING the 69 weeks, but AFTER<sup>1</sup> the 69th week.
- Also during the Gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed. This destruction is accomplished by "the people of the prince who is to come," rather than by the prince himself. This destruction took place by the Roman general Titus in

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. = אָחָר (*achar*).

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

70 AD. Therefore, the “prince who is to come” refers to a subsequent Roman leader, not to Titus himself, as some have thought. This future prince is the one called the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8. Note the following:

1. The people of the prince who is to come do the destroying, NOT THE PRINCE HIMSELF. The best explanation for this peculiar wording is that the people refer to the ethnic or political group from which the prince comes. These people were the Romans, who under Titus destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD.
2. It is clear that “the prince who is to come” is not Messiah the prince, but another prince who is antagonistic to God and His program for Israel. “The prince who is to come” is to be identified with the “little horn” of Daniel 7, commonly incorrectly called the antichrist. He is also seen represented in the second beast of Revelation 13. He is a Roman prince, who will lead the “revived Roman Empire” during the period of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. (See the discussion below dealing with the Gentiles in prophecy for more information concerning this prince.)
3. The gap continues today. The prophetic program for Israel is held in abeyance until the present prophetic program for the church is completed.

### c) The 70<sup>th</sup> Week Explained – 9:27

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

#### 1) The Beginning of the 70th Week

- The 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel begins with the confirmation of a covenant (Hebrew = בְּרִית, *b<sup>e</sup>rit*). This event has not yet taken place. Therefore, we are still in the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks.
- The word “*he*” at the beginning of verse 27 refers to the Roman prince who is to come.
- The “*covenant*” is best understood as a treaty of some kind, perhaps guaranteeing the safety of Israel.
- This covenant is time limited, in that it is confirmed for 1 week (7 years). However, the covenant is violated by the prince “in the middle of the week,” that is, after three and one half years.
- The word “*many*” often refers to Israel, especially in prophetic passages. During the first half of the week, Israel is in the land, but in unbelief. See Ezekiel 37:1-8. However, sometime during the 70<sup>th</sup> week God begins to bring Israel to faith. Scripture indicates that this is but a “remnant” of the original people. The synagogue system will be in effect, and many will reject the messianic message (Luke 21:12).

#### 2) The Middle of the 70th Week

- In “*the middle of the week,*” the Roman prince violates the covenant by bringing an end to sacrifice and offering. Using the 30 day calendar as a basis, this is 1260 days after the signing of the covenant. See Revelation 12:6.
- “*The wing of abominations*” refers to swift actions that bring about the destruction of Israel.
- “*The one who makes desolate*” refers to the terrible infliction of suffering brought about by the Roman prince.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Many Jews will betray their own kin (Luke 21:16). Yet the 144,000 Israelites from the 12 tribes will truly serve God and remain pure (Revelation 7). The gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world to the Gentile nations (Matthew 24:14). This may be partly accomplished by the fact that beginning at the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week believing Israelites will be led captive into Gentile nations (Luke 21:24).

### 3) The Culmination of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week

- “*The consummation which is determined is poured out on the desolate*” refers to the bringing to an end of the activities of the Roman prince, that is, the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week.
- While not directly mentioned in Daniel 9, the events which lead up to the end are discussed in detail by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25) and related passages. See the next chapter.

## X. God’s Elaboration of Prophetic Events – 10:1-12:13

### A. Introduction to the Vision – 10:1-21

#### 1. The Time of the Revelation – 10:1

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

- The events of Daniel 1 took place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Cyrus, which was 536 BC. At that time exiles had begun to return to Jerusalem, but Daniel stayed in Babylon, probably because of his great age.
- Daniel was probably in his 80s at this time. The events here take place 72 years after he had been taken captive in his youth. If he were 16 when taken captive, he would be approximately 88 years old by this time.

#### 2. The Appearance of a Spirit Being – 10:2-9

*2 In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed. 4 And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. 6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. 7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. 9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.*

- The cause of Daniel’s mourning is not stated specifically. It may have been because he was too old to make the journey back to Jerusalem. Or it may have been because he realized that, though the captivity was ending, it was to be hundreds of years before the kingdom of God was to be established, that is, at the end of the 70 weeks. Of course, he knew nothing of the length of the gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks, except that enough time would occur so that Messiah could be cut off.
- “Three weeks” is literally “three sevens of days.” This is in contrast to the “seventy sevens” of years in the previous chapter.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- Daniel's visitor was clearly not a human. His description in vs. 6 is indicative of a spirit being. Some believe this was another appearance of Gabriel, though the text does not indicate such, "Since Gabriel previously had been sent by God to reveal truth to Daniel (8:16), probably Gabriel was also the visitor on this occasion. Angels, who dwell in the presence of God who is light, are themselves clothed with light, and Daniel saw something of heaven's glory reflected in this one who visited him (10:5-6)." (BKC) This is pure speculation.
- The "gold of Uphaz" is something of a mystery. According to ISBE, Uphaz is a "gold bearing region, mentioned in Jeremiah 10:9 and Dan 10:5, otherwise unknown. In the second passage, instead of 'gold of Uphaz,' perhaps 'gold and fine gold' (Heb: 'uphaz) should be read."
- Having been deserted by his companions, Daniel was left alone to bear this vision and its effects. Again an encounter with God's messenger leaves him weak and helpless.

### 3. The Presentation of Spiritual Resistance – 10:10-17

*10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. 12 Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. 13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. 14 "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future." 15 And when he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. 16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, and said to him who was standing before me, "O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 "For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me."*

- One of the reasons this supernatural being is not to be considered the pre-incarnate Christ is the episode which he recounts in this paragraph. He had been resisted so that for some three weeks (21 days), from the time Daniel started praying, another spirit being, probably a fallen angel, hindered his coming to Daniel. At some point he had to get Michael's help, which would not have been necessary for a person of the godhead.
- We have a glimpse into the on-going battle in the spirit realm. A spirit being called the prince (Heb. *sar*, probably a sub-ruler in the spirit realm) of the kingdom of Persia withstood God's messenger to Daniel. (The reference indicates that this spirit being had a geographical responsibility at the time.) The nature and strategy of this warfare is not given. Nevertheless, it is real and substantial. We know that spirit beings are ranked, evidently according to power and ability. In this particular conflict a spirit being of great power and authority, Michael, came to the aid of one of lesser power. Michael is called one of the chief princes (Heb *sarim*), one of higher rank than the prince of the kingdom of Persia.
- The messenger states that he had been left "with the kings of Persia." Most expositors understand the word "left" to mean that he was no longer needed with the kings of Persia, not that he remained with them. This is based on the meaning of the Hebrew word *yathar*, which, according to BDB means here, "*I was left over there beside the kings* (i. e. I had nothing more to do". The "kings of Persia" are probably the human kings who had been being influenced by the demonic prince.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- It seems clear that a geographical, political, social struggle is on-going in the spirit realm. During the previous 21 day struggle the demonic being attempting to influence Persia was defeated with the help of Michael. The result was then that the program for God's dealings between Israel and Persia could go forth. Probably the struggle had to do with hindering God's plan for returning Israel to the land through the instrumentality of the Persian kings.
- The term "your people" in vs. 14 refers not to believers in general, or even believing Jews. The term refers to the Israelites as a national entity. This national entity is based on physical relationships, not simply spiritual ones. In fact, national Israel has always consisted of both believers and unbelievers. This is consistent with the way the term "latter days" is used in this context.
- The term "latter days" has more than one meaning in Scripture. In Daniel 2:28-10:14 the phrase refers to the end of Gentile dominion over Israel. It does not refer to a specific time period, but to the time after the 70 year captivity and therefore later than the judicial dispersion. In the Old Testament the term "latter days" has a variety of meanings: 1) the final rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 31:29), 2) the time of the future tribulation of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:30; Ezekiel 38:16), 3) the coming of Messiah and the establishment of the earthly Davidic kingdom (Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1).
- The New Testament uses the phrase "latter days" in a variety of ways as well: 1) twice in the New Testament the phrase refers to the period of time that began with the 1<sup>st</sup> advent of Christ (Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20), 2) the phrase often refers to the end of the present age (2 Timothy 3:1; James. 5:3; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 3:3), 3) the Lord Jesus Christ used the phrase "the last day" to refer to the resurrection (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 12:48).

### 4. The Warfare in Spiritual Realms – 10:18-21

*18 Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. 19 And he said, "O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!" Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, "May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." 20 Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 "However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.*

- This final paragraph in chapter 10 indicates the summary of the matter. It is used to introduce the rest of the vision found in chapters 11 and 12. For the third and final time a spirit being gives Daniel strength. As a result he is able to understand the rest of the vision.
- The spirit being indicates that he will return to fight against the demonic prince of Persia. Associated with that fight is the coming of the prince of Greece, undoubtedly another demonic spirit who will take up the warfare when the prince of Persia is defeated. The warfare is on going and the next events will relate to Persia and then Greece. Only two spirit beings are engaged in this particular set of battles, Daniel's messenger and Michael the archangel. However, we see in the following predictions that these two spirit beings are sufficient to thwart the Satanic plan and continue God's dealing with Israel.
- "Michael, your prince," indicates that Michael had a special relationship to Israel. In God's wisdom, He appointed angels responsibilities to promote His plan in various locations. It appears that Satan did likewise, leading to a constant battle in the heavenly realms.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

### B. The Substance of the Vision – 11:1-12:13

#### 1. The Countries Involved – 11:1-20

##### a) Persia and Greece – 11:1-4

##### 1) The Four Persian Kings – 11:1-2

1 “AND in the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him. 2 “And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

- Evidently Daniel’s messenger played the part of the righteous “prince of the Medes” as he protected Darius from the onslaught of demonic activity. The episode of Daniel in the den of lions is one event that probably originated as a demonic influence with Darius’ advisors. Yet angelic protection was over God’s plan, and God sovereignly intervened, probably through the agency of this very angel.
- The first three kings mentioned by the angel are 1) Cambyses (592-522 BC), 2) Pseudo-Smerdis (522-521 BC), and 3) Darius I Hystaspes (521-486 BC). Cambyses was the older of the two sons of Cyrus. He ruled Babylon at the time of his father’s rule over Medo-Persia. Pseudo-Smerdis lasted less than a year. Darius I Hystaspes was an effective ruler. He is mentioned twice in Ezra (5:7; 6:1).
- The fourth king mentioned is Xerxes I (486-465 BC). In Ezra 4:6 and Esther 1:1 he is called Ahasuerus, which was the old Persian form of Xerxes. The Persian Empire came to its zenith under Xerxes. He fought against the Greeks, and was initially successful. Finally he was defeated by the Greeks at Salamis and Palataea.

##### 2) The Mighty Greek King – 11:3

3 “And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. 4 “But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded; for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

- From Daniel 11:3 and extending through 11:35, there is a detailed prediction of the conflicts between the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty in Syria. For a time, Judea was first under the one and then the other, but eventually the Seleucid dynasty of Syria came to dominate the Levant. The discussion starts with Alexander, and concludes with Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- The mighty Greek king is Alexander the Great. He stood up to make war primarily against the Persians at first, but was so successful that he extended his warfare to the extreme reaches of known civilization.
- His kingdom was divided to the four points of the compass after Alexander’s death.
- Since Alexander had no descendants, his sovereign reign was taken over by four of his generals.

##### b) Egypt and Syria – 11:5-20

##### 1) A King and a Prince – 11:5

5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The king of the south is Ptolemy I Soter<sup>1</sup> (323-285 BC). He died in either 284 or 285 BC. He was king of ancient Egypt, the first ruler of the Macedonian dynasty (or Lagid dynasty), the son of a Macedonian named Lagus. He was one of the leading generals of Alexander the Great, and after Alexander's death (323 BC) he joined the other *Diadochi* (the Greek means *successors*, and refers to the Macedonian generals and administrators who succeeded Alexander the Great in dividing and quarreling over the empire. Ptolemy received Egypt and managed to keep control of it in the midst of constant warfare. To strengthen his position he married Eurydice, daughter of Antipater (though he soon shifted his affection to her niece and his own half sister, Berenice). He defeated Perdiccas (321), and he at first supported Antigonos I in the struggle for imperial power. He defeated Eumenes, then fearing Antigonos' efforts to remake the empire, allied himself with Cassander and Lysimachus. Ptolemy defeated the troops of Antigonos in 312 but he was defeated at Salamis in 306, and the ultimate defeat and death of Antigonos at Ipsus in 301 resolved the situation. Ptolemy had already declared himself king of Egypt in 305 BC. Subsequently he laid the outline for Ptolemaic administration in Egypt and did much to make Alexandria a center of culture and art by founding the library there.
- One of his descendants married Cleopatra, a descendant of Seleucus.
- "One of his princes" refers to Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 BC) who died in 280 or 281 BC. He was king of ancient Syria. An able general of Alexander the Great, he played a leading part in the wars of the *Diadochi*. In the partition of Alexander's empire in 312 BC he received Babylonia. Seleucus was drawn into the league against Antigonos I, and when Antigonos was defeated at Ipsus in 301 BC, Seleucus gained a large part of Asia Minor and all of Syria. Of the Macedonian generals he was the one who tried hardest to set up a kingdom following Alexander's ideas. He founded Greek colonies such as Seleucia and Antioch. He also tried to govern the subject people according to the methods of the Persian Empire. He finally won Asia Minor by defeating Lysimachus in the battle at Corupedion in Lydia in 281, an event that marked the end of the *Diadochi*. Seleucus was murdered before he could achieve his ambition of seizing the vacant throne of Macedonia as well. He was succeeded by Antiochus I.
- Originally Ptolemy and Seleucus were allies, with Ptolemy the Stronger. He helped Seleucus in his solidifying of Asian power. Eventually, however, Seleucus became stronger than Ptolemy, and they became rivals.

### 2) A Prediction – 11:6

6 *"And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times.*

- Ptolemy II Philadelphus, c.308-246 BC, was king of Egypt (285-246 BC), of the Macedonian dynasty, son of Ptolemy I and Berenice (c 340-281 BC). He continued his father's efforts to make Alexandria the cultural center of the Greek speaking world. He completed the Pharos Lighthouse and encouraged the translation of the Pentateuch into the Greek Septuagint. Finances were reformed, and a canal was built from the Nile to the Red Sea. He warred against Syria until he married off his daughter Berenice to the king of Syria, Antiochus II, in about 252 BC.

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<sup>1</sup> *Soter* means *savior*, and is the word often used of Christ in the New Testament.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- This king of Syria, called Antiochus II Theos<sup>1</sup>, divorced his wife, Laodice, and married Berenice to cement the alliance between Syria and Egypt. When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II remarried Laodice, which turned out to be a great mistake. In revenge Laodice murdered both Antiochus II and Berenice.
- What a wonderful group of reprobates!

### 3) Related Events – 11:7-9

7 “But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. 8 “And also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. 9 “Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

- The brother of Berenice, Ptolemy Physcon<sup>2</sup>, also known as Ptolemy III Euergetes<sup>3</sup>, king of Egypt (145-116 BC), defeated Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, in battle. He was co-ruler with his brother and his brother's wife from 170-164 BC. Trouble resulted in a settlement by which Ptolemy Physcon ruled Cyrene. On his brother's death he returned to Egypt, had his nephew put to death, and married Cleopatra, his brother's widow (not the later Cleopatra of Antony and Cleopatra fame). He soon repudiated her and married her daughter, also named Cleopatra. The elder Cleopatra led a revolt and drove him out of Egypt (130 BC). He returned in 127 BC and later ruled peacefully though despotically. Both queens survived him. His reign was one of great cruelty; he drove the scholars from Alexandria and thus brought about the spreading of Greek culture.
- Ptolemy III carried away the idols from Syria and brought them to Egypt. Some of these idols were previously taken to Syria by Cambyses when he had conquered Egypt under Alexander the Great.
- Vs. 9 concerns Seleucus Callinicus, who invaded Egypt some years later, but was defeated and forced to return to Syria.
- Seleucus Callinicus, who died in c. 226 BC, was king of Syria from 247-226 BC. He was the son of Antiochus II. On his father's death there was a struggle for the throne between Seleucus and his stepmother, Berenice (on behalf of her infant son). Seleucus Callinicus seems to have murdered both Berenice and her son before her brother Ptolemy III of Egypt could arrive. A long war with Ptolemy III ensued. Callinicus also had to wage war with his own brother, Antiochus Hierax<sup>4</sup>, who had made peace with Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt and then tried to recover the territories his brother took from him in Asia Minor. He was succeeded by his son Seleucus III, who was killed after a three-year reign. Another son, Antiochus III, then became king of Syria.

### 4) Warfare – 11:10-19

10 “And his sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress. 11 “And the

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<sup>1</sup> Antiochus II was given the title θεός (god) by the Milesians during the Second Syrian War (there were six wars between the Seleucid Empire and the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt) out of gratitude because he killed the petty tyrant Timarchus, who ruled the Greek city-state of Miletus, which must have caused them to believe that only a god could do such a thing.

<sup>2</sup> φύσχον means *fat one*. Was he over weight?

<sup>3</sup> εὐρεγίτης means *benefactor*.

<sup>4</sup> ἰεραξ is the Greek word *hawk*, probably given to Antiochus because of his violent nature.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

*king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. 12 "When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 13 "For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval*

Ptolemy V succeeded to the throne as a small boy, and his reign began with disastrous civil wars. Invasions by Antiochus III of Syria and Philip V of Macedon cost Egypt all of Palestine and the Egyptian possessions in Asia Minor. Antiochus defeated Ptolemy decisively at the Battle of Panion in 200 BC. Peace was confirmed by the marriage of Ptolemy to Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus. The Rosetta stone inscriptions concern Ptolemy V's ascension to the throne.

*of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment. 14 "Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. 15 "Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. 16 "But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. 17 "And he will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side. 18 "Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. 19 "So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.*

- Seleucus Callinicus and his son, Antiochus III (the Great) attacked Egypt and were defeated by Ptolemy IV Philopator<sup>1</sup>. Ptolemy IV was a lovely character. He had his mother, his brother, his uncle, and possibly his wife (who was his sister Arsinoë) killed.
- Antiochus the Great, who died 187 BC, was king of Syria from 223-187 BC. He was the son of Seleucus II and younger brother of Seleucus III, whom he succeeded. At his accession the Seleucid empire was in decline. Although Antiochus did not succeed in totally restoring the greatness of the Seleucid dynasty, he did much to revive its glory. Although he was defeated earlier by the Egyptians at Raphia, he and Philip V of Macedon undertook in 202 BC to wrest Egyptian territories from the boy king, Ptolemy V. While Philip V was engaged by the Roman armies, Antiochus recovered Syria and Asia Minor. In 199 BC he won a decisive victory over the Egyptians; Palestine then reverted to Syria, having been under Egyptian rule for almost a century. He forced the young king of Egypt to marry his daughter, Cleopatra (not the famous Cleopatra). In 196 he seized the Thracian Chersonese and thus alarmed the Greeks. They as well as the Egyptians sought the aid of the Romans. Antiochus, who disregarded the advice of Hannibal in 193, waited and then challenged Rome by accepting the invitation of the Aetolian League to interfere in Greece in 192. The Romans defeated him in 191 BC at Thermopylae and again at Magnesia (190), under the great Roman

Philip V (reigned in Macedon from 221-179 BC), engaged in war against Rome. Although the First Macedonian War (215-205 BC) ended favorably for Philip, he was decisively defeated in the Second Macedonian War (200-197 BC), was forced to give up most of his fleet and pay a large compensation, and was confined to Macedonia proper.

<sup>1</sup> φιλοπάτωρ means *one who loves his father*, an ironic name, given his vile actions against his family

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

general Scipio. He also lost a number of naval engagements, and in 188 he was forced to give up all his territory west of the Taurus Mountains. He returned to Syria where he was killed.

### 5) Seleucus Philopater – 11:20

20 *“Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle.*

- Because of the defeat of Antiochus III by the Romans, his successor, Seleucus Philopater, was forced to pay tribute to Rome. To raise money, Seleucus taxed all the people under him, especially the Jews. Seleucus Philopater died suddenly and mysteriously, opening the door to his successor, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

### 2. The Persons Involved – 11:21-12:13

#### a) Antiochus IV Epiphanes – 11:21-35

- Why is there so much emphasis on Antiochus IV Epiphanes? Why did Daniel’s vision include so much revelation concerning this single individual, the most of any single individual. There are two major reasons:
  1. This vision looks forward to a time in the future history of God’s people during which a culmination takes place. The years between the writing of the final book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the events chronicled in the historical Gospels of Matthew-Luke contains no written prophecy. However, the period is not ignored, and the primary individual from a Gentile perspective during that time in relationship to Israel was Antiochus IV. These events culminated in the removal of the Seleucid rule over the Jews, for shortly after Antiochus, the Roman Empire took over the land of Israel.
  2. Antiochus IV is a very good illustration of an individual who was to come later, someone already mentioned in Daniel’s prophecy more than once, the Roman prince whose signing of a covenant with Israel begins the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. The similarities between the two men are striking, though it is incorrect to call Antiochus a “type” of the man of sin.<sup>1</sup> But as a illustration of that future beast, Antiochus is valuable.

#### 1) His Rise to Power – 11:21-23

21 *“And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. 22 “And the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. 23 “And after an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.*

- Antiochus IV Epiphanes ruled Syria 175-164 BC. Outside of his importance to biblical prophecy he is obscure, and there is little concern for him in secular circles today. He lived during the time when Syria was becoming unimportant and Rome was beginning to expand its political and military influence. Though by the time of Antiochus IV, the Seleucid territory was greatly reduced, Antiochus, a man of evil temperament, desired wealth and control. Biblically, he was quite important in forwarding God’s program of Israel under Gentile domination, as he provides the transition between Greek and Roman domination of the land of Israel.
- The main significance of Antiochus’ is his persecution of the Jews, and some of the results of that persecution. He is the “little horn” of Daniel 8, and as noted has marked similarities to the man of sin. But there are significant differences as well, mainly dealing with the

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the concept of typology, see the author’s work *Principles and Practices of Bible Interpretation*.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

supernatural events that will occur during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. There were none during the time of Antiochus, so the primary issue is how his character and acts are illustrative of the future Roman prince.

- Antiochus is called a “despicable person”<sup>1</sup> in 11:21. Antiochus, the son of Antiochus III, was not the legitimate Seleucid king. He deposed Demetrius Soter, the son of Seleucus IV Pilopater, thus become one “on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred.” From history it is known that Antiochus invaded Israel during a time of relative calm, and made himself king, literally fulfilling the statement, “. . . he will come in a time of tranquility.”
- The “overflowing forces” of vs. 22 refers to an army which attempted to invade Israel, probably from Egypt, which Antiochus IV defeated. The “prince of the covenant” refers to the then high priest, Onias III, whom Antiochus hated and had murdered in 172 BC.
- The “small group of people” of vs. 23 refers to a few friends of Antiochus who benefited from his oppressive reign. While he was initially welcomed, he immediately began stealing from the Israelites.

### 2) His Growth in Power – 11:24-26

24 *“In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 “And he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. 26 “And those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain.*

- Again Daniel predicts that Antiochus will come “in a time of tranquility.” He began stealing from Israelites and gave over large sums to his companions. But that lasted only a short time, and in fulfillment of vs. 25 he invaded Egypt for the first time, after fighting the Egyptian army near the Nile delta.<sup>2</sup> After winning the battle, he professed a peace, but the Egyptians were also deceptive, and “devised against him.” Further fighting with his army in Egypt caused many to “fall down slain.”

### 3) His Anti-Semitic Activities – 11:27-35

#### a. His Attitude – 11:27-28

27 *“As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time. 28 “Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.*

- Vs. 27 speaks of “both kings,” referring to Antiochus IV and the King of Egypt, Ptolemy VI Philometor,<sup>3</sup> who was vying with his brother, Ptolemy VIII, for the throne. They made agreements, but neither of them men were honest, and their agreements came to nothing. The tensions between the Ptolemy and Seleucid dynasties was great, and war broke out, with the Egyptian army heading toward Palestine. However, Antiochus intercepted them, won the battle, and pursued the Egyptians to the Nile delta, where he defeated them. But peace broke

<sup>1</sup> Daniel uses the niphal participle of the verb, בָּזָה, *to despise*.

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptians had initiated the conflict, and began marching toward Palestine, but were in the Sinai when they met the Seleucid army under Antiochus IV.

<sup>3</sup> Ptolemy VI Philometor was a child when he became king, and was forced to marry his sister as a child. However, they stayed married into adulthood, and eventually had four children together.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

out, and Antiochus returned to his own land, which refers to Babylonia. Therefore, the end was still to come. Though he returned to Babylon, he evidently stopped on the way, and desecrated the temple.

### b. His Opposition by Rome – 11:29-32

29 *“At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 30 “For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened, and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 “And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. 32 “And by smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.*

- Here come the Romans! Vs. 29 reiterates Antiochus IV’s return to Egypt. It’s his last time in Egypt, and it turns out differently than his first incursion.
- The “ships of Kittim” refers to the Roman fleet, though Kittim refers to Cyprus. Perhaps the word was current as a metaphorical reference to any ships in the Mediterranean. The Roman senate sent a letter to Antiochus forbidding him to fight a war in Egypt. The Roman emissary, consul Gaius Popillias Laenas, required an immediate answer. The story (possibly apocryphal) is that when Antiochus asked for time to consider, Popillias drew a circle around Antiochus, and demanded an answer before he left the circle. The result was that, unwilling to go to war with the powerful Romans, Antiochus gave in, becoming greatly discouraged. He returned to Jerusalem, leaving the Romans in virtual control of Egypt.
- For the second time, Antiochus acts against the Jews who upheld the Mosaic Covenant. He regards the renegade Jews who despise the Law instead. His rage, probably as a result of his frustration because of the Roman intervention, caused him to persecute the Jews even worse than the first time. Antiochus once again desecrates the temple by sending over 20,000 soldiers under his general, Apollonius, pretending to be peaceful. Instead Apollonius attacked Jerusalem, killing many, and taking many captives.
- Antiochus forbade Jewish temple activity, refusing to allow the daily sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> He set up an altar for Zeus, the Greek god, on the site of the altar of burnt offering, and many Jews evidently succumbed to his desire to worship the false god by Antiochus’ “smooth words” (vs. 31). Only a remnant remained faithful, and took action, a reference to the Maccabean revolt.

### c. His Persecution of Israel – 11:33-35

33 *“And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for many days. 34 “Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 “And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.*

- Vs. 33 speaks of the terrible suffering of the Jews during the time of resistance against Antiochus. Judas, called Maccabeus (“one who hammers”), a son of the high priest Mattathias, along with his father and brothers fled Jerusalem, and organized a revolt. Originally, they had “little help,” and some joined them who were insincere.
- The revolt was relatively short lived, but some fell “in order to refine, purge, and make them pure.” The time came to an end because God so determined it (the appointed time). It is the

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<sup>1</sup> See the comments on Daniel 8, dealing with the “little horn,” Antiochus, and the cessation of the sacrifices.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

“time of the end” of the Greek domination over Israel. The Roman period began shortly thereafter and Israel continued to exist as a part of the Roman hegemony.

### b) The Future King – 11:36-45

#### 1) The Identity of the Future King – 11:36

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

- Many scholars recognize that verse 36 must refer to a different individual than Antiochus IV. The descriptions of this future king and his actions, while similar to Antiochus, are quite different in several ways. The attempt of some to refer these verses to Antiochus is unsound, as many things were not done by Antiochus which are attributed to this future king. Many, through the centuries, have realized that this cannot refer to Antiochus. Walvoord states, 

...many students of Scripture have recognized from antiquity that another king must be in view. Ibn-Ezra, for example, identified this king with Constantine the Great; Rashi and Calvin referred him to the Roman Empire as a whole; and Jerome, Theodoret, and Luther, among others, identified him with the New Testament Antichrist.<sup>1</sup>
- However, none of the historical figures presented, nor the Roman Empire, fit the normal Scriptural interpretation one must give to this passage of Scripture. For it is in a section that is quite clearly to be taken literally, referring to real people in history. The same type of interpretation will not fit any other historical time period or figure. Therefore, the passage must refer to an individual, and an individual who has not yet appeared.
- The best interpretation of “the king who will do as he pleases,” then, is that it refers to the “little horn” of Daniel seven, an ultimate Roman prince of the future.<sup>2</sup> The events dealing with the future king will take place during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. The location of his activity will be the “Revived Roman Empire” consisting of the territory of ten kings.
- The future king will operate as his own authority, with no oversight. He will “do as he pleases.” He is characterized by overwhelming pride, and will exalt himself above “every god.” Yet he will have special animosity against “the God of gods,” saying monstrous things against Him. As noted, he will prosper, but not for a long time. The indignation (his willful acts against God) will end, and his reign will fail.

#### 2) The Religion of the Future King – 11:37-39

37 *“And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. 38 “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures. 39 “And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, Daniel, pg. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Much discussion in conservative circles abounds concerning the origin of this individual. It has been common in the past for him to be identified as an apostate Jew, though many other ethnic originals have been attributed to him. As one studies, however, it becomes clear that he is a Roman, geographically, at least. Though many highly inventive and speculative arguments have been made, there is no definitive way to specifically identify the place of his origin within the Roman Empire.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The statement, “And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers” has been the basis for much speculation. Included in this speculation is that he must be a Jew. The assumption, unwarranted, is that the fathers must refer to the patriarchs of the Jews, or the ethnicity from which the Jews comes. In fact, such is highly unlikely. He is, without any doubt, a Roman. As such, the likelihood that he is Jewish is practically nonexistent. Furthermore, the word gods translates the Hebrew *elohim*<sup>1</sup>, a general word, often used of both the genuine God in heaven, and the false gods of the pagans. If Daniel had written *yahweh*<sup>2</sup> *elohim*, it would have been conclusive that he was referring to the God of the patriarchs. For him to have written as he did is strong evidence that he could not have been referring to the genuine God of Israel.
- The fact is, the future king will have no god, other than himself. He will set himself up as God, and expect to be so worshiped. The religion of that future time will not be one of the world’s recognized religions at all.<sup>3</sup> Note that “he will magnify himself above them all.”
- That the future king “will honor a god of fortresses,” indicates that he values warfare above all other considerations. He takes what he wants by force. In other words, no actual god is in view here, as the word is used metaphorically of his attitude toward war. The relative clause, “a god whom his fathers did not know” indicates that this is not a historical god at all, but a god of his own making. The concept of metaphorical worship is common in today’s society as it was in Daniel’s day. Such epigrams as “he worships the ground she walks on” are of this type.
- Finally, we see that “he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures.” Today, huge budgets are appropriated for weapons of war. The same will be true of the future king. Monies gathered through whatever means of extortion (taxes) will be spent mainly on implements of war.

### 3) The Final War of the Future King – 11:40-45

#### a. His Early Success – 11:40-43

40 “And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through. 41 “He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 “Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 “But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

- Here are battles “at the end time,” that is, the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. The scene is set in the Revived Roman Empire, which will include Egypt (the king of the South), and a northern king, possibly referring to a nation not in existence at the present time. In Scripture, the north from Israel’s perspective was Syria, but it seems likely that a larger area is meant here. It may be that Syria will expand its borders significantly during the 70<sup>th</sup> week, or even

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<sup>1</sup> *Elohim* is a plural form, but is often used in the singular sense. This is not unusual in Hebrew, as both plural and dual forms are used as singulars. However, modern translations usually translate it gods in this place, given that the expected form when there is a possibility of ambiguity is *yahweh elohim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Yahweh* is the accepted spelling which often takes the place of the older word *Jehovah*. As such, when it is used of the actual name of God it is capitalized as *Yahweh*, but when discussing a transliteration of the tetragrammaton it is sometimes written in all lower case letters, since there were no distinctions between capitals and lower case letters in ancient Hebrew (or in modern Hebrew, for that matter).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the religious issue during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, see this author’s work, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, “Chapter Thirteen.”

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

before. Some have supposed that the “king of the North” refers to Russia, or that Daniel is speaking of Gog and Magog mentioned in Ezekiel 38. But that appears to be a different circumstance, one during the early part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, or perhaps even before the beginning of the week, during the gap. In this passage, the terms north and south are clearly from the perspective of the land of Israel, which is consistent with the idea that the future king will make his headquarters the city of Jerusalem.

- At any rate, the king of the South and the King of the north will attack the future king while he is in Israel. But the text indicates that the future king will not stay in the land of Israel, but “he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through.” In other words, he will take the fight to his enemies, and seems to be victorious. Evidently, he will again “enter the Beautiful Land,” Israel,” but will continue the war and “many countries will fall.” During the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, then, the man of sin will be successful, but three countries will escape defeat.
- The phrase, “Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon” refers to a geographical area that today is called Jordan, which will be spared from the future king’s conquests. However, “. . . he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.”
- Commonly, expositors will speak of the man of sin’s “worldwide conquests” or “world government” at this point. For example, Walvoord states, “In light of the previous context, where the king is pictured as an absolute ruler, coinciding with other Scriptures picturing a world government at this time (Dan 7:23; Rev. 13:7). . . .”<sup>1</sup> However, the concept of a global world government is clearly not meant in the vision of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. To foist a “global” view on the writer or readers of that time is unwarranted. To them, the “world” referred to the civilization consisting of the Roman Empire. All other areas of civilization were discounted, and the references in this passage and others are quite explicit. The countries involved are what is called today the “middle east,” as well as parts of Europe and Africa.
- Verse 43 specifically refers to Africa, “But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.” The meaning is clear. The future king will control large areas of the revived Roman Empire, which includes parts of Europe, the Middle East, and northern Africa. His enormous wealth will be the result of having conquered those lands.

### b. His Final Battles – 11:44-45

44 “But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. 45 “And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

- Here we have a brief, but explicit, presentation of the future king’s downfall. After having been victorious over the kings of the South and North, he will return to Israel, where “he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain.” This

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<sup>1</sup> Later Walvoord calls the future king, “the world ruler.” However, see the note on Daniel 7:23 in this work. See also this author’s work, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pages 167-168. In no sense could the writers of Scripture mean by their phraseology the whole globe. They had no such concept, though they recognized that there were peoples, cities and governments beyond the Roman Empire. But to them, the word *world* speaks of what was to them the area occupied by the various empires of which they understood. There are many indications in the prophetic writings concerning the end times that the Mediterranean basin is the location of the events of prophetic Scripture

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

speaks of his mobile headquarters, which will be in the Levant, somewhere along the coast between Jerusalem (the beautiful Holy Mountain) and the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> This is in response to “But rumors from the East and from the North,” which must refer to the incipient invasions from those directions. Revelation 9:13 and following speak of an army from the east crossing the Euphrates and coming to Israel during this time. Its size is stated to be 200,000,000 (two hundred million) men. According to Revelation 12:16, the Euphrates will have been dried up, so an Asian army of that size could easily cross over.

- It is likely that a series of battles will take place, but Daniel skips over these, for the vision simply presents the outline of that future time, from its inception to its end, an inglorious one for the man of sin.
- The final result for the future king will be that “he will come to his end, and no one will help him.” Will he have made so many enemies that no help will be offered? Or is it that he has destroyed so many armies, that none are left to defend even his existence in Israel? At any rate, no glory attaches itself to this individual.
- Up to this point, the revelation of the vision is from the perspective of the Roman conqueror, but now the events are seen from the perspective of the land of Israel and its people. Chapter twelve begins with a description of the terrible distress that takes place during the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

### c) Michael the Prince – 12:1-4

#### 1) The Time of Trouble – 12:1

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

#### a. The Time Period under Consideration – Daniel 12:1a

- The phrase “at that time” refers to the same period of time as discussed in Daniel 11, which deals with the tribulation period, or the time of “Jacob’s trouble.” This is the “end time” mentioned in Daniel 11:40, that is, the second half of the week:

*And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through.*

- Since Michael (his name means “one who is like God”) is described as “the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people” his activity during the 2nd half of the week also includes making sure that Israel is not completely destroyed.
- The word “prince” is the Hebrew word *sar* (שַׂר), which often refers to an officer or military captain. The word “stand” is used twice. The first is the *qal* imperfect of *amad*, (עָמַד). The second is the *qal* masculine participle of the verb *amad*, meaning “to take a stand.” It is used as a descriptive of Michael “who stands.” The idea of “standing guard” is close to the

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord and others, following the NIV translation that states “He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain,” state that his headquarters will be in the city of Jerusalem. However, the Hebrew text does not indicate “at” or “in” the beautiful Holy Mountain, but says literally, “between the sea (בֵּין יַמַּיִם) to the beautiful Holy Mountain,” (לְהַר-צְבִי-קָדְשׁ) The NASB, Revised Standard Version, the American Standard Version (1901), and Darby say simply “between the seas (or sea) and the beautiful Holy Mountain,” where they supply *and* to make the English idiom clear. The wording does not fit Jerusalem as the place where the king will “pitch his tents of his palace” (וַיִּשַׁע אֹהֶלֶי אֶפְרַיִם), referring to the practice of the nomads who pitched tents. In Jerusalem no tent need to be pitched.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

meaning of the Hebrew verb. Michael is then viewed in his military capacity as being ready to go to war in behalf of Israel. This war begins in heaven, and is continued on earth.

- Military and geopolitical terms (prince, chief prince, king, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, etc.) were applied to spirit beings continuously through Scripture. Note the following passages: Ezekiel 28:12-18; Daniel 10:13, 20; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15; Titus 3:1; 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 9. Dr. Chafer makes the following significant comment:

Since the Bible does not indulge in useless tautology, it may be believed that there is a specific meaning to each of these denominations, which meaning no doubt corresponds to earthly realities which bear these appellations . . . . Though there is seeming similarity in these denominations, it may be assumed that representation is made by these titles to incomprehensible dignity and varying degrees of rank. Heavenly spheres or rule exceed human empires as the universe exceeds the earth.<sup>1</sup>

- It appears that in his military capacity Michael is the leader, the commander, of other angels who specifically have a relationship to Israel. This is confirmed by the statements of Revelation 12:7-9 (see below).
- “The sons of your people” must refer to Israel. Who else could be described as the sons of Daniel’s people? The only people under consideration in this context are the people of Israel, because they are at the heart of Daniel’s problem. He desires to know about the deliverance of his people, Israel.
- So, we see the archangel Michael (Jude 9) and his angels going to war in Revelation 12:7-9. They defeat Satan and his angels, who are consequently cast to the earth. This must take place at the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, as the terminology admits of no other understanding. For three and one half years Satan wars on earth, and it is during this time that “there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time” (Daniel 12:1a).
- As previously stated, the specific event of Daniel 12:1 is best understood as the same event as Revelation 12:7-9,

*And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

- It is this act of war against Satan and his angels that is apparently the act of Michael’s standing of Daniel 12:1. The consequence of this war is that Satan and his angels will be cast to earth.
- According to Revelation 12:13-14, this event takes place at the beginning of the last three and one half years of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

*Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary), 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> See the author’s comments on this passage in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, “Chapter Twelve.”

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The Lord Jesus Christ also describes this period of time in terms very similar to what Daniel says. See Matthew 24:16-21. The events of Daniel 12:1 therefore refer to the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, which is confirmed later in Daniel 12.

### b. The Delivery of Israel – Daniel 12:1b

*And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.*

- This statement refers to the national salvation of Israel, not to the salvation of mankind in general. Again, “your people” refers to Daniel’s people, that is, to Israel. The group under discussion is thus twice limited in verse 1 to the Israelites. Many have attempted to broaden the resurrection here to include other Old Testament believers who are not Israelites. While this larger group of Old Testament believers is undoubtedly included in the statement of the resurrection in Revelation 20:4-15, they are not included here, as this passage is clearly to give comfort to those Israelites who had been taken captive by the Babylonians. Thus, only Israelites are considered in the context of Daniel 12.
- The national deliverance of Israel requires the individual justification of believing Jews. Justification by faith is the prerequisite of national salvation (Romans 10:9-21).
- Only those Israelites whose names are written in the book will be delivered. (See Joel 2:32. Only a remnant will be saved.) Lehman Strauss makes the point,  
But we must not fall into the evil that has ensnared those who teach that that every Jew living on the earth at that time shall be saved. The prophecy in Daniel limits the deliverance to ‘every one that shall be found written in the book...’ These are the godly Jews, the believing remnant on the earth at that time. Certainly the apostate Jews in that day are not included, but only the redeemed Israelites.<sup>1</sup>
- God keeps books! But He does not keep them to jog His own memory. Rather, He keeps them as a revelatory device to emphasize that He keeps track of those who believe. This is a statement of God’s omniscience, of the fact that God will ultimately deliver every Israelite who believes. Are there actual, physical books in heaven? It’s possible, though not required. God is certainly capable of keeping His books in His head. He is truly an omniscient accountant.

### 2) The Resurrections of the Just and the Unjust – 12:2-4

2 “*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.* 3 “*And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.* 4 “*But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.*”

#### a. The Two-Fold Resurrection – Daniel 12:2

- That this is a physical resurrection cannot be denied. The phrase “sleep in the dust of the ground” can only refer to the physical body, not to the person. The phrase “dust of the ground” is used as a metaphor for the grave.
- The phrase, “these to everlasting life” refers only to the righteous dead of Israel. Contextually, this references does not include other righteous dead. That is not to say that other dead cannot be resurrected at this time. Evidently they are, according to the statement

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<sup>1</sup> Lehman Strauss. *Daniel*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, page 355.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

of the first resurrection in Revelation 20. But here only righteous Israelites are included because this passage is dealing with that nation and no other peoples.

- Likewise, “the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” can only refer to unrighteous Israelites who have died. That other unrighteous peoples will also be resurrected at a later time is true. But that resurrection is at least a thousand years after the first. In other words, two distinct resurrections are viewed in vs. 2, separated by one thousand years. Revelation 20:4-6 states,

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

- The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous dead, and part of those righteous dead will be Old Testament believing Israelites, Daniel included. This resurrection will occur after the events of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week are completed. But it includes all Old Testament believers, Jews and Gentiles alike. It is this posttribulational resurrection that is the subject of discussion of the rest of Daniel 12. It is important to realize that this posttribulational resurrection does not relate to the church. But to deny that a posttribulational resurrection occurs, as some pretribulationists have done, complicates rather than simplifies the issue. *The reason the church’s resurrection is pretribulational is not because there is no posttribulational resurrection.* The reason is found in the correct distinguishing between Israel and the church. Both Old and New Testament Scriptures teach a posttribulational resurrection of Old Testament and tribulation saints. Dr. Bernard Northrup makes the following statement:

We must sadly admit that many staunch, pretribulational, premillennial commentators have fearfully turned here to a nonliteral interpretation to try to annul the errant argument of the posttribulational rapturist.

Not only does Daniel 12 reveal a posttribulational resurrection of Israel, it also reveals the precise time elements involved in each of the three chronological details given above.<sup>1</sup> This should not be surprising after a consideration of the explicit chronological details revealed in Daniel 9 about the time of the coming of Israel’s Savior to be cut off for sin. Daniel 12 gives the chronological details in the same order as the events listed in verses 1 and 2.”<sup>2</sup>

- The second resurrection occurs after the thousand years, and includes all the unrighteous dead. It is clear from both Daniel and Revelation that unbelievers are to be resurrected. The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ places a thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. This passage eliminates the possibility of a “general resurrection” taught by so many non-distinctive theologians.

### **b. The Results of the First Resurrection – Daniel 12:3-4**

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<sup>1</sup> In his presentation, Dr. Northrup previously mentions 1) “a time of trouble such as never was” (12:1), 2) “at that time thy people (i.e. Israel) shall be delivered” (12:1) and 3) “many (not all) of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (i.e. resurrection, 12:2).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Northrup, “The Posttribulational Rapture Error.” A paper presented in the class in Old Testament at San Francisco Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The picture is one of physical glory of resurrected Jews. Notice the two-fold simile to describe their glorious condition: 1) like the brightness of the firmament, and 2) like the stars for ever and ever. This seems to describe the permanent glory of the resurrected Jew starting in the millennial state, and continuing beyond to the new heaven and new earth.
- The angel again addresses Daniel by name. This is a reminder that we should always interpret any passage as its original recipient would have understood it. Keep in mind that Daniel is concerned only with his people. He realized that among Israelites there were both righteous and unrighteous. But he also realized that God's program for His people would be brought to fruition, the covenants fulfilled, and the program for Israel brought to a successful conclusion. Daniel knew that eventually Israel would be brought back to God. But he just didn't know when, or the sequence of events. He will receive some information in the next part of this chapter, but he is given instructions in verse 4 concerning the "book."
- The statement "shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end" perhaps refers to the inability of *unbelieving Jews* to understand the prophecy of Daniel even until today. It is shut up until the end, perhaps a supernatural act guaranteeing that only that last generation of believing Jews will understand the fullness of the message.
- "The book" probably does not refer to the entire book of Daniel, but to this last prophecy spoken by the angel. This statement should not be taken to mean that believers today cannot understand the truth being presented. Rather it refers to the majority of Jews who are unbelievers. Only when there is a large return of Israelites to God, in acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ, will the conditions stated here be fulfilled. Believers at any time can understand the truth of this passage concerning the future resurrection of Israel.
- "Running to and fro" perhaps indicates the great activity of Israelites during the 70<sup>th</sup> week. "Knowledge shall increase undoubtedly refers to the fact that that last generation of Israelites will have a knowledge of prophetic truth that will be applicable to them at the time of the end.

### d) Three Spirit Beings – 12:5-13

- In this section of Daniel, the prophet deals with the chronology of the Old Testament Resurrection. Two questions are asked and answered. In answering these questions, God gives specific details dealing with the order of events associated with the resurrection of Old Testament believers.

#### 1) The First Question Asked – 12:5-6

*5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river, and the other on that bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"*

- Who are the "two others" on the two sides of the river who speak to the man clothed in linen? They are probably angels who are provided to dramatize this final revelation as a conversation between themselves and the first angel.
- This first angel seems to hover over the river, while the spirit beings are on either bank. Much speculation has arisen as to the purpose of this sight which Daniel beheld. The best answer is simply that Daniel sees the angel in control of the river, undoubtedly the Tigris, which was the river which flowed through the land of Persia, and sustained its existence. Thus Daniel has indication that God's program for Israel will eventually include domination of the land of Persia.



## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The wonders mentioned in verses 5-6 refer to the entire set of contextual events going back into the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Daniel. It is clear from the later context that the question is not limited to the resurrections mentioned, but goes back to the beginning of the time of trouble mentioned in Daniel 12:1.

### 2) The First Answer – Daniel 12:7

*Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered,<sup>1</sup> all these things shall be finished.*

- By raising both hands, the spirit being indicates the strength of his statement, as though it were an oath. Normally a person raised only the right hand when promising or swearing.

“This solemn form of swearing shows that the question and answer must refer not to the duration of the period of the persecution under Antiochus, but to that under the last enemy, the Antichrist.”<sup>1</sup>

- The term “time, times and half a time” is universally understood by pretribulational scholars (and even some liberals) to refer to the second three and ½ years of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Dr. Walvoord states,

What is the meaning of the phrase *a time, times, and an half*. This expression, also occurring in Daniel 7:25, apparently refers to the last period preceding the second coming of Christ which brings conclusion to the time of the end. Montgomery, although a liberal scholar, correctly stated the meaning when he wrote, ‘Here, v. 7, it is in the terms of 7:25, with the Hebrews equivalent of the Aram. there; i. e., three and a half years.’ In other words, it is the last half of the seven-year period of Daniel 9:27 which culminates in the second advent. The expression *time*, is considered a single unit; *times*, as equivalent to two units, and *an half*, a half unit. Adding these units amounts to three and one half.<sup>2</sup>

- See also Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7, where this phrase occurs.
- The actual number of days is 1260, which corresponds to the 3 ½ years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week as referenced in Revelation 12:6. This is the same time period mentioned in Revelation 12:14.
- The holy people refer to Israel during the second half of the tribulation week. Israel will be scattered during that time. At that time “the wonders will be finished.” In other words, the entirety of the second half of the week, the final three and one half years, plus the resurrection of the righteous will find culmination.

### 3) The Second Question Asked – Daniel 12:8

*Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, My lord, what shall be the end of these things?*

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps “scattered” rather than “shattered,” as signified by the Hebrew root of the word, which can mean both. During the second three and one half years of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week Israel is scattered, having been driven from the land or taken captive. Therefore, the power (lit. hand, but used metaphorically of power or ability) of the people is rendered ineffective, shattered.

<sup>1</sup> Keil & Delitzsch, *Daniel*.

<sup>2</sup> John Walvoord, *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*. Chicago: Moody Press, page 293.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

- The one asking this question is none other than Daniel himself because of his lack of understanding. Daniel knew only of the 70<sup>th</sup> week divided into two parts, but did not have any details of the second half of the week and the 75 day period afterward. So Daniel was somewhat confused about the previous interchange between the spirit beings. He desired more details so he could fully understand the chronology.
- The answer to Daniel's question is given in verses 9-13, and is presented in a four-fold set of statements.

### 4) The Second Answer – Daniel 12:9-13

#### a. The Timeframe – Daniel 12:9

*And he said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*

- This part of angel's answer is only understandable if one realizes that it is Daniel who is asking the question. Daniel did not comprehend fully the events being discussed. Because of the nature of the response, it seems evident that Daniel wanted more details. But only a limited amount of detail would be forthcoming. Much information (words) are closed up and sealed. This probably means that only a limited amount of information will be revealed to Daniel.
- The time of the end is best understood as a reference to the last part of the tribulation period extending, as we shall see, into the 75 day gap beyond.

#### b. The Two Groups – Daniel 12:10

*Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*

- The two groups of verse 10 are to be identified with the two groups found in the parables of Matthew 24 and 25. They consist of two groups of Israelites who survive the actual time of trouble, but are not yet in the kingdom. Like the unfaithful slave, unwise virgins, etc., "none of the wicked shall understand." Like the faithful slave, the wise virgins, etc. "the wise shall understand."
- "Purified, made white, and refined" are a metaphorical statement as to the condition and therefore the practice of the believer at that time. The unbeliever shall do wickedly, and will not understand. The understanding which the wise have is undoubtedly in reference to the spiritual situation of that final time when the wise will be looking forward to the coming of Messiah.

#### c. The First Duration – Daniel 12:11

*And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

- The time period begins at the time the daily sacrifice is taken away. This corresponds to the event mentioned in Daniel 9:27 when the sacrifice and offering will cease. From that event there will be 1,260 days until the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week.
- Therefore, the period before us of 1,290 days extends 30 days after the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week during which faithful Israelites will be expecting the coming of Messiah and the unfaithful will be continuing acting in their unbelief. Undoubtedly during this period of time Messiah returns to earth to deliver faithful Israel and to bring the various aspects of judgment that will culminate this period. Dr. Northrup says:

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

The answer now continues, revealing that from the middle of the seven year period (and the abomination) until the purification of living Israel (and the separation of the obstinately wicked in Israel) in Israel's judgment would be accomplished in 1290 days, i. e. within the month after the end of the period of trials.<sup>1</sup>

- Remnant Israel returns from captivity virtually instantaneously after the 70<sup>th</sup> week is over. Circumstances quickly return to the culture that was true during the days of Noah when people were marrying and giving in marriage. The three parables of the Olivet Discourse fit into this thirty-day period.

### d. The Second Duration – Daniel 12:12-13

*Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.*

- The 1,335 days is also to be counted from the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. The total period of time then is 1,260 days until the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, plus 30 days waiting for the coming of Messiah, plus 45 days until the establishment of blessing.
- The second period that consists of 1,335 days relates to the statements of Daniel 12:2, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Those who are alive at the time of this resurrection are said to be “blessed.” This is consistent with the OT concept that the final generation who enter into the Kingdom of God in natural bodies will enjoy a blessing that other generations of believing Israelites, that is, those who are resurrected, will not enjoy.
- Several events occur at the end of this 75 day period:
  1. For those believing Israelites who are alive, great blessing will attain;
  2. This is undoubtedly due to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy;
  3. The resurrection of Daniel who will rise and stand in his allotted portion of land upon the culmination of this period, along with OT believing Israelites;
  4. The resurrection of all other *believers* (not unbelievers) with the exception of the church, which will have already been resurrected;
  5. The judgment of the Gentile nations discussed in Matthew 25:31-46 will take place, probably right at the end of the period, or immediately after the establishment of the Kingdom of God.
- Thus we understand that the Kingdom of God and the first resurrection of Revelation 20 take place 1,335 days after the abomination of desolation. Other events of judgment, including the various campaigns that Messiah undertakes to bring physical judgment on unbelieving nations will undoubtedly take place during this period as well. It may well be that the scene of Matthew 25:31-46 is the final resultant event of the military campaigns of Messiah during the gap.
- Concerning this issue, Dr. Northrup states,

Thirdly, a period of 75 days beyond the end of the tribulation (i. e. 1335 days) is the conclusion of the question, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” Here Daniel is told exactly when he would be resurrected. He was to “REST” (cf Rev. 6:11 concerning tribulation saints) until the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

## Notes on the Book of Daniel

days (i.e. 75 days after the tribulation) and then stand “IN THY LOT.” What was Daniel’s lot? It was the promise of resurrection and entry into the earthly Messianic Kingdom:

1. With the pre-Israelite saints when the redeemer would stand on the earth (Job 19:25-27)
2. With tribulation saints after the little season when their brethren were yet being killed (cf. Rev. 6:11)
3. And with the rest of the Old Testament saints when earth casts forth its (saved) dead (Isaiah 26:19) to worship with the returned outcasts at Jerusalem (Isaiah 27:13).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.