

Commentary On The Book Of Daniel

Introduction To Daniel The Man

Who was Daniel? Daniel was one of many Hebrews taken from their homeland by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. For this reason Daniel spent most of his life in Babylon, yet he remained loyal to the God of Israel.

Based upon Daniel 1:3 it is believed that Daniel was of royal background, however his family is never specifically mentioned. His time of birth would have been about the time of the reformations of the great child king Josiah. Some suggest the date of 621 B.C.

Daniel was just a young man at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Jerusalem (Daniel 1:3-4), perhaps 20 years old or younger. His name in Hebrew meant, "God is my Judge."

Was Daniel A Prophet?

There is a little confusion on this matter. In one sense Daniel was not a prophet like Jeremiah or Isaiah. He did not spend his days prophesying to God's people, warning them of pending judgments, urging them to repent. It is for this reason the book of Daniel is not listed among the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, but rather with the Writings. Yet in a strict sense Daniel clearly fits the definition of a prophet. Daniel delivered the words of God when and where God chose them to be spoken. When needed, Daniel foretold future events to kings of a foreign land. Although not a part of the job description of a prophet, Daniel also suffered greatly for his faith, both physically and emotionally.

With these thoughts in mind, we may conclude that Daniel was indeed a prophet! The main difference being that his service was as a prophet of God to the Babylonians, rather than to God's people. In this sense Daniel and Jonah had something in common.

The Dates For The Book Of Daniel

Most conservative scholars date the writing of Daniel between the years of 538 and 528 B.C. Several narrow the date of Daniel to the year 536 B.C. This would be near or shortly after Daniel received his last vision recorded in the book.

I mention "conservative" scholars because there are those who take an entirely different approach to biblical studies, which undermines the entire date structure of many Old Testament books. Daniel has for some time been under fire due to its prophetic content. To state this matter simply, for those who approach the study of Daniel with the preconceived belief that predicting the future is not possible, there is a problem with Daniel. To their thinking, a book that specifically outlines historical events that took place over the last five

centuries before Christ could not have been written in 536 B.C.! Thus this school of thought chooses to date Daniel at around 175 - 163 B.C.

Since the ability of Daniel to foretell the future is such an important part of this book, the debate concerning the date of Daniel is very important. First, the "late date" theory has a problem with the fact that the Jews, when putting together the Old Testament canon, had already accepted Daniel as a very old book during the reign of Artaxerxes, or about 465 B.C. The historian Josephus confirms this! In addition, the well-known Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) contained the book of Daniel, and nearly all agree that the Septuagint was completed between 280 - 180 B.C., thus the book of Daniel predated the Septuagint. The apocrypha also refers to "Daniel for his innocency was delivered from the mouth of lions" (1 Maccabees 2:60). The Maccabean period was during the middle of the 2nd century B.C., thus this reference to Daniel along with other Old Testament heroes shows that the book of Daniel predated the Maccabean period. These facts disprove the "late date" theory for the writing of the book of Daniel.

One of the most fascinating evidences for the early date of the book of Daniel comes from yet another reference in the writings of Josephus. When Alexander the Great began his thrust into Palestine in 334 B.C., he did not destroy Jerusalem as he had other defeated cities. Josephus states, rather, that when Jaddua the high priest came out to meet the conqueror, that Alexander fell down before Jaddua and adored him. When another asked Alexander why he did this, Alexander the Great replied that he was not worshipping the high priest, but rather the God who had made him high priest. There is also a reference to a dream that Alexander had received, in which he was instructed to honor the high priest. Upon their meeting, the high priest showed Alexander the passages in the book of Daniel that spoke of a Greek invader who would defeat the Persians. Josephus states that Alexander accepted the prophecy as a reference to himself, and declared that God had ordained him to conquer Persia, which he then went about to do! This too, is another convincing proof of the earlier existence of the book of Daniel, placing it before the invasion of Alexander the Great into Palestine in 334 B.C. (Antiquities Of The Jews, XI, VIII, 5)

Internal proofs of the earlier date begin with the use of ancient words, such as "Shinar" for "Babylon" (Daniel 1:2), terms that were not used during the later period under consideration. Overall the book clearly and accurately describes the society and culture of ancient Babylon and Persian. The names given for Babylon and Persian leaders, the order of events, all these will be covered in our commentary, and all confirm to the reader the antiquity of the book of Daniel.

Lest we omit the most important fact, our Lord Himself quoted from the book of Daniel as being the words of Daniel the prophet (Matthew 24:15). Note Jesus specifies that the prophecy He refers to was spoken by Daniel the prophet, not by another who later "posed" as Daniel the prophet. Note also that Jesus makes this reference to a passage that He knew His Jewish readers would be familiar with. He was now explaining a part of Daniel's prophecy that was soon (in His days upon the earth) to be fulfilled.

Another interesting reference to Daniel is found in the book of Ezekiel 14:14, and also 28:3. In these two references Daniel is spoken of as being both righteous, and also wise. Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel. We have no reason to doubt these references are to Daniel the prophet. These references again confirm the existence of Daniel, and also confirm the content of the book of Daniel concerning his remarkable ministry as both a righteous and wise man.

What then are our conclusions concerning the date of the writing of the book of Daniel? To accept the earlier dates for the book of Daniel is to also accept the power of God to reveal future events to His chosen prophets. To accept the earlier dates for Daniel is also to accept the inspiration of the entire Bible, including the very words of Jesus. To try to make the book of Daniel "fit" a much later time period is to reject the foreknowledge of God, and also the truth of the statements of Jesus Himself.

Purpose

One obvious value of Daniel is the history it contains. It gives us insight into the conditions the Hebrew captives experienced in the foreign land of Babylon. Just as God's people became a nation as Egyptian slaves centuries before, in the book of Daniel we see a remnant of God's nation reforming to becoming His people once again under foreign rule.

Beyond its historical value, however, the book of Daniel had great value in providing comfort and encouragement to the children of Israel living in a foreign land. Certainly the realization that if God could foretell the future of God's people, He could also protect them during that time of captivity. Although the time of deliverance was approaching, there were many years remaining before the "remnant" could return home. The book of Daniel provided both the record of that promise, and the comfort of God's guidance until those promises could be enjoyed. In addition, the prophecies of Daniel gave the clearest details yet to God's people as to the time in which the Messiah would come.

For those of us living today, the book of Daniel helps the New Testament Christian to draw together the historical period between the Testaments. Its study builds our faith in the accurate prophecies of God contained in both Testaments. Last but not least, the book of Daniel provides the modern reader with a key to better understand our most difficult New Testament book, the book of Revelation.

Daniel In The Context Of Ancient History

Cities of Babel and Assyria built by Nimrod apx. 3000-2500 B.C. (Gen.10:10-11)

The Tower Of Babel apx. 2400 B.C. (Gen.11:1-9)

Old Kingdom Period In Egypt 2400-2200 B.C. (pyramids built)

Middle Kingdom Period In Egypt 2050-1800 B.C. (Joseph rule apx. 1885 B.C.)

Height of *ancient* Babylonian kingdom apx. 1900-1596 B.C. (Hammurabi code)

New Kingdom Period In Egypt 1580-1090 B.C. (Moses, Exodus apx.1446 B.C.)

The Assyrian empire apx. 1000-610 B.C. (Israel carried away 725 B.C.)

The Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean regime 626-539 B.C.

-Judah attacked & captives removed in 3 stages 597, 586, & 581 B.C.

-Daniel among those taken in first stage, 597 B.C.

the Medo-Persian Empire 539-330 B.C. (Cyrus, Darius I, etc.)

-Daniel's last visions received in Cyrus' 3rd year, 536 B.C.

The Greek Empire 330-323 B.C. (Alexander the Great)

-Greek Empire divided among 4 of Alex. generals upon his death

The Roman armies defeat the last elements of Greek power 168 B.C.

-The Roman Empire 168-apx.476 B.C.

-The birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Messiah

A Commentary On The Book Of Daniel

by Bruce Gleim

Judah's Last Days, The Beginning Of Captivity

:1-2 After many generations of receiving God's blessings and protection, at last time had run out for Judah. Her sister to the north (Israel) had already been defeated and carried away by the Assyrians over 100 years earlier. Now the southern tribes were about to taste the same medicine.

We pick up Daniel's story in the 3rd year of the reign of king Jehoiakim in Judah. Jehoiakim ruled for 11 years, from 609-597 B.C. Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah, but he was evil in the sight of God. He had been installed as a puppet ruler by Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, but now Babylon moves in and begins to dissect what is left of the Jewish nation. The text states that the Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Babylon, including even some of the articles from the temple! The extent of God's wrath toward Israel is seen in that He even allowed some of the articles of the temple to be carried away and placed in the idolatrous temple of Babylon.

:3-7 More important to the story of Daniel, the king of Babylon also carried away human trophies! Some chosen Hebrew children, including some of nobility were taken. Those removed from Judah were also selected upon the basis of their looks, wisdom, knowledge, and apparently how well they did on their Babylonian IQ test.

We must remember that the taking of this group of young people was not for the purpose of punishment, but that the king had a use for them. It is clear that his intent was not to make common slave laborers out of them, but to rather groom them for service in the king's palace.

We are now introduced specifically to four of the Jewish youths that were among this group of captives. Daniel was given the Babylonian name "Belteshazzar." His new name now gave honor to a pagan god with the meaning, "Bel protects his life." In the same way each of the four young men's Hebrew name honoring the God of Israel is now changed to honor pagan gods or ideas. To impress upon us how import these name changes were, ask yourself which of the four (other than Daniel) do you know by his Hebrew name? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were their pagan names! Besides the humiliation of having their named changed, some also believe the prophecy of Isaiah points to their also being emasculated to become eunuchs in the palace of the king (II Kings 20:16-18).

The king wanted these young men educated in the language and writings of the Chaldeans. This is an ancient term referring to the ethnic background of the Babylonians, and also sometimes referred (at that time) to a sect of men thought to be wise. To be called a "Chaldean" was a great honor to those of Babylonia.

Indeed, the quality of education available in Babylonia was extensive. Archaeologists have found the huge library of Ashurbanipal to contain 22,000

volumes! These clay tablets deal with subjects such as science, religion, astronomy, and mathematics. It is from the Babylonians we received the system of counting in base 60. (Note: 60 minutes to the hour, 360 degrees in a circle.) It is also clear that the Babylonians were very comfortable with calculating square roots, cubes, and the dimensions of triangles long before modern geometry "rediscovered" such theorems. The Babylonians had also become very advanced in the charting of the stars and the planets, as well as in the fields of medicine.

With these facts in mind, we can better understand the breadth of the training these selected Hebrew youths were truly given.

:8-10 In addition to a full scholarship at "Babylon University," Daniel and his friends also were given a free meal ticket. The good news was that it was not at the school cafeteria, it would be from the king's exclusive kitchens! The stage was now set for four Jewish captives, who could have been worked to death in a slave camp, to now literally eat like kings. But something was wrong with this picture; a spiritual conflict was about to begin!

It appears that it was the king's "delicacies" and wines that were the offensive parts to the eating arrangements. Most think that Daniel refused these due to Jewish dietary laws. The Babylonians most certainly ate some meats that Jewish law considered unclean. Their methods of preparation perhaps were also questionable. It is also very likely that some (if not all) of the king's meats had first made a stop at the altars of pagan gods. Perhaps beyond these factors Daniel also saw these "delicacies" as the beginning of an indulgent life which would make him and his associates more "Babylonian" than they cared to be.

Daniel was blessed in the fact that the chief eunuch seemed to have a great deal of respect for Daniel. Rather than take this insult directly to the king, the eunuch speaks openly with Daniel and expresses his fear that if the king's food is secretly refused, that soon the four Hebrew youths will begin to look under-fed compared to others among the captives. This would jeopardize his own life.

:11-13 It is at this point Daniel suggests the famous test. This is most likely the first and last example of a prisoner asking for gourmet food to be replaced with beans and water. It sounds like an advertising offer, "if in ten days you don't see an improvement, you may deal with us as you wish."

:14-16 The confidence of Daniel's faith prompted the chief eunuch to try a dangerous test that could cost him more than his career. To his relief the four youths were found at the end of the test to appear healthier than all the young men who had eaten everything the king had given them. Although not wanting to take away from the benefits of eating vegetables, I think we can all see that the miraculous hand of God was also involved in this dietary test!

:17-21 With verse 17 we are introduced to a key theme of the book of Daniel. It is here we learn that the four young men grew both in knowledge and skill in *all* literature and wisdom. The full meaning of such a statement is breathtaking. Note it is stated that God gave them these blessings. Certainly some blessings were received through the work of their Babylonian instructors, but ultimately it was God who gave Daniel and his friends the ability to learn, remember, and to

assimilate all the knowledge that was given them, and even much more besides. The fact that their wisdom outweighed that of the king's other "wise" men was not because the others had not been given the same education. They had no doubt been through "Babylon's Wise Guys" training themselves! No, the difference was the providence of God working in their minds to absorb the good, and to reject the bad. Remember, the Babylonians with all their knowledge, also gave the world the very unscientific "science" of astrology (:20). The four youths greatest education had first come from their faith in the God of Israel. With that foundation all further education could be put in it's proper position!

Beyond their education, however, we learn in verse 17 that Daniel received something extra from God, and that was the understanding of all visions and dreams. This is, of course, a key theme to the entire book. The other three did not have this gift. It was for Daniel only. In time, it would change the entire course of many lives, and even affect Biblical and world history.

This chapter ends by stating overall that Daniel continued his work in this foreign land even into the Persian regime. We will learn more about that part of his ministry later in Daniel's writings.

Chapter 2

The King's Dream

:1-13 In the second year of his reign, king Nebuchadnezzar had a very troubling dream. Keep in mind that the events of chapter one preceded this, with the first captives (including Daniel) being carried away during the Nebuchadnezzar's first expedition while his father Nabopolassar was still king. Thus, we now pick up events shortly following the Hebrew youths' three years of Babylonian education. Nebuchadnezzar was only in the second year of his reign according to Babylonian reckoning.

The dream under consideration was clearly no ordinary dream! Bible students may note that at specific times in history God has chosen to speak or reveal information to man while that man or woman is asleep. To those who received such communication it was always quite distinct from ordinary dreams, and if not understood, there was a great desire to find the meaning. (Remember Pharaoh's dream and his search for its meaning?)

Now the plot of this book begins to thicken. We have just learned how important knowledge and education was to the Babylonians in the previous chapter. They had made a significant investment in the education of some of their captives from foreign lands. History and archeology tells us how advanced the Babylonians were in the sciences and in mathematics. Yet it is here that we can also see a fatal flaw in Babylonian thought, and that was the confusion between knowledge and the occult. It seems that their well educated people were also classified with the sorcerers, astrologers, and magicians.

It was this group of people that the king now sought out to interpret his dream, and due to the lack of any takers, the king then put out a "class action"

death warrant on all the wise men of the land, including Daniel and his companions (Daniel 2:2, 12-13). The king was not in a mood to be reasoned with! His anger was intense, and he now put into action a plan to destroy this entire group of people, whom he now saw as corrupt and dishonest. There are no explanations as to why the king would turn on such a trusted group of men. Perhaps the only reason was that the power of the dream God had delivered to the king now showed all his sorcerers for what they were. The wording of verse 13 in some translations indicates that some were already being put to death when Daniel and his companions were rounded up.

Had the king truly forgotten his dream? The KJV gives us that understanding in verse 5. However most other translations do not. If he had, how would he know if his dream had been revealed and interpreted? A better understanding is that the king refused to reveal it in order to know who truly had the power of interpreting dreams.

An interesting side point on this chapter is the change of language in all of the old manuscripts of the book of Daniel. Nearly all of the O.T. is written in Hebrew. The book of Daniel also begins in Hebrew, but beginning in verse 4 of this chapter it switches to Aramaic. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls switch languages at this same point. Now to our eyes Aramaic would not seem that different. Aramaic and Hebrew are "cousins" as far as languages are concerned. Apparently, however, it was important to this inspired writer to use the very language that the king would have spoken.

:14-:23 When Daniel learned of the king's plan to kill the wise men, he asked the captain of the king's guard why such a harsh and urgent order had gone out. It appears that as soon as Daniel learned about the king's dream, he immediately made arrangements to see the king, and to ask for a little time to receive the interpretation. In light of the king's mood, we may wonder why this delay may have been granted. Keep in mind, however, that there is no record of any of the wise men even *suggesting* that they could come up with an interpretation! Daniel, by his words, and with his confidence shining through his great faith in God, made the king of Babylon halt his unbridled fury.

Note that at this point Daniel did not have the interpretation! This young man had stood before the most powerful man on earth and had promised him something that Daniel did not yet have. Here is faith demonstrated.

:24-:35 Following this meeting Daniel's faith was rewarded. The "secret" was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Armed with this answer from God, Daniel again asked for the king's audience, as he also pleaded to preserve the lives of the other wise men of Babylon. As before, the king asked for the dream to first be revealed, then interpreted. It is here that both the king and all those who have read this account through the ages learn of Daniel's "secret" to revealing secrets, and that was his God. Daniel took no credit for this information. He even spoke the revelation as being from God to the king, leaving himself no credit (2:27-28).

The contents of the dream are found in verses 31-35. We are familiar with the great image or statue with a head made out of gold, its chest and arms made out of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, and its legs of iron, with feet partly of clay. The action of this dream was the stone being cut out without

human hands, which then crashed into the image at its feet, breaking the entire image into pieces that then were carried away by the wind. That same stone then grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

:36-:45 Daniel does not record the king's response at this point, but he certainly had his attention! Perhaps becoming speechless was the king's response! Daniel now proceeds to the meaning of this great dream. Daniel first makes it very clear that **Nebuchadnezzar** was symbolized by the **head** of the statue that was made of **gold**. Can you feel the king's glee at being the head of gold? Yet the bad news was that his kingdom would someday give place to an "inferior" kingdom.

History tells us that kingdom to follow was the **Medo-Persian** empire. While in several ways the Medo-Persian empire was greater than the Babylonian, Daniel's interpretation has it as being inferior. Perhaps this was a reference to its internal unity never being that of Babylon. Note that this kingdom was both the **arms and the chest** of the image. It was a kingdom made up of the combination of the Medes and the Persians. The *inferiority* of this kingdom could also quite literally refer to the grandeur of Persia being inferior due to their emphasis upon power and control more so than magnificence. There is much evidence that Babylon focused much more upon the use of gold. Herodotus even mentions that Nebuchadnezzar required an older chapel which had previously been made from silver to be overlaid with bright gold! The Medo-Persians, however, focused less upon building for the sake of glory and more upon a perfect system of taxation. Total power was gained by the amassing of wealth that was generally paid in silver. Herodotus, the historian, states that some tribute paid by India to the Persians was in gold-dust, yet it was valued according to its *silver equivalent*. It appears that the Persians based their empire on a **silver-standard**.

The third kingdom mentioned was to be a **kingdom of bronze** that would rule over all the earth. History again leaves no doubt that the kingdom to replace the Medo-Persians was the kingdom of the **Greeks**. Bronze here is mentioned for good reason. Herodotus again speaks of the difference between the bronze worn by the Greeks and the cloth hats worn by the Persians. As to their leader Alexander the Great, one needs only a basic history lesson to learn of the extent of his victories. Indeed, for a few years, the Greeks ruled the earth. This could not have been said of Persia, for they never were able to fully conquer Greece. It was Alexander who sat down and wept because there were no other nations to conquer!

We are now down to the **legs of iron and feet of iron and clay**. This kingdom replaced the kingdom of Greece. History teaches us this was to be **Rome**. It seems appropriate to use "iron" in describing Rome. It was during this time in history that bronze weapons and armor were replaced by iron, which was of course superior.

As to the nature of the Roman war machine, its goal was simply to crush every nation in its path. When compared to previous leaders from the east, the nature of Roman rule was very brash and irreverent. Thus the symbolism of iron was very fitting. As to the mixture of clay within the iron, another feature of Rome

must be noted. The nations defeated by Rome were never unified under Roman rule to the extent that previous kingdoms had enjoyed. Roman vassal states were simply defeated, devastated, and dominated. In this sense Rome was always divided, yet the strength of the iron (Rome's military might) was still in it.

Keep in mind that the Roman kingdom lasted much longer than the previous three we have discussed, (over 500 years as compared to 130 for Greece), yet internal unity was never Rome's outstanding feature.

This brings us to the key element of this entire dream, found in verse 44. Daniel revealed that **in the days of "these kings,"** (i.e. the kings of Rome), that a kingdom would be set up which would **never be destroyed!** Do we still not understand the meaning of this dream? This is a direct prophecy concerning the **establishment of the church in the days of Roman rule.** It was to be a permanent kingdom, one that would never be handed over to another kingdom. This clearly conveys that this (5th) kingdom was of a totally different nature than the previous four. In the first place it was not cut out by human hands (34). The implication being it was from God. Verse 44 tells us God will set up this kingdom, and also that it shall stand forever. History reveals that following the decline of Rome, there were no other great world powers for centuries. Yes, modern times have seen the rise and fall of several, but even they have not spanned more than a generation or two. Yet it was the birth of Christ in the days of Rome and the establishment of the church in 33 A.D. that has had far greater impact upon human history than the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome put together. At last, Daniel had broken the riddle of the king's dream!

:46-49 The impact of Daniel's interpretation brought the greatest king on earth to his knees. Furthermore, the king even felt the need for some form of worship to the God of Daniel. In verse 47 Nebuchadnezzar goes so far as to actually confess Daniel's God as the God of all other gods. While we cannot construe these actions and words as a renouncement of paganism by the king, he was willing at this point to give pre-eminence to "Daniel's God." As we shall see in the next two chapters, the battle for the spiritual mind and soul of king Nebuchadnezzar was by no means over.

Following this great promotion Daniel was made ruler over the whole province of Babylon. This does not mean that Daniel was made king, but rather a chief administrator over all the wise men, who in turn answered directly to the king. Note that Daniel still had to ask permission of the king to promote his three friends to high ranking positions.

Chapter 3

Nebuchadnezzar's Image Of Gold

:1-7 At the conclusion of the previous chapter the reader would think that as far as the Hebrew captives were concerned, all would be well concerning their relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. Yet now, (perhaps 16-17 years later), we find that the king was still far from being a true follower of the God of Israel. This is an important lesson we must learn; including God among other gods, or even placing Him at the top of our list, does not make us a child of the One True God. Nebuchadnezzar (despite his apparent belief in Daniel's God) saw no problem in having this idol built, and threatening with death all those who refused to worship it!

The idol itself was to be sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide. Remember the Babylonians used base sixty for counting and measuring. If their cubit was 18 inches, this image would have been 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. Such dimensions seem strange, but if the base was around 45 feet high, the proportions of the image would be correct. Although it is never stated, many assume that this image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself. This is very possible. Remember the king's dream? While he was humbled by Daniel's interpretation, the thought of himself being the "head of gold" may have literally gone to his head! In addition, this image made totally of gold may have been the king's Freudian slip, showing after all these years his refusal to accept the prophecy that his kingdom of "gold" would be replaced by a kingdom of "silver."

Daniel goes to great detail in listing all the different levels of government officials who were gathered together for the dedication of the great image. There seems to be no reason other than to show how important the viewing and the subsequent worship of this image was to the king. In this list Daniel uses several Persian terms, but considering Daniel lived into the days of Persian rule, one would expect him to use terms that at the time of the completion of his book were in current use. Daniel also uses Greek terms to describe some of the musical instruments, which also is reasonable, seeing that with the rise of the Greek culture, the influence of Greece can already been seen long before the time and the conquests of Alexander. Even today musical instruments tend to retain their names as pronounced in the language of their origin.

The playing of this wild combination of musical instruments was to be the signal to worship the image of gold. It appears that for most of the melting pot of people in Babylonia at that time, this command presented no problem. Just as Nebuchadnezzar himself had seen no conflict in praising the God of Daniel and then later commanding the worship of a golden idol, apparently most of the population saw no conflict in adding the golden image to their list of gods. One fact is here made very clear; the worship of multiple gods effectively removes all exclusive worship of any particular one. The devil knows that polytheism is in reality no true worship at all.

We might add, however, that there was a "incentive program" for the worship of this image. Those who refused would be cast into a burning furnace. Rather than trying to picture a home heating system, the furnace involved here was probably one used in the baking of bricks for the king's many building projects. Such a furnace would bring a quick yet horribly painful death. The washed out, watered-down religions of the populace required little time for the citizens of Babylon to decide to worship the image.

:8-18 Apparently soon after the first image worship rehearsal, several Chaldeans came before the king with some news they could not contain. They first flattered the king, reminding him of his command, and then "sadly" told him of three Jews who did not obey the command, and who also were not serving the king's gods. Their names, of course were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It is ironic that those who revealed this to the king were probably among the group of men saved by Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream several years earlier, but by now any gratitude was forgotten. In fact, Daniel and his three friends' success (and reward of positions) probably had set the stage for these ungodly men to resent rather than respect the four men from Judea.

Speaking of four, why are the three only mentioned in this chapter? What had happened to Daniel? To be quite honest, no one truly knows. There is no indication in this book or elsewhere as to why Daniel was not involved in this incident. There are several facts we can state clearly, however. Daniel was not deceased, for we see him again in the following chapters, even up into the Persian period. Based upon what we know about Daniel's faith and character, we know he too would have refused to worship the image. This leaves us with only one conclusion, and that was that for some reason Daniel was away during this time. Perhaps he was on official business, seeing that his was a very high-ranking position. For those who claim that this book was a book of fiction written many years after the time of Daniel by one claiming to be Daniel, one would expect Daniel's name to be included in this chapter. Believing that Daniel himself wrote these words, however, it is no surprise that if he was out of town during this event, that he would (out of modesty) make no mention of himself since he was not directly involved. His three friends did wonderfully on their own. This chapter is in dedication to their faith!

Nebuchadnezzar's response was to be expected. When the king didn't get his way, the king's response was to show a fit of anger (:13)! The three men are ordered before him, and they are questioned concerning their "crimes" against the king. Although in a rage, his offer for a "second chance" shows his continued respect for the Jewish men. The three men's response removes any need for the musical signal to be given again, however, for their confidence in this matter ends the discussion. Rarely have men throughout history spoken so boldly and clearly. "We have no need to answer you in this matter." These words were spoken to a king! "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us..." Notice they did not at this point say that they knew He would deliver them, but merely that He was able to deliver them. But even if God chose not to deliver

them, they would still not serve the king's gods, including the image he had set up!

:19-25 Like most powerful leaders, Nebuchadnezzar was not used to such insubordination! At this point the order was given to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual. As the furnace heated up, so did the king's anger, so that even the expression on his face changed toward these three men who refused to "respect" his gods. The insanity of his anger is shown in that some of his men were even killed by the flames as they cast the three Jews into this super-heated furnace. Certainly the usual temperatures within would have done the job, perhaps even better, giving his victims more time to suffer and die in the heat rather than the flames. It is clear that at this point the king was out of control.

There are two points to be noticed about this great miracle. One, not only were the three thrown into the fire, but they were also thrown in tied up. What the king sees with his own eyes following this was the three men and "another" walking in the middle of the flames of the furnace! God's protection was absolute. The flames had killed the guards and apparently had burned away the three's bonds, but they themselves were totally unharmed.

The fourth man the king saw was noticeably different. The NKJV translates that the "form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Perhaps we should clarify here that Nebuchadnezzar had no concept of Jesus, seeing that He had not yet come into the world. We can be also sure that the king had little if any understanding of the Jewish prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. Even the Jews in the days of Christ showed their limited understanding of the Messiah being the actual "Son of God." It is most likely that what the king was saying was that what he saw looked like some sort of Divine Being. In some way, the fourth being was unique from the other three. God made sure that the supposed "king of the earth" caught a glimpse of the true God in action!

Regardless of what Nebuchadnezzar thought, the question for Bible students is; "who was the fourth man in the furnace?" I've found most commentators consider him as an angel of God. This may be correct. Note that the king later calls the fourth man God's "Angel" and was not corrected by the three men (:28). My personal view has been that the fourth man was the pre-incarnate Christ. As we see in selected other passages of O.T. scriptures, the presence of God was placed before man at various times in history. Certainly the preservation of God's people and their faith while in captivity was a time that was important enough to intervene in such a way. This does not take away from the uniqueness of events when Christ was born in Bethlehem. His coming in the flesh in the ways of the flesh in the first century was clearly unique, and nothing else can take away from His life lived here on earth and His death on the cross. However, is it too much to believe that the Son of the living God could also have been directly at work at selected times during the O.T. era?

:26-30 The ironic aspect of human pride is that in the presence of God, it is always made to look so silly! Now we find the greatest king on earth talking into the mouth of flaming furnace, asking three men to come out of the flames. The

three were apparently in no hurry to come out. It was as though they were enjoying their stroll in the presence of God! At last they hear the king's call and come forth, but they bring with them no signs of the fire. Modern man is just now learning the science of removing the smell of fire from a home or furnishings. These men walked out of a furnace smelling smoke-free.

Again, Nebuchadnezzar was humbled. He blesses the God of the three Jews. He praises God for delivering the three, while frustrating his own words and decrees. Note that again, the king does not himself pledge allegiance to the God of the Jews, but rather blesses their God and honors the three for being steadfast in worshipping no other gods. This distinction is important, for it will help us to understand the humbling of the king that still must take place in the following chapter.

Yet another decree is now made. It is now made into law that no one could speak against the God of the Jews. The same punishment that was prescribed against the wise men of Babylon in chapter 2 is now promised for those who would slander the God of Judah. These are powerful words from a very powerful leader of his day. In addition, the king promoted the three Hebrews to positions even higher than before in Babylon (see 2:49). The struggle, however, of God's people in captivity is now far from over.

Chapter 4

Another Dream For Nebuchadnezzar

:1-18 Many years have passed since the trial of the fiery furnace. Daniel is now perhaps 50 - 60 years old. Most Bible historians date the events of this chapter at around 569 - 562 B.C. The king was nearing the end of his very long and successful reign of over 40 years as king of Babylon. Due to the continuous influence of the four Hebrews, however, the king has learned much about the God of Judah. Thus we find this chapter the king's own words sounding as though they were written by one of God's prophets!

It is difficult to say which parts of this chapter were originally written or spoken by Nebuchadnezzar himself, but the wording would indicate that verses 1-18 records the actual edict of the king, followed by Daniel's narrative in verses 19-33. These are followed by the king's "lesson," (again in the king's words), found in verses 34-37.

At first reading the Bible student would notice the very strong evidence of true faith in the one God, especially in verses 2-3. We must remember, however, that this aging king had seen much of God's power. His dream (over 30 years earlier) had been revealed and interpreted by Daniel when no one in the kingdom could do it to save their own lives! About 20 years prior to the events of this chapter his efforts to destroy Daniel's three friends in the furnace had resulted in his own humiliation and their salvation by the power of God. Now, after all these years, Nebuchadnezzar has another dream that, when fulfilled, literally brought this powerful king to his knees.

The setting of the dream was in the king's palace. The king was at rest, perhaps a reference to the historical fact that his success in "world" conquest now provided him a rest from war. The king was at his peak of power, his kingdom could not be shaken. He was "flourishing in his palace." But then he received another dream from God. It was a knowledge born out of experience, such a dream could not be ignored!

As before, all the wise men were summoned to interpret, and as before they could not. Different this time, however, the king revealed the dream, yet still the interpretation was not given. Many wonder why Daniel was not asked first, in light of the king's past experience with such a dream from God. While the text does not explain this, there are many possibilities. Daniel again may have been away on official business (see Daniel 8:2). Being an aging citizen himself, Daniel may have been ill or slower in appearing before the king. Since the king did reveal the dream on this occasion, there may have been many attempting to interpret it ahead of Daniel. At any rate, Daniel after the others, came before the king.

The king expresses great respect for Daniel and his God as he then proceeds to reveal his dream to Daniel. The dream itself was very simple. He dreamed of a tree that had grown great and had become strong. It grew until it

reached the heavens and could be seen from anywhere upon the earth. It was also beautiful and provided fruit for everyone. Yet there was a "watcher" who was a "holy one" who came down from heaven, who ordered the tree to be chopped down. The stump and the roots were to be left in the earth, but the tree now referred to as "he," must now graze with the beasts of the field. His heart will be changed from that of a man to that of an animal for a period of seven times. The purpose of such a dream? To show that the Most High rules over the kings and kingdoms of the earth.

:19-27 Now for the interpretation. Interestingly, Daniel at first is astonished and troubled. The king seems to be moved by this, and in the midst of his distress shows some concern for Daniel himself. These two aging leaders had been through much together. Their mutual respect is now seen in their conversation. Daniel first indicates that the dream's meaning would be for the king's enemies, that is, a dream that they would like to see fulfilled. Yet the king has urged him on, and Daniel's respect for God outweighs his respect for the king.

First, the tree represents Nebuchadnezzar. His greatness had grown to the point of legend upon the earth. Today we still speak of his name. Yet the humbling of the king was about to occur. The king was going to be afflicted with a condition that would make him behave as though he were an animal. It would reach such a point that this great king would be driven from living among men to living as a beast! After a period of seven times (possibly years) passes, Daniel reveals that the king would then be humbled and restored to his kingdom.

:28-33 Daniel ends his prophecy with a few words of invitation, as he urges the king to repent of his iniquities, that perhaps this "sentence" could be reduced. Unfortunately for the king, such a permanent change did not occur, for the dream was fulfilled just one year later. The exact time of the fulfillment was as the king was walking about the royal palace, glorying in his accomplishments and power. The text shows that the king actually spoke these words out loud, and that as he was speaking them a voice from heaven declared the time of the sentence would now begin! Daniel reveals the prophecy was fulfilled in that very hour.

From the perspective of medical science, this is a very perplexing passage. Yet such conditions are not totally unknown. There is a form of mental illness that leads a man to behave like an animal. This condition is called "lycanthropy." There are examples of this in modern medical history. Certainly the student of the Bible and of history can attest to the power of belief, both for man's good and to his detriment. If Nebuchadnezzar came to truly believe himself to be a beast of the field, we can imagine the power of such an illness. God, at this point, permitted this man who had allowed his self-worship to reach such a pinnacle, to now lower him to the depths of his animal nature.

Of course there are many questions we may ask. How could a human being survive as an animal among the beasts of the field? There are no easy answers found here. We could go into great detail of speculation, but the foundational answer to all of such questions is that God's hand was directly involved in this entire matter. If God could create man to live and survive as we do upon this earth, could he not also temporarily preserve even Nebuchadnezzar during this time of his altered state? The king may have been seriously mentally

disturbed, but God saw to it that he retained enough of his wits to eat, defend himself, and survive. That's not to say this time was a vacation for the king! It was humiliation in its ultimate form. Besides losing his pride, this "camping experience" changed the king's life. Do you suppose he ever wanted to go hunting after this? Did he become a vegetarian? I would hazard to guess that the king's taste for some foods upon his return was never quite the same from that day forward! But most importantly, his view of himself was permanently changed by God's living lesson.

:34-37 Again we find the king himself speaking in the first person. Could we say that Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king actually wrote part of the Bible? Yes, God used many human hands to deliver his word to us. Even some of the words of the Bible were not human. Some parts were spoken by angels, Satan, and even a serpent and a donkey! Yet together they record the entire history of God's struggle to lead man to salvation. Nebuchadnezzar was just a small piece of that plan.

Perhaps a question we've never considered, did Nebuchadnezzar die in a saved condition? This we can't know. We can only say that over the years his faith apparently grew, and that his knowledge of the God of Daniel had grown. We find the greatest and best examples of his faith in this, the final chapter of his life recorded in the book of Daniel. His final statement in verse 37 sounds like king Solomon and many other great men and women who finally found the profundity in simply stating, "God is the King!" This leaves without saying that we are not the King, even of our own lives.

Chapter 5

Daniel Interprets "The End" For Babylon

:1-12 Some years again have passed since the events of the previous chapter. Nebuchadnezzar had died in about 562 B.C. He was followed by his son, Evil-merodach, who was assassinated by his brother-in-law Nergalsharezer in about 560 B.C. Nergalsharezer died in about 556 B.C. leaving his throne to the infant Labashi-Marduk, whom the priestly party replaced with Nabonidus in about 555 B.C. Nabonidus ruled for about 17 years, after which he was exiled by the Persians who conquered Babylonia in about the year of 538 B.C.

Taking a close look at Daniel chapter 5, we must ask, where are we in history? We find Belshazzar as king of Babylon, and we also find in this chapter that he was slain the night the Medes and the Persians received the kingdom that had been Babylon. This at one time was a very difficult historical problem for Bible students. Critics of the Bible complained loudly that the book of Daniel was not only inaccurate as to the name of the last king of Babylon, but that also the details of the end were incorrect also. History stated that Nabonidus was the last king, and that he was not put to death by the Medo-Persians.

In the 1800's, however, a number of clay tablets were excavated in the vicinity of Babylon. These tablets spoke of the name of Belshazzar, some bearing both the name of Belshazzar and Nabonidus upon the same tablet! One tablet also referred to Belshazzar as the son of the king. Yet another tablet recorded an oath that was taken in the name of both Belshazzar *and* Nabonidus. Since oaths were normally made in the name of the king, this was strong indication that both of these men were considered kings of Babylon at the same time. Further studies have shown that Nabonidus spent a large amount of time in Arabia during the last part of his reign, thus leaving Belshazzar in the position of ruling over Babylon itself as king. One inscription states Nabonidus "entrusted the kingship to him." Such archeological finds have once and for all silenced the critics of the Bible on this matter. Nabonidus was the last king of Babylonia, yet for all practical purposes Belshazzar was in charge in Babylon the night it fell! Although Nabonidus may have been spared, Belshazzar was slain on that fateful night.

This is a tremendous example of (can we say) "historical foreknowledge" of the Bible! Here are some historical facts that had long since been forgotten and lost to modern historians, yet the ancient book of Daniel knew long before other records were found to confirm these facts as being correct. This should give us even greater confidence in the inspiration of the Bible, for time and again it has shown itself to be accurate in its content. Such accuracy also strengthens the belief that Daniel was written by Daniel himself in the very days in which these events took place. A later author may not have even known of the existence of Belshazzar, as even we did not know until recent times.

With this historical background, we now look at the events of Babylon's final night. Belshazzar, the acting king of Babylon made a great feast. Rather

than the usual drinking and revelry, it was he who decided to add to the festivities by bringing out the "good" silverware, which was all the vessels that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem. It's amazing to think that these items still existed. Rather than being melted down, they had been kept as trophies. Now in a show of irreverence to the God of a defeated nation, they chose to engage in their drunkenness using God's holy vessels. In addition to this brazen disrespect for the God of Israel, the king, his lords, and his wives and concubines drank while praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. The pagan nation of Babylon had now reached the limit of God's patience!

Verse five informs us that it was in the very same hour that the fingers of a man's hand appeared and began to write on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. It is interesting to note that archeologists have uncovered a great hall in Babylon measuring 50' by 160' having walls of white plaster. It was upon such plaster that apparently only the king saw fingers writing, but the writing itself remained for all to see. To see disembodied fingers writing was clearly more than what the king had hoped to experience from the effects of alcohol, and he became greatly troubled and afraid!

It is at this point history seems to repeat itself. Twice in the life of Nebuchadnezzar there was a call for interpretation, and only Daniel was found to have it. Now we find Belshazzar facing the same dilemma. The writing on the wall must be interpreted! Whoever among the wise men who can do so will be made third in the kingdom! As with the dreams of years past, the wise men could do nothing with the writings. Its meaning was somehow hidden from them.

The problem of interpretation was not with the language. The words were Aramaic, which was the language of the Babylonians (Daniel 2:4). The problem was in the meaning of the words. It was like a riddle, one may read it, but not understand it. We will look at its meaning later in this chapter.

It is at this point the queen enters the picture, giving Belshazzar a bit of a history lesson, telling him of the accomplishments of a man named Daniel. The queen mentioned in these verses was probably not the wife of Belshazzar. His wives and concubines were already present at this feast (5:3). The queen was probably the queen mother, who in Babylon held the highest respect in the royal house. Note that she entered the hall on her own accord without permission. She very likely could have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar himself, for she shows a great knowledge of events during his reign.

:13-24 At last the aging man of God is again brought before a king. As Belshazzar struggles to clear the cobwebs from his inebriated mind, he asks, "Are you that Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah?" The king evidently had never met Daniel, or if he had, he had never known his history until the queen had informed him.

Again the promise of reward is made, as the king's urgency in learning the interpretation is clearly evident. History tells us that prior to the fall of Babylon, the armies of the Medes and the Persians were camped outside that great city. History also says that the Babylonians thought that their enemies were building siege engines to attack their gates and the walls, while in fact the

Persians were actually diverting the river that flowed through Babylon so as to enter the city through the empty riverbed.

But the question remains, why the drunken feast at such a time of national distress? There are many possible answers. There was no doubt a feeling of invincibility within such a great empire. As has been seen in other times of history, the common people may have prepared while the king and his government refused to accept reality. The drunken feast may have been their response to the external doom that awaited them.

Daniel's answer to the king was very short and abrupt. In so many words Daniel told the king, "You may keep your gifts, however I will give you the interpretation." Before giving the meaning of the handwriting, however, Daniel gives Belshazzar a short history lesson. He reminded the king of what Nebuchadnezzar had learned. He spoke of his humiliation in being driven from the presence of man, and being made to live as a beast of the field. The king's pride was specifically mentioned as the reason for his humiliation (Daniel 5:20).

Now Belshazzar had committed the same fatal error (5:22). In a sense Daniel was saying that Belshazzar was going to be judged even more harshly for not learning from the lesson taught to his predecessor. The final act of insolence was the drinking from the vessels of the temple and the praising of false gods. In perhaps the most poetic section of the entire book, Daniel speaks of the king's praise of gods "which do not see or hear or know, while the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified (Daniel 5:23)."

:25-31 Getting back to the inscription, what did it mean? "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin." The word "mene" in ancient Aramaic meant "to number" or to "fix the limit of." "Tekel" meant "to weigh." The "u" at the beginning of "upharsin" is the conjunction "and." "Pharsin" is the plural of "peres" which means "to divide." As previously mentioned, however, the meaning of the words does not reveal the interpretation of the riddle. Daniel gives the complete meaning by filling in the blanks. To the king of Babylon he speaks, "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it. You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

The sentence had now been pronounced. Daniel's final message to Babylon from God had now been given. Belshazzar, still reeling from the alcohol, the sight of the supernatural, and the impact of Daniel's interpretation, now gives perhaps the most meaningless appointment in the history of human government. He bestows upon Daniel the position of the third ruler in Babylon. By the way, do you remember our discussion at the beginning of this chapter of Nabonidus and Belshazzar as co-rulers of Babylon? We may now understand why Daniel was made the *third* ruler of Babylon rather than the second. Unfortunately it was given on the very night that Babylon fell! Before the night was over, Belshazzar was dead, and Darius the Mede was king of an empire that had reigned supreme over the earth for 70 years. Babylon was to be no more. It was the end of an era.

Chapter 6

Daniel Prevails Under Persian Rule

:1-9 Daniel's life spanned a period of human history that saw radical change. We now find him in this chapter surviving under a "new world order." The change that Daniel saw in his life would be equivalent to our seeing the collapse of the United States to a foreign power! Although Daniel and his friends had been severely tested under the Babylonian regime, it must have been extremely difficult for him to face yet another upheaval at this late stage of his life. Yet, as God would have it, we find Daniel playing both a prominent role in preparing the Babylonians for their final hours, and now teaching the new Persian rulers a lesson about the same God their predecessors had found so hard to understand.

This chapter begins with the administration of Darius as he organized his new kingdom in what once was Babylon. Historians have some questions about this ruler being the conqueror of Babylon. Ancient records show Cyrus the Persian holding this distinction. While this question has not been as clearly answered as other so called historical "discrepancies" in the book of Daniel, past experiences of those who have challenged Daniel's historical accuracy should make his critics wary. Some research has already shown that the Darius mentioned in Daniel may well have been another name for Cyrus' great general, Gobryas. One tablet has been found that speaks of Gobryas (also spelled Gubaru) being set up as governor of Babylon, and of his appointing many sub-governors, as mentioned in this chapter. Daniel's mention that he "received" the kingdom rather than "taking" it may refer to the fact that it was the Cyrus later mentioned in 6:28 who put his general in charge while he finished the business of solidifying his new kingdom.

We should make it clear that the mention of Darius being a Mede does not indicate the existence of an independent Median kingdom prior to the Persians. It is clear that the Medes and the Persians united in their conquests, and that they together ruled the known world for 200 years. Cyrus, in fact, was the son of a Persian king and a Median princess. Some speculate therefore that Darius was perhaps a brother to Cyrus' wife.

Daniel records that one of Darius' first official acts was to divide the kingdom into 120 governmental segments. Over these 120 sub-governors he then placed 3 governors, of whom Daniel was one. This was an extremely prestigious position which effectively placed Daniel in charge of 40 districts, and also at least one of the top 4 officials in the kingdom. To add to this honor, it was apparently not long before Daniel distinguished himself well above and beyond the other 2 governors and satraps with whom he was serving. This became so clear that the king was even entertaining the idea of placing Daniel over the entire realm. Keeping in mind that Daniel, at this point, must have been about 80 years old, we might conclude that not only had God blessed him with great wisdom, but also with great physical stamina as well!

The stage is now set, of course, for the world around Daniel to become greatly envious of his success and position. We find not only the 2 governors most threatened by Daniel's rise, but also even the many satraps plotting together to find a way to destroy Daniel. In this there was a great problem, and that being Daniel was a man with an unimpeachable record. It was at this point his enemies concluded that his only political weakness was in his commitment to his God.

The plot was hatched to trick the king into signing a decree against the petitioning of any god other than the king for 30 days. The penalty for any violation of this law was certain death in the lion's den. The king, apparently oblivious of what he was doing to his favorite governor, signed the decree into law. The sub-note here is that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, this law, once signed, could never be changed.

:10-17 With the signing of this statute, Daniel's ticket to the lion's den was now essentially a certainty! His enemies knew His character, and Daniel did not disappoint them. Daniel, quite aware of this new law, went home to his upper room, and with his windows wide open toward Jerusalem, knelt in prayer 3 times that day, as had been his practice since he was young. This exhibition of faith was not wasted upon his enemies. They had gathered to view his "rebellion" to the king, and now happily brought the news to him.

The king is now placed in a position of great duress, brought upon him by his lack of foresight and by the manipulation of his own subordinates. His character is now shown, for the text reveals that he was most displeased with himself, rather than Daniel. Darius strove until sundown to find a legal way to deliver Daniel, yet in this case the great authority given the king was now working against him. His only recourse would have been to boldly break the law that he was in power to enforce.

At this point the pesky governors again returned to *remind* the king that his laws could not be changed. While no mention of his anger toward them is here mentioned, the king's actions in verse 24 shows the level of passion to which this whole matter eventually reached. But now, the king saw his only recourse being that of throwing Daniel to the lions. It is interesting that in verse 16 we have a pagan king in this book of prophecy making a "prophecy" of his own. Darius speaks to Daniel, and states his belief that Daniel's God would deliver him. Did the king somehow know God would shut the lion's mouths? Had the king received a vision? This is not stated. Perhaps the king was a student of history. His putting Daniel in such a high ranking position was due to some information. Perhaps he had learned of Daniel's interpretations and great victories of faith under Babylonian rule. At any rate, Darius believed that in some way God would now deliver Daniel. His respect for Daniel and the duress of these circumstances forced this pagan king to find at least a mustard-seed of faith in the power of the God of Daniel!

:18-23 Having been cast into the lion's den, a stone was laid on the mouth of it, with the opening somehow sealed with the king's own ring. Ironically we soon learn that the one who truly was cast into a "den of lion's" that night was the king himself! The king spent the night without sleep, and without food. There was no

effort for entertainment to be brought before him. It was as though the king's self-imposed night of anguish was due to the injustice he had brought upon his best governor, and without a doubt the greatest man he had ever known. Meanwhile, do you suppose Daniel slept peacefully with a sleepy lion as his pillow?

After such a night, the king wasted no time in reaching the lion's den. Did the king truly believe God could save Daniel under such circumstances? If he did not, why would he have even bothered to call out to Daniel? Can you imagine seeing a man thrown into a den of ravenous, wild lions, and then returning to speak to him the next morning? This indeed, was a demonstration of great faith in Daniel's God.

From within there was the reply, "O king, live forever!" Not only had Daniel survived, he was unhurt. In addition, Daniel now pleads his case that his survival proves his innocence before God, and therefore innocent before the king as well. The king's extreme joy brought the immediate call for the removal of Daniel from the den. As throughout his life, Daniel's faith in God gave him a great victory under the most impossible circumstances.

:24-28 Darius now sees some unfinished business at hand. The men who had accused Daniel were now brought in, and along with their families, cast into the den of lions. It is a horrifying event, graphically described in verse 24, yet it illustrates the concept of justice in ancient times. This also confirms that the lions God had withheld from harming Daniel were very capable of extracting punishment upon their victims.

The final verses of this chapter, (25-28), are interesting in that they record yet again the writings of a pagan king in defense of the one true God (see 4:34-37). While in this passage Darius does not disassociate himself from all other gods, he does give preeminence to Daniel's God, and even proclaims His kingdom as "enduring to the end." There is no indication that Darius had received such a revelation from God, but it appears that he now speaks these words to some degree in ignorance of their full meaning. This may remind us of the words that Caiaphas had unknowingly spoken showing insight concerning the fate of Jesus when he said, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish (John 11:50)."

And so ends what some would call the historical section of Daniel. The following chapters are quite different in many ways from these first six. We will see, however, how the time in which Daniel lived plays prominently into what prophecies God gave him to write. Get ready for a challenging journey through the end of this great book!

Chapter 7

Daniel's Vision Of The Four Beasts

:1-8 We now leave that part of the book of Daniel that reads more like a historical narrative, and begin what some call the “apocalyptic” section of Daniel. You will notice that from here on Daniel’s writings consist more of highly graphic and colorful descriptions of his visions and dreams, with very little being said about the actual current events in Daniel’s life other than his visions. It’s as though Daniel has saved his “advanced” dreams, visions, and interpretations for last. His first six chapters were a beginner’s introduction into the visions of God, now we should be ready for “high school” material!

With that being said, however, Daniel does give some reference to the time in which each of his visions was received. The one covered in this chapter may be considered a flashback from where he had left off in chapter 6, for we now go back to the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. On a time-line this vision would be placed between the events of chapters 4 and 5. Its placement here shows the obvious intention of Daniel to group together all of his more figurative and difficult visions into this final half of his book.

In this vision Daniel saw four winds stirring upon the Great Sea. After the winds came four great beasts up from the sea. Each beast was quite unique, to say the least! The first was *like* a lion with eagle’s wings. The second was *like* a bear that walked strangely, the third was *like* a leopard with four wings and four heads, and the fourth was so different that no animal was used to describe it.

Reading apocalyptic books such as Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation, can be overwhelming. My suggestion here is to see these visions as great paintings rather than as complicated codes we must decipher. In the religious world today it seems that there are both those who see too much in such writings, and those who see too little. Our goal will be to get the main points of Daniel’s visions, while not losing sight of the forest for the trees!

One thing to remember about apocalyptic writings is that often many different symbols may be used to convey the same or similar points. In chapter 2 we found Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue. Each part of the statue represented one of four different kingdoms, beginning with Babylon. Here again those four kingdoms are represented, this time, however, each is represented as a great beast (see 7:17). Since this is a *progressive vision*, it is very important that we understand what the first beast represented.

The fact that the first beast was like a lion with eagle’s wings should be a dead give-away that this is speaking of Babylon. The winged lion in many ways was the corporate logo of Babylon! Archeologists have uncovered many such figures carved in base-relief on the gates of ancient Babylon. The plucking off of the lion’s wings, and its being made to stand on two feet like a man, seems to fit well with the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar as detailed in chapter 4. Now that we have our starting point, the entire vision becomes easier to understand.

The second beast was interestingly described as a bear. Remember that history clearly records the Medo-Persian Empire as replacing and followed Babylonian rule. Since this animal follows the lion, we can determine that the Medo-Persian Empire is here being symbolized by the bear. Even today a bear is known for its great hunger, which was fitting for the Persian kingdom. Persia's empire extended further than that of Babylon, and lasted much longer. This bear was described as being raised up on one side. We may picture him in mid-stride with two legs advancing forward as the other two are pushing off, or we may view this in a more unnatural way with the bear literally being raised up on one side and walking with the other two legs! Since this is apocalyptic literature, I would lean toward the latter view. A bear walking on "one side" fits well with the graphic nature of apocalyptic writings, and also with the fact that the Medo-Persian empire was in fact two nations combined, with one side, (Persia) being much stronger and dominate, as history has borne out.

History tells us that Persia eventually fell to the Greek armies of Alexander the Great. The image of a fast-moving leopard, (with wings no less), is a very appropriate way to describe the speed with which Alexander defeated the known world. In only twelve years he had expanded his empire from Europe to Asia. The "four heads" this leopard possessed fits very well with the fact that, after Alexander's rapid rise to world domination, his premature death at the young age of 33 left his kingdom divided among his four generals. Note that the dominion of this beast was given to it. We must understand this to be that God Himself gave this power to the leopard. Perhaps this helps us understand the unbelievable good fortune that followed Alexander's armies in their countless victories.

The fourth beast has no earthly animal to describe it. Perhaps this is to say that its strength was beyond any of the others. This unnamed, dreadful beast had teeth of iron, reminding us of the fourth kingdom of iron as described in chapter 2. Again the Roman Empire is now being described as the forth beast. The Roman Empire is still remembered as a cruel and needlessly destructive empire. Compared to the empires before it, Roman rule was devoid of culture and reason. This new "western" style of devouring and destruction was to the eastern cultures truly a beast with teeth of iron, different from all before it.

A notable aspect of the forth beast was its ten horns. There are several possible meanings for these. The first recorded ten emperors of Rome would take us from Augustus to Titus. Following Titus, Domitian became the eleventh ruler of Rome. Many see those ten horns as being these Roman emperors, with Domitian being that "little horn" that came up after the ten. It was Domitian who made into law that he was to be addressed as "God," thus he would fit the description of the horn who had the "eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words (7:8)." The problem with this view is the question, in what way did Domitian replace or "pluck out" three of the previous emperors of Rome?

Another view of this difficult section sees the ten horns as representing the many European nations that came about as the result of the breakup of the Roman Empire beginning in 476 A.D. It was the demise of Roman power that brought about the forming of many nations, and it was also at this time that the

rise of the political power of the Roman church began to exercise its influence over those nations. The increase of Papal power led to men claiming to be the “vicar of Christ” on earth. Such beliefs are held to this day. This view points to that “little horn” as the beginning of the papacy. As to the three horns this little horn had removed, some point to the fragments of power in Ravenna, Lombardy, and Rome that became the “Patrimony of Peter.” This was the beginning of the Roman church existing on its own as a small kingdom, a kingdom that would later claim power over the kings of modern Europe. This is the view that I find most plausible concerning the “little horn.”

:9-14 In this section the focus is now turned toward the throne of God. There should be no doubt that the Ancient of Days was and is the God of heaven. In these verses we feel the tension of a courtroom, in which God is the Judge. Then the pompous words of the “horn” are heard in the courtroom. It is at this point that all are put in their place. The (forth) beast is slain and burned. The other three await their punishment. Is there any question who is truly in charge here? Christ is also clearly referred to in verse 13, when His everlasting kingdom is established forever.

Again the contrast between the kingdoms of this earth are shown as weak and temporary when compared to the kingdom God established in the days of Roman rule. His church shall never pass. The gates of hades shall not prevail against His eternal kingdom (Matthew 16:18)!

:15-28 And now, we return to the present reality for Daniel. At the time of receiving this vision he was troubled in spirit and in body. It seems out of character to see Daniel himself fretting over the meaning of a dream, when so many times before we see him calmly bringing interpretations to the kings of two great nations! Yet we must remember that before he could be such a strength to others, he himself had to seek out the will of God. Even the spiritual giants of the Bible had to have their time of seeking and searching for the mind of God. With his great visions, however, God also gave Daniel special assistance. There was one nearby, (apparently an angel of God), to give him the interpretation.

In verse 17 we find a “key” verse that has already helped us in the previous comments as to the identity of the beasts. Daniel, however, was not satisfied with this alone. He wanted to know more about the forth beast. Verse 24 states that the 10 horns were indeed 10 kings. The concept that the saints would be delivered into the hand of the pompous and blasphemous “king” fits with the interpretation that this was the papacy. Not long after Christianity ceased to be persecuted by Rome, we find the Roman Catholic (universal) church persecuting those of its own number who did not follow the “official” doctrines of the church! The comfort to those Christians who would later understand Daniel’s visions was that, in time, the power of such courts and such men would be taken away, and they themselves would someday be on trial before *God’s* court.

Even with this help given, we find Daniel still troubled over these visions. Perhaps now his distress was not due to his lack of understanding of the vision, but now he was troubled because he did! Certainly we, as his readers, may now identify with him.

Chapter 8

Daniel's Vision Of The Ram And The Goat

:1-8 As Daniel continues his review of his most remarkable visions, we now move ahead three years from the previous chapter, which puts this vision at about 549 B.C. This would have been about seven years before the fall of Babylon.

At the time of receiving this vision Daniel was in Shushan, which was the capital city of Elam. Later, under Persian rule, this city became the summer capital of Persia.

This vision, (like many ordinary dreams), employed Daniel's surroundings as its setting. He saw (standing by the river Ulai) a ram with two horns. Immediately Daniel's attention was drawn to the fact that one horn was higher than the other. The "higher" horn, however, apparently "grew out" after the "lower" horn. From there the ram began show aggression, pushing in all four directions, and no other beasts in the area were able to stop him. As a result, the ram became great and did whatever he wished.

At this point, however, a male goat came from the west. He apparently came so fast it was as though his feet did not touch the surface. This goat, (unlike actual goats), had only one notable horn, and that was between his eyes! The following showdown was unavoidable. The goat ran at the ram with furious power, breaking both of his horns, casting him down, and destroying his power.

Following this savage attack, the goat then grew to greatness himself, however, upon gaining his great strength the notable horn was broken off, and in its place four horns sprang up.

What does this all mean? Can we know for certain any of the symbolic content of this vision? Thankfully, God's Word provides us with (again) a few "keys" with which to unlock this vision. Looking ahead, we find in verse 20 that the ram with the two horns symbolized the kings of Media and Persia. This even helps explain the two horns, one (Persia) being greater than the other (Media). Even though Media had shown prominence earlier in history, Persia later outgrew her in strength.

Verse 21 of this chapter also clearly identifies the goat as the kingdom of Greece, with the large horn being its first king. This unquestionably referred to Alexander the Great. His path of conquest was indeed from the west, as he went through Persia, all the way to India. His conquests were so rapid that it was as though his armies did not touch the ground! This same concept was portrayed in the previous vision as the beast representing Greece had "four wings."

Perhaps we should stop at this point to answer a nagging question; "Why are we now seeing these same nations and events symbolized in such different ways in Daniel's visions?" So far, for example, the nation of Greece has been portrayed as the bronze part of a statue, as a leopard with four wings, and now

as a male goat! Taking a close look at apocalyptic literature, you will find that this is to be expected. Whether you are studying Revelation or Daniel, you will often find the same theme or point being made repeatedly with different symbols. Often the meaning is exactly the same, however, in some cases more detail is given with each subsequent vision and with each description.

As to God's reason for doing so, we can only speculate. Some feel it was intentional, to confuse the pagans and to comfort God's people, who would understand. Others think that God used such language to help His people paint mental pictures that would emotionally and intellectually stay with them much longer than if He had given them the prophecies without the symbolism. Even with children we may find that if given a puzzle, they may actually learn more than if simple answers are given. Certainly the mental effort we must put forth in our study of Daniel is greater than what must be applied to our study of other books!

:9-14 With this section we are confronted with identifying the "little horn" that grew out of the four horns that had replaced Alexander. Now we know that Alexander died not long after gaining world domination, and that his kingdom was then divided up between his four generals. This leaves us with the question, who was the "little horn" that grew up out of the four?

Bible scholars are agreed that this little horn was to be Antiochus Epiphanes, an extremely wicked king who took over the Seleucid branch (one of Alexander's four generals) of the Greek kingdom. The events now being described to Daniel were yet nearly 400 years in to future, however the details are exact! Indeed in 175 B.C. Antiochus became ruler of the Seleucid branch of the Greek empire. The Seleucids at that time had control of the Jews in Palestine. IN 168 B.C. Antiochus had the authorized the Jewish high priest to be put to death, and then ordered that all worship (except of his gods) was to be ended. Soldiers were sent to Jerusalem to enforce this edict. All copies of the Bible were ordered to be burnt, and a statue of Jupiter was placed on the altar in the Holy Temple of God. A pig was sacrificed upon the altar of burnt-offering, and its blood was sprinkled over the entire temple interior. By some estimates over 100,000 Jews who held to their faith were put to death by Antiochus.

While Antiochus may not be the most significant leader from a historical or political view, from the viewpoint of God's people, he ranks high on the all-time scale of evil. With this history in mind, we can understand why he is singled-out in this vision, and also why Daniel was literally sick for days after receiving this vision. The only comfort to Daniel was that this time of transgression would have an end. In verse 14 it was given the duration of 2,300 days.

When confronted with numbers in such visions, we have the dilemma of taking them literally or figuratively. A basic rule of thumb one must consider when interpreting apocalyptic literature such as this is to think symbolically first, unless we are given reason to think otherwise. Often numbers are symbolic, especially numbers that are used repeatedly, such as the number seven for example. However 2,300 seems to have no symbolic meaning. Translated into years this would be a little less than 6½ years. When taken literally this number

fits well with the time that actually elapsed between the murder of the rightful high priest and the eventual reclaiming of the temple area by God's faithful servants.

:15-22 Daniel has now received the vision itself, but he himself is in need of an interpreter! It is at this point that God sends him a messenger in the appearance of a man. This unnamed angel then calls for another angel by the name of "Gabriel." This is the first time in the Bible that one will find an angel being referred to by name. Gabriel being called forth, approaches Daniel with the comforting message that the content of the vision applies to the time of the end, and that the "end time" being spoken of would follow the time of Persia, and even the time of the Greek kingdom. It was now made clear to Daniel that the fierce king that had been described would arise at the latter part of the Greek kingdom.

Although this was a bitter pill for Daniel to swallow, he had to emotionally digest the coming suffering of God's people in order to record these visions. Despite the difficulty, Daniel must also accept the fact that such an evil king could not do such to God's people if it were not for their future rebellion.

:23-27 The final verses of this chapter reveal that the main focus of this vision was the "little horn." This fierce king is now more carefully defined. It is important to remember that while different visions may cover some of the same topics, each vision is self-contained, that is, the "little horn" mentioned in the vision of the ram and the goat should not be confused with the "little horn" found in the vision of the four beasts of the previous chapter. Although Persia and Greece are both found in these two visions, they are symbolized by different creatures and in different ways. The "little horn" coming out of the Greek kingdom is found only in this vision, and is now, due to the makeup of this vision, the centerpiece of this entire chapter.

We could spend a great deal of time chronicling the abominable acts of Antiochus Epiphanes, but it is interesting to note that his end would come without human hands, he would not be defeated by another king or army. History tells us such was the case. Antiochus, after suffering many reversals, died as the result of what many believed to be madness. Some even viewed this madness to have been inflicted by the hand of God. Certainly we can say that "God permitting" does not always mean "God-approving." God has permitted many evil events to occur throughout human history, but that does not mean He approves of all that has occurred. In time justice will be served.

Daniel was told to seal up this vision. This obviously did not mean that it could not be recorded, but that simply it was concerning things that were far in the distant future. Even so, the righteous Daniel found himself physically sick from its influence. It took him days to recover from this "vision sickness," however after his period of sickness and apparent mourning for God's people, Daniel was able to once again serve his earthly king.

The comments in verse 27 confirms that these visions contained in the last half of the book of Daniel were both too advanced and too challenging for both Daniel and his readers to understand and to receive them in their chronological order. If, however, you have gotten this far into Daniel and have the will, you, like Daniel, may in time understand! Let's press on to the challenge of chapter 9.

Chapter 9

Daniel Receives The Prophecy Of The “Seventy Weeks”

:1-3 This chapter, (like the two previous) begins by giving the reader the time of the revelation, in this case, it was during the first year of the reign of Darius. Thus, the information of this chapter was received by Daniel near the time of his ordeal in the lion’s den, as recorded in chapter six.

It was during this momentous year that we find Daniel doing something very godly, he was studying his Bible! While we should already have known that such great men from the Old Testament did so, it is somehow strange to think of Daniel, the great interpreter, reading the book of Jeremiah, striving to determine when the Jews would be able to return back to their homeland from captivity! This passage reveals to us that even the inspired writers of God’s Word were not given *all* knowledge. It is clearly a Bible teaching that the inspired writers were only given “in part,” that is the part that God wanted them to have and to reveal. Verses such as I Peter 1:10-12, II Peter 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21, and I Corinthians 13:9 help us to understand this important point.

While pinning down the exact dates of ancient history in relation to Bible prophecies is always difficult, it is quite interesting to find how well such prophecies as this do fit the approximate dates we can determine.

The passage Daniel must have been pondering was Jeremiah 25:9-11, in which Jeremiah was told by the Holy Spirit that God’s people would serve the king of Babylon seventy years. No doubt what Daniel was seeking to understand was how to exactly calculate these seventy years. “Will I see home again?” “Is our ordeal nearly over?” Such questions, after enduring nearly the entire 70 years of captivity himself, most assuredly were on the mind of Daniel. For him Bible study was not just an exercise, it was a window to the immediate future!

The exact end to the 70 years depended upon when one began counting. Babylon’s invasion of Judah, (the beginning of the book of Daniel), was in 606 B.C. Counting from there would put the end of the 70 years in 536 B.C. The first year of Darius would put this chapter near the end of the 70 years. We can see why Daniel was interested in what God had revealed to Jeremiah!

:3-19 As it should for all of us, Daniel’s study of the Bible provoked him to enter into prayer. Daniel prayed in sackcloth and ashes, indicating that this was no ordinary time of prayer, but a time of great remorse and concern for God’s people. The prayer contained in these verses is one of the greatest examples of praise for God and human humility that can be found anywhere! Daniel pours out his sorrow for his sins and the sins of his brethren, while continuously praising the goodness and the mercy of God. In Daniel’s eyes there was neither excuse nor explanation for the people’s sins, his only hope was in the forgiveness of God. In Daniel’s mind the Lord had been right in bringing the disasters of the past 60 plus years upon them, and if that promise of relief was not to come, it would be what Judah deserved.

Yet Daniel continued to plead. In this prayer the specific request to return home is not even articulated, for it wasn't really necessary. Both God and Daniel knew what he and that remnant of God-fearing Jews still sought so desperately. "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act!"

:20-27 In the midst of this great time of prayer to God, the angel Gabriel came to Daniel toward the evening. We can conclude that Daniel had been praying for many hours, for the indication is that as soon as Daniel had begun to pray, Gabriel had been dispatched. This is a fascinating passage that brings up more questions than we have the information to answer. First of all, it would seem that this passage shows that angels are definitely not omnipresent as is God, and that they are also, (at least when dealing with man on earth), in some ways restricted by time and space. Secondly, of course, we are made to wonder by the term "fly" that is applied to Gabriel. Since we have (on one hand) usually seen angels portrayed as creatures with wings, this would probably be our first thought. Without getting into an extended discussion of angels, perhaps it would be safe to say that this verse does indicate that angels have some form of transportation. To conclude that it involves birdlike wings is to make more of this passage than is given. However, if angels do have wings of some sort, why would we have a problem with that?

More importantly now, we have before us one of the most challenging prophecies found in the entire Bible. It is fascinating because at first glance it appears to be very specific, with details that the Lord obviously intended for both Daniel and his readers to understand.

This vision begins by informing Daniel of a period of "70 weeks" that had been given to his people. Lest confusion immediately sets in, let us remember that this is a different revelation from the 70-year prophecy that Jeremiah had been given. That particular prophecy concerning the 70 years of Babylonian captivity was nearly over. Yet it seems that Daniel's prayer concerning Jeremiah's prophecy had promoted this vision of the 70 weeks. It appears that God was saying to Daniel; "Although the 70 years of captivity for the Jews is about over, yet there is an additional period of time that the Jews are about to endure to "finish their transgression."

Many Bible scholars interpret this vision of the 70 weeks to mean 70 sevens, that is, 70×7 , or 490 years. Now I know that sounds strange, and a little like we are grasping at straws here, but over the years I too have come to this conclusion, and believe that these commentators are right on this. Although I am not a Hebrew scholar, the literal interpretation of weeks here is "seven." While we today use the word "week" almost exclusively to refer to a period of seven days, in the Hebrew usage this term could mean seven days, or just simply "seven." That being the case, the time frame here is 490, and we can start by assuming this means 490 years. Some have tried to calculate this vision using 490 literal weeks, which has not brought about any real definitive meaning to this passage. Others have taken this vision to mean 490 days, with the same results. Still others have "bailed out" (in my opinion) and said this is all figurative and that we should not take these numbers to mean any specific time in history!

Now I would be the first to admit that some numbers by themselves, are indeed used for symbolic purposes in apocalyptic literature, (such as the book of Daniel), but here we have 70 weeks being specifically divided up into a period of 7 weeks and then 62 weeks, followed by a period of 1 week, in the middle of which the Messiah was to be cut off. It sounds to me like the Lord is trying to give Daniel and his readers a little more than just general symbolism here!

With that thought in mind, let's start at the beginning of verse 24 and see if we can come up with a interpretation that fits well with history, and that would be significant enough for Daniel to be sent a special envoy to deliver it.

Let's consider the possibility that the 70 weeks is truly referring to a period of 70 sevens, that is a total of 490. Let's also consider the possibility that this period of 490 refers to 490 years, rather than days or weeks. If it was going to take 490 years to finish the transgressions of the Jews, then our next question is, "When should we start counting?" Verse 25 gives us this clue.

"From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem" (:9:25) was to be that starting point for this period of 490 years. Historians have offered several different dates. Cyrus gave the first decree for the Jews to rebuild their temple in about 538 B.C., and a later "Darius" gave a similar follow up decree in about 518 B.C. The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., however, is very significant in that it truly allowed the Jewish commonwealth to be re-established. It allowed Ezra to ordain laws, and to basically restore Jerusalem and the nation. This decree is found verbatim in Ezra 7:12-26, and is even recorded in the original Aramaic rather than Hebrew. This is the only Aramaic section of Ezra, which seems to also emphasize the importance of this decree. Starting from the date of this decree of Araxerxes in 457 B.C., we now return to the vision. It seems that Gabriel was saying to Daniel that this period of 70 sevens (490 years) was made up of several important segments. The first segment was a period of 7 sevens, (or 49 years if we are on the right track!) Moving ahead 49 years from the time of the decree in 457 B.C. would put this at 408 B.C. The year 408 B.C. fits well with the time in which the work of rebuilding Jerusalem was completed. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us the Bible history of this completion.

Gabriel also explains that the next segment of the 70 sevens was to be the larger segment of 62 sevens, which would come out to 434 years. Moving forward 434 years in time from the completion of the work in Jerusalem in 408 B.C. would bring us to the year of 26 A.D. According to the vision then, it would be after the 7 sevens, (Jerusalem rebuilt), and then after the 62 sevens, (about 26 A.D.) to the time of the Messiah the Prince. For Bible students we don't have to explain who the Messiah was to be. Jesus was the Christ foretold throughout the Old Testament, and the New Testament tells us of His ministry beginning at the age of 30. But there seems to be a problem with this. If our calendars are based upon the birth of Christ, then His ministry should have begun in the year of 30, and this vision given to Daniel would have taken our calculations to that date.

Now this may sound very convenient, but it is well confirmed that the dating system we now follow using the birth of Christ as its starting point is off by about four years. That is, Christ was actually was born in the year 4 B.C.

according to the dating system we have used from the third century. As strange as it may sound, the fact is that Jesus was born in about 4 B.C., and that He would have been 30 years old and starting His ministry in about the year 26 A.D! This interpretation of Daniel's vision does fit very well with history!

But what about the last "seven?" Let's review. We started out with a period of 70 sevens, or 490 years. That whole section of time was to be divided up into a section of 7 sevens (49 years), 62 sevens (434 years), and now the final seven (7 years). Add them up.

7 Sevens + 62 Sevens + 1 Seven = 70 Sevens

We now read in verse 27 that the Messiah was to confirm His covenant with many for that final "seven," but that in the middle of that final seven He was to bring an end to sacrifice and offering. If the final seven years was to begin when Christ started His ministry, what did indeed happen halfway through those seven years? The only answer could be the crucifixion of Christ on the cross. We know that Jesus' ministry covered a little over three years on this earth. In addition, what did Jesus accomplish by dying on the cross? The answer is that He brought to an end the need for animal sacrifices! It is interesting to note that even most of the Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah, today have ceased from offering animal sacrifices. A look back in Jewish history will show that most of the sacrifices ended about 2,000 years ago. These facts also fit the details of Daniel's vision.

With all this being said, however, we still have the last half of the final seven years to account for. The vision does not seem to make much of it, but rather leaves that last 3 ½ years to be assumed. There was a short time after the cross that the gospel was "to the Jew first." Perhaps it was during those last 3 ½ years that the Jews enjoyed their special time of attention from the apostles and disciples of Christ, that they might be the first to enter the church. Yet, within a very short time the gospel began to go into all the world. The last few verses of chapter 9 also seem to point even beyond the time frame of the vision to the day in which the Jewish people as a nation would again cease. The "abomination of desolation" as Daniel describes it is later mentioned by Jesus as something about to happen following His time upon the earth. In Luke 21:20 Jesus clearly states that this was to be the surrounding of Jerusalem with armies. About 30 years after the time of Christ Roman armies did indeed surround Jerusalem. In a sense, therefore, we can see how the fulfillment of this vision was made even clearer in the years following the end of the 70 sevens. Judaism and Jerusalem have never been the same. Daniel saw yet again into the future, and he saw the end of an era for Israel, and the beginning of God's eternal kingdom!

Chapter 10

The Angels' Work To Give Daniel Yet Another Revelation

:1-9 If you're like me, the chronology of these chapters and visions is getting a little confusing. Just remember that the first six chapters of Daniel were in chronological order, and the last six are not exactly in order. Overall, the time frame of the last six chapters starts a little later, (with the reign of Belshazzar), and now proceeds a little further, (into the 3rd year of Cyrus). (Now that clears things up a little, doesn't it?)

I remember one commentator on the book of Revelation (William Hendriksen) calling this "progressive parallelism" in the book of Revelation, and to varying degrees I see this principle in both Revelation and Daniel. Note that not only are we covering again some of the same time periods as far as when the visions were given, but that also most of these visions were concerned with the same subjects. Notice also, however, that with each vision a little "progress" is made as we go either further into the future, or deeper into the details of the future events already given.

We are now in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. This chapter therefore follows the events of chapter 9 by about six years. Verse 1 seems to be in the words of the revealing angel himself, and is a brief summary of this chapter.

Daniel himself begins to write in the first person in verse 2. His response to the vision of this chapter was severe mourning and physical deprivation. Daniel went without good food or bodily anointing for 3 weeks. It appears that after those 3 weeks Daniel then saw yet another vision, that of a glorious man. The description of this man sounds very similar to the vision of Christ found in the book of Revelation. For this reason many see this "man" as the pre-incarnate Christ, as was also discussed as a possibility for the fourth man in the fiery furnace in chapter 3:25. It is important to remember, however, that although the words and the symbols of any two visions may be similar, it is often a mistake to use the meaning of one to interpret another.

With that caution in mind, however, it does no damage to other passages to consider this "man" as the Christ, if we allow the possibility that the one who awoke Daniel after his deep sleep in verses 9-10 was then simply an angel of God. I say this because we find this angel in need of help from Michael, which would not be in keeping with the power of the Son of God.

So then, whether you consider the "glorious man" of verses 5-6 the Son of God or an angel of God, we now move on to Daniel's response. Daniel, now a very old man, found himself to have all his strength drained from his body. Considering Daniel's age and what he had been through, this ordinarily would not be too surprising. Yet God had blessed Daniel with vigor and strength at his advanced age, and now this vision had perhaps made Daniel feel his age as never before! This physical weakness combined with the content of the vision apparently caused Daniel to fall into a deep sleep. Others think that it was during this deep sleep that Daniel received his vision.

Notice also that it was only Daniel who saw the vision, while those who were with him did not, yet they fled in terror! If they couldn't see it, what were they afraid of? Perhaps a look at Acts 9 may be helpful. There we find Paul actually seeing the Lord, while those around him only hearing a voice but seeing no one. God has His ways of getting His message to His chosen one, and putting a little fear into those to whom He is not speaking!

:10-14 At this point Daniel is now awakened by a hand that touched him and made him greatly afraid. This unnamed angel now orders Daniel to stand as he is told that he is greatly beloved. Although these were undoubtedly words of great comfort to Daniel, he still stood trembling, as we could imagine any man would in such circumstances. Daniel is then told not to fear.

Some of the comfort that is now given to Daniel was in helping him to understand how things were working behind the scenes in Daniel's behalf. What Daniel had not known, was that during the 3 weeks of Daniel's distress over the meaning of this vision, his prayer for understanding was heard on the first day! This information must have been of great encouragement to Daniel, and should be to all praying people of all generations. So often we think when our prayers are unanswered that God does not hear. The thought here is that if we are children of God, even the most monumental prayer request is heard the first time we offer it up to God in faith. Yet in this passage we also learn there is sometimes a "gap" between the hearing of our prayers, and the forthcoming answers.

In Daniel's case that "gap" was a period of 21 days! Now I know the words of verse 13 sound strange to us. In the first place, this verse indicates that although God may hear our prayers instantly, on some occasions God's answer may sometimes be "delayed" by other forces, apparently the forces of Satan. We have always known that God's power is greater than that of the devil, yet here it seems that they are almost evenly matched in this standoff!

To help us understand this difficult passage we need to note several things. First, the "prince of Persia" that had withstood this unnamed angel for 3 weeks is not likely referring to the actual ruler of Persia, but was rather one of Satan's angels or demons who was working to *influence* the kings of Persia. Second, his success was such that this angel speaking to Daniel had to call upon Michael, one of the "chief princes (angels) to overcome this evil influence over the Persian rulers.

We must remember what we are looking at is not a pitched battle between the total power of God and the power of Satan. We already know Satan has lost that battle from the very beginning, and will, in the end, lose that battle for eternity. However, when it comes to the battle for the will and minds of mankind, Satan often wins. Sometimes it is a protracted war in which God must concentrate many of His angels in winning a small victory in the affairs of man. Clearly the rulers of Persia were not godly, and to influence them to allow God's will to be done concerning the Jews was a long and laborious process. Even in getting the word to Daniel, many victories had to be won here on earth. Although it took 3 weeks, that apparently was what was required in earth-time to put together the ingredients needed to answer Daniel's prayer.

The good news is, however, that word has now arrived. Daniel learns that the content of the vision had to do with what was going to happen to Daniel's people in the "latter days." For those of us living today we often think of the "latter days" as being the time of the second coming, but we must remember, these words were written before the first coming! Although Daniel may not have fully understood at the time, he was being told of things that were going to happen during the latter days of the first covenant. Time was getting short. Daniel now stood near the end of the tunnel that men from the time of Adam to Isaiah had been looking through. Yet for Daniel's comfort, these events were still many days to come. Daniel himself would not see the fall of Persia, let alone the rise and fall of the Greek empire.

:15-21 Having received these revelations, Daniel now turns his face to the ground and becomes speechless. It appears that his fear had now turned to sorrow. Suddenly the unnamed angel touched his lips and made it possible for Daniel to again speak. It is then that Daniel told the angel of his spiritual sorrow and his physical weakness. After 70 plus years of trials, visions, and bad news, Daniel had reached his limit. The angel responds to Daniel's condition and restores his strength with just a touch. (For those of us feeling as though we have no strength left for the Lord, we should take heart!)

Daniel, now strengthened, is able to receive further words from the angel of God. While we long to know more about this fascinating passage, the angel is very brief. His battle with the demons of Persia continues, and he must return. Once that battle is over, his work will continue, as he begins his battle with the demon of Greece. Yet, Daniel is reassured that he will be told the truth of God's Word! Both he and Michael were working together for that cause.

Chapter 11

Daniel's Vision Concerning The Kings Of The North And The South

:1-4 As we begin our overview of this chapter, we find that the chapter division here is not helpful. The thought of Daniel 10:21 continues on through to 11:1, and this entire chapter contains the details of the vision the angels brought to Daniel in chapter 10. For a better understanding it is best to ignore the chapter break.

We find in verse 1 the unnamed angel still speaking concerning his work with Michael as they had been standing together against the evil influence upon Persia. We now learn that the uniting of efforts had been an ongoing struggle since the first year of Darius the Mede. Simply put, God's messengers had been at work to influence the Medo-Persian Empire from the very first year of its existence!

As we have seen before in the visions of Daniel, each vision brings great detail and clarity to the previous visions. We have clearly understood from the earlier visions that the Medo-Persian Empire would replace Babylon. Now that this prophecy has come to pass, in the 3rd year of Cyrus, Daniel learns that Persia would have 3 more kings, followed by a 4th that would be richer than them all. A list of the kings of Persia is below.

Cyrus (with Darius the Mede in charge over Babylon) the current ruler. Those to follow;

1. Cambyses
2. Smerdis
3. Darius Hystaspis the Persian
4. Xerxes (Ahasuerus)

The following details of Daniel's vision are so numerous and so accurate in detail, the critics of this great work can only dismiss the book of Daniel as having been written *after the fact*, despite the clear evidence that the book of Daniel was already well know and well circulated before the time of these events that are described in this chapter.

The vision describes the 4th king as being very rich. History records that Xerxes grew excessively rich through aggressive taxation, with which he raised a tremendous army to invade Greece in about 470 B.C. Although his Greek invasion failed, he succeeded in creating a bitter enemy in Greece, who then began to develop into an even stronger military power. As forewarned in verses 2-3, out of this "stirring" came a mighty king, which history clearly identifies as Alexander the Great. Yet, as we have learned in previous visions, Alexander's kingdom would be broken up and divided into four sections after his early death. Note that none of those divisions would be from his posterity, that is, Alexander's kingdom would not go to any of his descendants, but rather to his generals.

:5-13 It is here that the focus of this vision zooms in very closely for greater detail than we have previously seen in any of Daniel's visions. First, we find the king of the southern portion of Alexander's kingdom joining forces with another.

History shows that this was Ptolemy I and Seleucus I, who had fled to him for protection. According to verse 6, and according to history, later the daughter of Ptolemy II (Bernice) married the Seleucid king for political reasons, but in the end Bernice, her child, and the king, are poisoned by the king's original wife. However, according to verse 7, a branch (Bernice's brother) arose and attacked the Seleucid king and won some victories. Following this he (Ptolemy III) returned to Egypt and lived a long life. Following this the king of the North, (the Seleucid kingdom), tried to retaliate against Ptolemy III, but failed and had to return home. However, his three sons would continue the struggle, as the balance of power tips slightly one way, and then the other between these two dominate factions of the original four divisions of Alexander's kingdom.

:14-19 Verse 14 is key because it is at this point that history tells us about the many Jews who decided to throw their support toward the "king of the North," that is the Seleucid successor, or Antiochus III. At this point the Seleucids gain a significant advantage over the kings of the South in the area of Palestine. In the long run the Jews actually lose some of their independence that they had found during the standoff between these two greater powers. The details of this section are amazing! Antiochus III even tried to cement his power by giving his daughter in marriage to Ptolemy V, which backfired when she began to side with the south rather than the north! Antiochus III then, (with the influence of a recently defeated general by the name of Hannibal), began to attack the coasts of Asia Minor, which stirred up the rising power of Rome. The Roman armies soon arrived and soundly defeated Antiochus III. Antiochus III was later slain by Elamites for his attempt at plundering their temple.

:20-28 Seleucus IV would come to the throne in the north, but his reign would be very brief. Following his rule, however, would come the infamous Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Antiochus IV showed political shrewdness by winning enough support to gain control over the Syrians. He followed this with military victories as well. However, it is at this time that Antiochus IV also deposed Onias as the High Priest in Jerusalem, selling the office to his brother, Jason. The heart of Jewish organized religion was now falling under Antiochus' control. Antiochus, then with the aid of much deception and flatteries, was able to gain control deep into the southern kingdom. While some great leaders are known for their military genius, Antiochus IV certainly showed his strength was political intrigue and deception. He was all words and no content. He would have done well in today's politically savvy world. However both he and the kings of the south were bent on evil, yet their future was still under God's control. Unfortunately before his demise, Antiochus IV brought great damage against the Jewish faith. Some of these abominations are detailed in our notes on Daniel 8:11-14.

:29-39 History shows that Antiochus IV later returned to attack Egypt in 168 B.C., but that things did not go as well as before. Roman ships from Cyprus came and forced him to return home grieving, and thus Antiochus IV took out his rage against all god-fearing Jews. As we have previously noted, Antiochus actually sent in troops to prevent the proper offerings and religious practices of God's people. A hog was offered on the altar in the temple simply to mock their faith and to defile the temple.

Even more sadly, those Jews who gave in to his attacks were then used for propaganda purposes, and were exalted with flattery to be used against the undecided masses. Antiochus IV stands in history as one of the most vicious adversaries of God's people and of true religion. Due to his influence and inroads into Judaism, there was obviously much chaos among the people who tried to remain strong in the faith. Yet for those who did, their faith was purged and made even purer.

:36-39 Unfortunately, Antiochus IV went much further in his desecration of Judaism. He even reached such depths of blasphemy that he had the following inscribed; "Of King Antiochus, God, Manifest, Victory-bearer." Verses 37-38 indicate that Antiochus IV actually had little regard for *any* traditional religion, including the pagan gods he had been exposed to, but rather worshipped the god of power, and in the final analysis, he worshipped only himself. It is not surprising that it was a statue of *his* image placed in the Most Holy Place within the temple.

:40-45 Some see the details of this section as applying to someone other than Antiochus IV, for we have no historical record of yet another campaign into Egypt by Antiochus. It may be, however, that such a campaign did take place, but has not yet been documented by secular history. It seems unlikely that the subject, (Antiochus IV) would have changed without warning in verse 40 after following his exploits since verse 21. Others reconcile this section with the known history of Antiochus IV by viewing this section as simply a review of his entire arrogant and violent reign.

All details aside, Antiochus IV in all his corruption, would someday face his demise. In the end, Antiochus IV would die like all men, and there would be no one to help him. History says that Antiochus IV died a madman in 164 B.C.

Chapter 12

The Final Details Of Daniel's Last Recorded Vision

:1-4 In this chapter we see a continuation of the details of the vision Daniel received, beginning in chapter 10. It is best to study chapters 10-12 together, as Daniel's final vision is presented to his readers.

We had ended chapter 11 with the prophecy of the death of Antiochus IV, which, (history tells us), occurred in 164 B.C. This death of this evil Syrian king, however, was not the end of tribulation for the Jews. At this point in history, rather, we learn that Michael, the great prince or archangel would again assist God's people in their time of great need. The tribulations of this time are described as a time of trouble greater than any since the beginning of the Jewish nation. Considering what the Jews had been through in the pages of the Old Testament, this is saying a great deal about the suffering about to be endured.

Yet, with God's strength those who were found faithful would be delivered. Considering the hundreds of thousands that were massacred during the years between Antiochus, on through to the total destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., it is hard to see how God's people were delivered. The answer to this problem is that such deliverance refers primarily to a spiritual preservation. Every name "found written in the book" indicates a spiritual safety beyond physical preservation. In fact, considering the inevitable political and military outcome of Palestine during the waning years of the old covenant, it would have been far desirable for those faithful of God to have been taken from the conflict, rather than to linger and see the death gasps of the Jewish nation.

This is not to say, however, that no God-fearing Jews survived. God in His wisdom may have selected many who were strong enough to be delivered physically as well, that there would be a foundation of faithful Jewish descendants to someday fill His church. As we pray "deliver us from evil" let us remember that God's deliverance can be physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Perhaps it is often a combination of these areas of human trials. Let's not limit His capabilities in this verse, or in our lives.

Verses 2 & 3 present us with a difficulty as well. To our "New Testament ears" it sounds like the angel revealing this vision to Daniel has now skipped over all of the remaining years of human history, and now is only speaking of the final Day of Judgment. Without ruling this interpretation out completely, it is more fitting to consider these verses as having a dual meaning. As in the previous verse, we considered that the deliverance would be physical for some, and for all the faithful there lay ahead a spiritual deliverance. In the same way there would be many in Israel who would be "awakened" by the trials brought upon their people. Clearly during this time in history many Jews awoke to fight for their faith and their freedoms. You can read the books of I & II Maccabees to learn more about their desperate struggles against enormous odds during this time "between the testaments."

If the mention of "dual meanings" in Bible prophecies sounds a bit contrived to you, I suggest you spend more time with Old Testament prophecies

before ruling out this concept. It's really not that foreign to us. Today we use dual meanings mostly as a form of humor, and also often in what we would call "wise sayings." To the Holy Spirit it seems that the giving of a prophecy that had both an immediate fulfillment as well as a distant, or even eternal meaning, was quite common. Perhaps it was just a part of the Spirit's teaching method. As Jesus began with the physical world to teach spiritual lessons, the angel is now giving Daniel a near-term prophecy that would someday also have an eternal fulfillment.

The placement of this passage near the end of Daniel's book also makes one think of the prophecies contained in the book of Revelation. There too we find many immediate prophecies concerning events to soon follow the first century, yet in the final chapters we find passages that seem clearly to reach to the end of time. With these thoughts in mind, perhaps we can now accept this wonderful passage in Daniel for what it is; a wonderful prophecy that comforted the Jews of Daniel's day, and a clear passage concerning the Old Testament teaching of life after death and the final judgment!

Daniel was now told, however, to shut up the book he was now being given. We should not understand this to mean his book was to be closed and kept secret from others, but rather the writing of his book was coming to a conclusion. This is the finalizing section of all his visions. In the future, many would be running to and fro, and much knowledge concerning the events that Daniel had written about would increase. Could we even say that in our brief study of Daniel we have shared more knowledge concerning his writings than anyone could have known in Daniel's day? I truly hope we can say we've made progress!

:5-13 Daniel's vision was now brought to a close with the appearance of apparently two angels in the form of men on two riverbanks. Daniel heard one angel ask the other how long it would be before these final wonders would be fulfilled. By this he apparently was speaking of the contents of this final vision concerning the conflicts between the kings of the north and south (chapter 11). The other angel answers with this specific reply; it would be for a "time, times, and half a time" before the power of the holy people would be completely shattered. With this Daniel speaks for all of us when he says, "I did not understand!" Yet Daniel's request for a clearer explanation was rejected. He was told to go his way. Even Daniel was not given all understanding. God, in His wisdom, gave to each as He chose to receive in part, until that which is perfect is come (see I Corinthians 13:9-10). With God's complete Word before us, and with much of human history behind us, we can now more clearly see the meaning of these prophecies.

In the days following the close of Daniel's writings many would be purified, while many of the wicked would grow even more wicked. The wicked would not understand the words Daniel had written, but the wise would understand. Although Daniel still had his own personal questions concerning his writings, it must have been of great consolation to know that future men and women of God would gain strength from his efforts to record God words!

In verses 11-13 we are left with a few final details that refer back to Daniel's question of the time frame for this final vision. Remember the "time, times, and half a time?" In Hebrew literature this is another way of saying "3½," which is a round figure to the Jewish mind, being ½ of the perfect number 7. We are now told more specifically that the approximately 3½ years would be exactly 1,290 days, which is 30 days longer than 3 ½ years. History tells us that Antiochus stopped the daily sacrifices in the temple in the early summer of 168 B.C., and that the Maccabees cleansed and restored temple worship in December of 165 B.C. From what history has revealed, this prophecy was right on target, even though Daniel was given it nearly 400 years earlier!

But what about this next number? Verse 12 tells us that blessed are those who wait and live to see the 1,335 days. History reveals that it was only an additional few weeks after the purification of the temple until the death of Antiochus. According to these numbers in verses 11 & 12, it figures out to 45 days after the temple worship was restored, by subtracting 1,290 from 1,335 days.

Both we and Daniel have now come to the end of his great work. Daniel was finally told to go his way till the end, his work was finished, he could now rest. Again the hint of an eternal inheritance is now mentioned, as Daniel approached the end of his life.

What became of Daniel? We have no further information. Did he finally get to return to his beloved home? There is no indication that he did. Daniel was a valuable man to the Persian rulers. Perhaps the fear of his wisdom being used in the resettled Judea was enough to keep him in Persia. Then again, perhaps he was of more value to God and His people by keeping him in Persia, as he too (along with the angels of God) fought against the forces of evil trying to influence Persia.

We now reluctantly leave Daniel's remarkable life to the pages of history, knowing that if we live a life as dedicated to God, we may someday share the joys of God's heaven together.

-Bruce Gleim 11/17/99 -Revised 5/23/03

Daniel In Review

Ch. 1. Who was the king who took some of the young men of Judah from their home land? _____

What did Daniel and his 3 friends refuse to do? _____

Ch. 2. What were the 4 parts of the statue that this king dreamed about? a. _____
b. _____ c. _____ d. _____

What nations did these 4 parts represent? a. _____ b. _____

c. _____ d. _____

Ch. 3. What did this same king have built in chapter 3? _____

What happened to Daniel's friends because they refused to worship it? _____

Ch. 4. What did this same king dream about in chapter 4? _____

What happened to him because of his pride? _____

Ch. 5. Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon. What was the sign to him that Babylon was going to fall? _____

Who interpreted that sign for him? _____

Ch. 6. What law was passed in the days of Darius the Mede after they had defeated the Babylonians? _____

What did Daniel do that got him thrown into the lion's den? _____

Ch. 7. In chapter 7 Daniel dreams about four what? _____

Looking to ancient history, what nations do we know those 4 things represented?

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____

Ch. 8. In chapter 8 Daniel has another dream about 2 different creatures. What nations did they represent? a. _____ b. _____

Ch.9. In chapter 9 Daniel was given a vision that covered a period of ____ weeks.

In Hebrew, what does the word "week" simply mean? _____

Ch.10. In this chapter, what named angel helps bring word to Daniel? _____

Ch.11. In this chapter, Daniel sees the future wars between the kings of the _____ and the _____ .

The Seleucids and the Ptolemy's were two parts of the kingdom of _____ after Alexander's death.

Ch.12. What Seleucid king from ancient history fits well with the prophecy in chapter 12? _____

Discussion Questions:

- A. Why do you think God went to all this effort to reveal through Daniel these details concerning the future events of the nations?
- B. Why do you think God gave these prophecies in such figurative language instead of simply telling Daniel in plain terms what the future held?
- C. How has the study of Daniel helped you?

Check One Or More Boxes Below:

We know that Daniel lived and wrote down his prophecies from God long before the events he saw had taken place because:

- The Jews had been reading and using the book of Daniel, and had made it a part of the Old Testament canon hundreds of years before the time of Christ. (The Old Testament canon as we have it today was completed by about 465 B.C.)
- When the Old Testament was 1st translated from Hebrew into Greek in 250 B.C., the book of Daniel (in its entirety) was a part of that translation.
- Josephus, (the Jewish historian), speaks of the book of Daniel, and even mentions that the book was shown to Alexander the Great when his armies reached Jerusalem, resulting in the sparing of the city!
- Daniel is referred to in the book of Ezekiel (apx. 597 B.C.) who was a contemporary of Daniel.
- Daniel is also mentioned in other old books outside of the Bible, such as the book of I Maccabees (apx. 150 – 100 B.C.).