
The Book of Daniel

The Historical Setting:

The Neo-Babylonian Empire began in 626 B.C. when the Chaldean chieftan Nabopolassar captured Babylon and declared independence from Assyria. Nabopolassar made an alliance with the Medes, and in 612 B.C. they captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. The Assyrians and their Egyptian allies were completely defeated in 605 B.C. by the general Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar.

Daniel is first seen at the beginning of the captivity of Judah in Babylon, the period known as the “Exile.” Josiah, the last “good” king, had been killed by the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who reigned for three months and was then deposed by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (2 Kings 23:30-33). The pharaoh replaced Jehoahaz with his brother Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.). Jehoiakim served Neco until 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt and Assyria at Carchemish. Following this conquest, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem and eventually captured the city (2 Kings 24:1). The siege took place in their year of Jehoiakim (Dan 1:1). This year, 605 B.C., was also when Daniel and many other young men were taken to Babylon for training (1:3-6). In that year, Nabopolassar died, and Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne.

Jehoiakim mysteriously died in 598 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah or Coniah). He ruled for three months (598-597 B.C.) and was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar. He was taken captive to Babylon with ten thousand of Jerusalem’s leading citizens (2 Kings 24:8-18). Jehoiachin was succeeded by Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.), who rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The army of the Babylonian king came against Jerusalem in 588 B.C. For approximately two years they besieged the city, finally destroying it in 586 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the Babylonian Empire for over forty years. After his death in 562 B.C., Evil-merodach (Amel-Marduk) ruled from 562-560 B.C. According to 2 Kings 25:27-30 and Jeremiah 52:31-34, Evil-merodach released King Jehoiachin from prison after thirty-six years and treated him kindly. After Evil-merodach was murdered, Neriglissar, his brother-in-law began to reign. He is likely the same as Nergal-sar-ezer, who was one of the officials involved in the siege of Jerusalem (Jer 39:3, 13). After the death of Neriglissar in 556 B.C., his son Labashi-Marduck was able to reign for nine months before he was killed in a conspiracy. Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar’s son-in-law, was the last of the Neo-Babylonian kings. He is not mentioned in the Bible; but his son, Belshazzar, was the king of Babylon when it fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. (Dan 5:1,

30). Actually, Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar were ruling jointly when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians under Cyrus in 539 B.C.

Daniel stayed in Babylon throughout the remainder of the Babylonian Empire. He was still living in Babylon when Cyrus the Great overtook the city and began the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C. (1:21). The last recorded vision of Daniel was “in the third year of Cyrus,” that is, 536 B.C. (10:1). Therefore, Daniel lived in Babylon for at least seventy years, the full length of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10; see Dan 9:2).

The Medo-Persian Empire

The Medes (Media) were from the area now known as Azerbaijan and northern Iran. They formed an alliance with Babylon and other nations to help destroy the Assyrian Empire in 605 B.C. As the reign of Nebuchadnezzar progressed, the alliance with the Medes soon came to an end. Around 555 B.C., as they developed their own spirit of conquest, the Medes began conquering portions of Babylonian territory.

The Medes were considered more advanced and civilized than the Persians, and the Greek writers referred to the whole as “Medes” even after the time of Cyrus. During the later reign of Darius I (a Persian), the Medes revolted. A long civil war followed and was finally won by Darius I. After that victory, Median history is merged finally and indissolubly into Persian history.

Cyrus became the great leader of the Persian Empire. He was of Persian and Median descent. Around 560 or 559 B. C., he was enthroned over the kingdom of Anshan, which was an acquired, or at least a tribute-paying, territory of Media. However, a short time later he began referring to himself as the “King of the Persians.” Between 552 to 549 B.C., he took over the Median kingdom. From this time forward, little distinction was made between the Medes and Persian as to his dominion. Daniel’s reference to “Medes and Persians,” beginning in 5:28, indicates a contemporary reference, for later they were referred to as “Persia and Media” (see Esther 1:3, 14, 18, 19).

As Cyrus’ power grew, certain Babylonians became friendly toward him, even asking him to rescue their city from Nabonidus, their king whom they considered to be a usurper of the throne. A religious principle lay behind their request. The Babylonian rulers had been bringing various religious artifacts and idols to Babylon from all the people they had conquered. This interchange may help to explain Cyrus’ eventual decision to order the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. After his conquest of Babylon, he ordered the return of various idols and instruments of worship to their places of origin.

In October, 539 B.C., Cyrus surrounded the city of Babylon, but Belshazzar and many of his chief aides were feasting in the citadel. The citadel was taken at night in an

attack that was almost unopposed. Those in command were more interested in revelry than in military matters at the time of the attack.

The Persians were spoken of as Aryan ethnic origin by outsiders. The nation was a province of Aryan (modern Iran). Under Cyrus' leadership, the Persians became the greatest empire that had been known up to this time.

The Greek and Roman Empires

The ancient Near East was ruled by a succession of Persian rulers for about two hundred years. Late in the fourth century B.C., the Persian Empire was overthrown by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. After Alexander died, his kingdom was divided among four of his generals. Two of the resulting kingdoms are important to the study of Daniel: The Ptolemies ruled Egypt, and the Seleucids ruled Syro-Palestine. Eventually, the Romans defeated both groups and took control.

Therefore, we move in a period of approximately six hundred years from the Babylonians to the Medes and Persians to the Greeks and finally to the Romans. Daniel also spoke of a fifth kingdom, the kingdom of God that would never pass away (2:44).

Other Characteristics

The book of Daniel depicts historical events beginning with the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. and ending in the third year of Cyrus in 536 B.C. The prophecies in the book encompass the time from Daniel's day to the future establishment of the kingdom of God, the church.

The book can be divided into two major divisions. The first (chs 1-6) involves narratives illustrating the sovereign rule of God. In this section, God was speaking through historical incidents involving Daniel and his three friends. Daniel often interpreted dreams and other signs. This section is written mostly in the third person. The introduction is written in Hebrew (1:1—2:4), whereas the rest is in Aramaic (2:4b—6:28).

The second division (chs 7-12) contains prophecies illustrating the sovereign rule of God. Daniel's three friends do not appear in this section. Daniel offered prayers to God, and God spoke to Him through visions; these visions were often interpreted by angels. This section is written in Aramaic (7:1-28), whereas the rest is in Hebrew (8:1-12:13).

A summary of the use of these two languages follows:

1. Daniel 1:1-2:4a is written in Hebrew
2. Daniel 2:4b-7:28 is written in Aramaic
3. Daniel 8:1-12:13 is written in Hebrew

Why is the book written in two languages? One reason suggested by many is that the book is written for Jews and Gentiles. The Hebrew portion would get the attention of the Jews, while the Aramaic portion would have the attention of the Gentiles.

The structure of the book is not chronological. This makes it difficult to categorize the contents of the book. The visions in the last six chapters occurred almost within the time frame of the first six chapters. The kings mentioned in the last chapters are named to help establish the time for the visions.

Outline:

- I. Daniel's and His Friends' Dependence on God (1)
- II. Nebuchadnezzar's Great Dream (2)
- III. The Three Friends' Facing a Fiery Furnace (3)
- IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream with a Warning (4)
- V. God's Message at Belshazzar's Feast (5)
- VI. Daniel's Deliverance in the Lions' Den (6)
- VII. Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts (7)
- VIII. Daniel's Vision of a Ram and a Goat (8)
- IX. Daniel's Prayer for Forgiveness and the Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9)
- X. A Prophecy and an Explanation (10)
- XI. Understanding of the Vision (11)
- XII. The End of Daniel's Prophecy (12)

The Message:

The theme throughout Daniel is "God is in control." This seems to be the message of comfort that Daniel and the faithful needed in a time of persecution, distress, and apparent defeat.

The Jewish nation, their homes, their country, had been destroyed. The Jewish family had been betrayed by unfaithful people, especially among their leaders, and more especially by their religious leaders. Many of the faithful had been martyred or taken into slavery far from home. These were supposed to be God's people. Did He come? Would He do anything?

God is in control. He who: made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them" (Ex 20:11) is in control. He "is ruler over the realm of mankind" (Dan 4:17). He governs the times and the seasons, the nations and their rulers; He even involves Himself in our lives.

Throughout the world, at any minute of any hour of the day, humble people are praying to God. Amid so many prayers arising from the earth's chaos and confusion, God hears each individual as if he or she were the only one praying. God is in control.

We do not understand God's thoughts or His ways (Is 55:8). We tend to forget that Daniel was given his visions and understanding for reassurance! We must always remember that God is in control!

Daniel the Man

The name Daniel means “God is Judge” or “God is my Judge.” The earliest information we have of Daniel is that he was a youth (12-20 years old) when taken as a captive to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (1:1). He was of the royal seed which means that he was a prince in the line of the kings of Judah. It is probable that he was made a eunuch along with other captives (1:3). Chapter ten, verse 1 tells us that Daniel lived through the total of the seventy year’s captivity and into at least the third year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia. This would make his age somewhere near ninety. It is likely that he did not return to his homeland but died in the land of his captivity.

Daniel is likened to Joseph, the great statesman serving the court of the Pharaohs. Daniel was a man of integrity, purity, courage, and unexcelled devotion to God. He is described repeatedly as a man “greatly beloved.”

Daniel Chapter 1 Faith’s Resolve

This first chapter of the Book of Daniel explains how Daniel and his three friends were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon and trained for service in the king’s court (1:1-7). Their determination to follow the Law, even in a foreign land, is emphasized (1:8-14). God rewarded their faithfulness with good health, knowledge, and wisdom. In particular, Daniel was given the miraculous ability to interpret dreams accurately. As a result of these blessings, Daniel, and his three friends made a favorable impression upon King Nebuchadnezzar (1:15-21).

Even through symbols and unusual language are used, the historical narrative of chapter 1 is comparatively clear. King Nebuchadnezzar had taken the best of the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem back to Babylon, leaving the rest for the Jews to conduct their temple services. This event shows us something of the justice of God. Beginning with Solomon, the people of Israel had polluted God’s temple with the vessels of various idolatrous nations whom they had conquered.

Along with the vessels of the temple, the king of Babylon also took the best of the young people to Babylon. He was more intent on the incorporation of captive peoples into Babylonian society than he was on genocide. These young people were to be educated in the government, laws, customs, languages, and science of the Chaldeans for three years.

As part of their assimilation into Babylonian society, the Jewish captives were given new names (1:7) that incorporated the names of the Babylonian gods. The changing of their names was, at least in part, an attempt to erase the religious influences of the Jews and instill the religion of the Babylonians in the heart of these young men.

Deuteronomy 28:15

¹⁵ "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. The defeat of Jehoiakim and the capture of Jerusalem should have been expected by the people of Judah because of their ongoing disobedience.

Jeremiah 32:28-30

²⁸ Therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will take it.

²⁹ "The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will enter and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses where *people* have offered incense to Baal on their roofs and poured out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger.

³⁰ "Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands," declares the LORD.

The land of Shinar is used as another name for Babylon (Is 11:11; Zech 5:11). Shinar, site of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), was synonymous with opposition to God; it was the place where wickedness was at home and uprightness could expect opposition. Shinar was flanked by the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, which run together into the Persian Gulf. It was located within the territory of modern Iraq.

The Babylonians had numerous gods. Even though Nebuchadnezzar's name contains the designation of the god. Nabu (Nebo), the phrase "his god" probably refers to Marduk (Bel), the chief god of Babylon that was worshiped by the king (Jer 50:2; 51:44). Nabu was the god of his father Nabopolassar, while Marduk was Nebuchadnezzar's god. Nebuchadnezzar named his son Amel-Marduk (called Evil-merodach in 2 Kings 25:27-30 and Jer 52:31-34), which means "man of Marduk."

The education of Persian youths began at age fourteen and was completed at age seventeen. Nebuchadnezzar wanted young men who would be teachable and able to learn new disciplines. While the Babylonians were polytheists and tolerated the worship of other gods, it is evident that Nebuchadnezzar wanted these young men to function as Babylonians—speaking their language (1:4), eating their food (1:5), being called by their names (1:7), and worshiping their gods (3:1-7). The "language" spoken by the Babylonians at that time was Aramaic, which used an alphabetic script similar to Hebrews.

Name Changes In Daniel			
Hebrew Name	Meaning	Babylonian Name	Meaning
Daniel	“God is my Judge”	Belteshazzar	“Bel, protect his life”
Hananiah	“Yahweh is gracious”	Shadrach	“the command of Aku”
Mishael	“who is what God is?”	Meshach	“who is what Aku is?”
Azariah	“Yahweh has helped”	Abed-nego	“Servant of Nebo”

They did not want to defile themselves with the king’s choice food and wine. Many meats eaten in the Babylonian court would have been unclean according to the dietary law of Moses (Lev 11, Duet 14). We often think of pork, but serval other kinds of animals were also considered unclean. The Babylonians were eating animals that were improperly killed or cooked. The Law commanded God’s people not to eat animals that had died naturally or had been torn to pieces by wild beasts. Moreover, the blood of the animal had to be drained, since the life is in the blood (Deut 12:16). It is likely that the king’s choice food would have already been offered to the Babylonian gods as a sacrifice and would therefore have been associated with idolatrous worship. The wine also would have been dedicated to these deities; some of it would have been poured out as a libation. Eating food from the king’s table was equal to entering into a covenant-like relationship with him.

The last five verses of this chapter show the progress of Daniel and his companions. Daniel, as God’s man, gained a position near the throne over the course of time. He remained in a position of authority for more than sixty years, through the reign of several monarchs in two empires. Rarely in the course of human history has any one man in power affected so many. This power was not what Daniel sought. Given his personal preference, he no doubt would rather have been faithfully serving God among his own people. Nevertheless, because Daniel was faithful to God, his God was faithful in rewarding Daniel with blessings beyond anything he could “ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20)

Chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar’s Great Dream

The description and explanation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream make up one of the most intriguing passages of prophecy in all of the Bible. This dream, along with the vision in chapter 7, has been the subject of much controversy, yet it is not beyond our understanding. After all, Daniel gave both the dream and its interpretation to the king.

Chapter 2 is the leading chapter in the Book of Daniel. It covers history from Babylon to Rome and provides the foundation for understanding the rest of the prophecies. Chapter 7 expands upon this chapter, especially with regard to the second, third, and fourth kingdoms (Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome). Chapters 11 and 12 also expand

upon chapter 2, especially with regard to kingdoms two, three, and four. The later chapters supply details that are not mentioned here.

The king may have viewed a refusal to make known the dream as a refusal of loyalty and submission to his rule. Nebuchadnezzar may have seen his trusted personnel as withholding from him divine insight. He had believed, or he had been led to believe, that his advisers had access to divine help. The fact that they were unable to do what, logically, divine aid should have enabled them to do was a reflection on the king's own belief. He had to choose between looking upon his subjects in a bad light or viewing his gods negatively.

Verse 10 is an important verse in the chapter. It infers that the glory would be due to God if and when the revelation and the interpretation of the dream took place. It was true that "there [was] not a man on earth who could declare the matter," but if we look at verse 19, Daniel affirmed that the "God of heaven" could do so.

Daniel and his friends, although a part of the group as identified by the king to be killed, had received no opportunity to meet the king's demands. Daniel, being a man of faith, and therefore a man of both sense and proportion, recognized the threat to himself and his friends and reacted appropriately.

The king's commander was delayed in his carrying out the king's command by Daniel's honest inquiry, "For what reason is the decree...so urgent?" apparently, Arioch interceded for Daniel with the king, and Daniel was granted an interview.

When the king was promising rewards and gifts and great honor, they [Daniel and his friends] did not care to go before him. Lest they should appear to be shamelessly grasping after the wealth and honor of the Chaldeans. Or else it was undoubtedly true that the Chaldeans themselves, being envious of the Jews' reputation and learning, entered alone before the king, as if to obtain the rewards by themselves. Afterward they were perfectly willing to have those whom they had denied any hope of glory to share in a comm on peril.

After his audience with the king, Daniel met with his three friends. Together, they prayed for God's revelation so that their lives would be spared. Verse 16 implies that they intended to ask God for both the dream and its interpretation.

The prayers of Daniel and his friends brought results. Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving uttered upon receiving the revelation from God is clear in its meaning. Having asked God for something and then having received it, Daniel immediately offered thanks to God. Too often, we focus only on asking and neglect thanksgiving. Paul said that we ought to include thanksgiving with our requests (Phil 4:6).

The language is germane to Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation (2:29-45). The fact that God "changes the times and the epochs," as well as "removes kings and

establishes kings,” speaks of the divine sovereignty of God regarding His world. This is an important theme, not only in the Book of Daniel but also throughout biblical history. God is in control of events—all events. Everything occurs according to His will, whether it is His directive will (what He desires to happen) or His permissive will (what He allows to happen).

Daniel then proceeded to explain that the revelation was not really for him, but for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told this pagan king that God was interested in the king and that He had chosen Nebuchadnezzar to reveal how history would unfold in the coming centuries.

Surely this made a favorable impression upon the king. However, Daniel next had to announce that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would not last but would be replaced by another and still another.

Daniel 2		“Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream”		
	Golden Head	Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon	605 to 562BCE
	Silver Body	After Nebuchadnezzar “Inferior”	Nabonidus’ Babylon	556 to 539BCE
	Bronze Waist	Rules The World	Persian Empire	539 to 330BCE
	Iron Legs	Crushes all Others	Alexander the Great	330 to 323BCE
	Iron and Clay Feet	Breaks to Pieces	Alexander’s Kingdom Divided	323BCE

Daniel told the king, “You are the head of gold” (2:38), so the head of the statue represented the Babylonian Empire. Gold was used to represent the Babylonian monarchy because Nebuchadnezzar was such an absolute monarch, having vested within himself more personal power than any of his successors.

The chest and arms of silver (2:32) symbolized the empire of the Medes and Persians, founded upon the ruins of the Babylonian collapse (539B.C) and lasting until its defeat

by the Greeks (331 B. C.). the belly and thighs of bronze (2:32) referred to the Greek Empire, which reached its zenith under Alexander the Great.

The legs depicted the division of the Greek Empire upon the death of Alexander. The vision, especially from the viewpoint of Daniel and the Jews, involved their history.

Iron tends to symbolize both strength and harshness. For the Jewish people, some of their most difficult history lay ahead. The fourth kingdom was represented in the dream as legs of iron, mixed with clay in the feet (2:33, 41, 42). Some symbolism of weakness mixed with strength is included in the fourth era.

The last part of the vision involved a stone (2:34, 45). Having been cut from a mountain, but not cut out by hand, the stone represented something beyond human endeavor. The cutting seems to be a spiritual act, not a physical one. The real focus of the vision is here. This stone would overcome all the kingdoms of men, becoming a kingdom “which will never be destroyed” or “left for another people” (2:44).

Jesus referred to His church as a “kingdom.” When the history of the church from the time of Jesus is compared with the history of the kingdoms symbolized in the vision of the image, the prophecy’s fulfillment becomes clear. All the other kingdoms depicted by the image have long since become monuments left in ruins.

The fact that the “stone was cut out of the mountain” (2:45) and “became a great mountain” (2:35) would have been significant to Nebuchadnezzar. In Babylonian mythology, the “mountain” was originally the home of their chief god, Marduk, and it eventually stood for the god himself. The image of a mountain would have conveyed to the king that something divine was being described.

The Kingdom of Heaven:

- 1) [That kingdom] will never be destroyed
- 2) That kingdom will not be left for another people
- 3) It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms
- 4) It will itself endure forever.

Those who had prayed for Daniel and supported him in the most important ways that they could were given a part of Daniel’s reward.

Chapter 3 Facing A Fiery Furnace

Chapter 3, in its entirety, is a narrative of the survival of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Perhaps this story is anticipated in Isaiah 43:2 in a reassuring promise of God: “When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched.” It reminds us of Hebrews 11:34, where the writer said that men by faith “quenched the power of fire.”

Several years may have passed between Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream in chapter 2 and the building of the great image in chapter 3. The LXX dates the building of the image to the "eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar had for the God of Daniel (and, therefore, for the Jews) at the end of chapter 2 does not seem to be present at the beginning of the events recorded here.

The scenes of chapter 3 define what it means to have one's faith tested by taking a stand against all odds. The test involved resisting the temptation of compromise. This is the second trial of Daniel's three friends; the first was not being defiled by the king's food in chapter 1. Daniel is not mentioned in this chapter.

The king of Babylon set up an idol that was covered with gold. We do not know. For whatever reason, the king set up this idol. He made a decree that apparently applied only to government officials, asking all of them to comply with it and worship the idol. Being over the administration of the province (2:49), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood out when they did not obey. The other people never seemed to have thought of not worshipping this idol. One characteristic of idolatry is the constant adding of new gods to the pantheon.

The NIV interpreted the size of the image as being "ninety feet high and nine feet wide." To visualize this height, we can imagine a nine-story building. An image of such proportions would have been extraordinary. There are several connections between this image of gold and the statue of the dream in chapter 2 appear.

The list of officials is according to status, beginning with the highest in the empire:

- **Satraps** were protectors of the kingdom, rulers over large divisions of the empire.
- **Prefects** were high-ranking officials directly responsible to the satraps.
- **Governors** were administrators of districts or smaller regions.
- **Counselors** were advisers.
- **Treasurers** handled the affairs finance.
- **Judges** were law-bearers.
- **Magistrates** were over-chiefs or superintendents.
- All the rulers of the provinces were the other officials not specifically mentioned.

Death by burning was not unheard of among the people of Israel. When Judah suspected Tamar of prostitution, he concluded that she should be burned (Gen 38:24). Later, the Law prescribed death by burning in certain cases of sexual immorality (Lev 20:14; 21:9). After taking the banned items from Jericho, Achan, along with his family, was stoned and burned (Josh 7:15, 25). Among the Babylonians, burning as a capital punishment is found in Hammurabi's ancient law code. Moreover, Jeremiah reported

that king Nebuchadnezzar roasted two false prophets, Abab and Zedekiah, in the fire (Jer 29:21, 22).

In the absence of stone, furnaces were widely used in Babylon to make bricks for construction projects. They were also used for forging, smelting, and casting metal. The furnace in this scene may have been used for casing Nebuchadnezzar's gold image. The temperature in these kilns could reach as high as 1800 degrees.

The Jews were in captivity because of their idolatry (Is 30:19-22; 31:7; Jer 8:19; Ezek 5:1-12; 6:1-10). Israel had been commanded not to make or worship any idols. The punishment of the captivity had its effect, for after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews did not worship idols until the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Nebuchadnezzar was unfamiliar with self-control. In chapter 2, he issued a decree to kill all the wise men of Babylon because they could not do what, on man's part, was an impossible task. Now, enraged by the response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, he gave orders that the furnace be heated "seven times more than" normal (3:19), indicating that he wanted the furnace to be heated to maximum capacity.

Several of the loyal guards bound the three men and threw them into the furnace. The heat was so intense that the garments of the guards caught fire, and the guards were consumed by flames from the furnace. This very fact emphasizes the power of God in saving the Jews.

After verse 23, the Catholic Bibles insert "The Prayer of Azariah" and "the Song of the Three Young Men." These additions come from the Apocrypha, and evidence from them being a part of the original text is lacking (*Apocryphal Additions to Daniel*, page 438).

Nebuchadnezzar immediately praised the God of the Jews (3:28) and made another decree that no one was to speak against the great God. This was not a command to worship the God of Israel, but it was an acknowledgment of Him.

In what must have been the providence of God's justice, the king then restored the Jews to the positions in government which they had held before. Daniel closed his record of this incident by saying that they "prospered."

Chapter 4 A Dream with A Warning

Chapter 4 is one of the most unusual chapters in all Scripture. It is the only chapter in the Bible composed under the authority of a pagan. The story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is told in first person (4:1-27, 34-37) and in third person (4:28-33).

The events of this narrative further emphasize Daniel's theme that God is in control. Verse 17, 25, and 32 state that "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind." The chapter opens and closes with a decree from Nebuchadnezzar, praising God. In between

we find his dream and the interpretation of it by Daniel, which is similar in construction to the dream in chapter 2.

The events of chapter 4 likely occurred several years after Daniel and his three friends entered the royal administration (2:48, 49). The LXX dates the events of this chapter to the king's eighteenth year, just as in 3:1. However, the Aramaic text does not specify when these things took place.

In the opening of the letter, the king acknowledged the power and presence of the Most High God. He especially noted the signs and wonders that God had personally performed from him. These would have included the revelation and interpretation of his dream by Daniel in chapter 2, the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in chapter 3, and the removal of the king's insanity in chapter 4.

Linking verse 2 and 3 with verses 34 and 35 gives rise to the sense that the great king had been "converted" to the God of Daniel. The substance of his decree was, in practice, parallel to the testimony of the psalmist in Psalm 51:13, 14, wherein the penitent vowed to make known the goodness and glory of God. In reality, no concrete evidence is given in this chapter whether or not Nebuchadnezzar turned from idolatry to serve the living God. This decree could have been his way of including God on his pantheon of gods. However, it does no harm to suppose that Daniel's influence and the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams led the king to believe exactly the words he expressed in his decree. He may have become a worshiper of the true God.

When Nebuchadnezzar had this dream, he was alarmed and fearful (4:5). He was not capable of dealing with it. The king of Babylon was the most powerful man on earth from a human point of view, but he was afraid when he got a glimpse of the future.

The king had made some progress through the years. In chapter 2, he demanded that the wise men make known to him the dream itself, under penalty of death if they failed to do so. In 4:6, he merely asked them to interpret the dream. The same people who had failed him before were about to fail him again. Perhaps Daniel had been on the king's business elsewhere and came after receiving a special summons. "But finally Daniel came" (4:8) may suggest that the king had been anxiously wondering when Daniel would come.

If the king comprehended the dream better than he revealed, we can deduce why he was alarmed. He may have suspected that the dream was foretelling something bad for himself and therefore delayed getting an accurate interpretation.

Having called Daniel into his presence, Nebuchadnezzar said "a spirit of the holy gods" (4:8) was in Daniel, who had been named Belteshazzar. Daniel had previously made it clear to the king that "God in heaven" (2:28), not Daniel himself, had revealed the king's dream. At least, that much of Daniel's faith remained with Nebuchadnezzar, however poorly he may have understood it.

When Daniel heard Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he "was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him" (4:19). Daniel knew the interpretation of the dream, for the Spirit of God was indeed with him. He was considering the severity of the interpretation, as well as the consequences of its fulfillment on the king and the kingdom. Over the years, Daniel had developed a good relationship with Nebuchadnezzar; the king trusted him. The king immediately encouraged Daniel to reveal the interpretation and not to be alarmed about the consequences.

Daniel showed Nebuchadnezzar that the tree was, in fact, the king himself (4:22). He next revealed that Nebuchadnezzar would lose his sanity and temporarily be deposed. When the king realized that "the Most High is ruler" (4:25), then he would be restored to a kingdom held intact for him.

After interpreting the king's dream, Daniel encouraged Nebuchadnezzar to repent (4:27). The king's sins of idolatry, pride, and a violent temper are evident. Daniel urged the king to avoid the circumstances shown to him in the dream by "showing mercy to the poor," many of whom had been made poor by Nebuchadnezzar's conquests.

Daniel may have realized the potential negative effects that the fulfillment of this dream could have on its won people. Nebuchadnezzar had treated the Jews well throughout his reign; but if he were deposed, there was no guarantee what the next ruler would be like. Daniel genuinely cared about Nebuchadnezzar, who had elevated him to "ruler over the whole province of Babylon" as well as "the chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon" (2:48). The two men had worked closely together for many years, and Daniel felt sorry for the king's tragic future.

Twelve months later, the king's dream came true. This time frame is interesting, and it raises the following questions: Did Daniel's interpretation cause the king to change his ways for a while? Did God, in His mercy, give Nebuchadnezzar a year to repent of his sins? Either scenario is possible.

At this point, Nebuchadnezzar was an older, more experienced, and wiser king. He acknowledged the facts that God rules and that He humbles those who walk in pride. The king had learned his lesson.

The thrust throughout Daniel's writing is the rule of God over the kingdoms—indeed over all the affairs of men. The confidence was important for Daniel's primary readers, who were God's people, His kingdom, but who had been defeated, dispossessed, and enslaved. Daniel offered a message of comfort and hope to them: God was still ruling in the lives of people.

Was Nebuchadnezzar converted? Did his acknowledgment imply that now he believed in Yahweh as the only God? Was he only affirming his belief in Yahweh as one among many gods? Did he apostatize soon after making these affirmations? We simply do not know for sure.

Chapter 5 The Handwriting on the Wall

Chapter 5 contains the last contest narrative in the Book of Daniel. The previous ones appear in chapter 1, 2, and 4. In chapter 1, Daniel and his three friends prevailed when challenged to eat special foods of Babylon and impressed the king with their wisdom (1:15, 20). In chapters 2 and 4, Daniel was the only one able to interpret the king's dream (2:27, 28; 4:7,8). In chapter 5, Daniel was the only person who could read the mysterious handwriting on the wall (5:15, 17). Chapter 3 and 6 contain conflict stories, showing the dedication of Daniel and his friends when facing an edict contrary to their beliefs. These stories illustrate that God blesses His faithful servants.

Chapter 5 and 6 could well be seen as one continuous narrative. The theme that unites them is the rulership of God. Chapter 5 relates the divine demise of Belshazzar, while chapter 6 features the divine protection of Daniel. The great empires of the world are always under God's domain.

The idea that "Nero fiddled while Rome burned" is similar to what happened with Belshazzar in regard to Babylon. While the city was coming under siege, the government was feasting. Those at the feast engaged in a great deal of drinking. While in an intoxicated state, Belshazzar ordered that the cups and goblets of gold and silver that had been taken from Jerusalem be brought to him. These vessels which had been used by the priests at the temple there were brought to the king so that he and his fellow revelers might drink from them (5:4).

In the midst of this sacrilege, the fingers of a hand appeared, writing on the wall. Belshazzar was terrified (5:6; see Jer 50:43). When the king promised to give rich rewards to anyone able to interpret the writing, all the wise men failed (5:7-9). Perhaps these were descendants of the same political groups who had failed Nebuchadnezzar years before (Chs 2 and 4).

The Queen remembered the work of Daniel during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was brought to read the inscription and interpret its meaning. Belshazzar had been "weighed in the balances" and "found wanting" (5:27;KJV). His empire would be "given over to the Medes and Persians" (5:28). God's judgment was brought upon him, and he immediately lost his kingdom.

Although not explicitly stated, about twenty-five to thirty years separated the events described in chapter 4 (Nebuchadnezzar's insanity and restoration) and the events in chapter 5 (the handwriting on the wall and the fall of Babylon). Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., and Babylon was captured by Cyrus of Persia in 539 B.C. The period between Nebuchadnezzar's death and the downfall of Babylon was characterized by instability. Daniel lived through the reigns of these Babylonian Kings:

Nebuchadnezzar	605-563 BC
Evil-merodach	562-562 BC
Neriglissar	560-556 BC
Labashi-Marduk	556 BC
Nabonidus	556-539 BC
Belshazzar	553-539 BC

Belshazzar gave a feast for a thousand of his nobles. This banquet took place in Babylon on October 12, 539 BC. According to the Babylonian Chronicles, a few days earlier King Cyrus of Persia had defeated the Babylonian army at Opis on the Tigris River. Next in line, the city of Sippar surrendered to Cyrus without a fight, and Nabonidus fled. The Persian forces then made their way to Babylon.

If Cyrus' troops were surrounding the city, why would Belshazzar have thrown a banquet instead of preparing his army for battle? Several suggestions for this feast have been given:

- 1) The banquet was held to build morale in his army. They would certainly need it after the previous defeats. However, this banquet was not for the soldiers but for the nobles.
- 2) After hearing the news of his father's defeat, Belshazzar moved quickly to proclaim himself the ruler of the empire, the de facto king. Such a banquet would help explain why so many nobles were present. One problem with this suggestion is that his father Nabonidus was still alive at the time. Another is that the promise of making the interpreter of the mysterious message the "third ruler in the kingdom" (5:7) would not make sense if his father were no longer king.
- 3) The celebration was a last fling before Babylon was overtaken. Perhaps Belshazzar was fatalistically saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die" (see Is 22:13; 1 Cor 15:32). Nevertheless, his offering a place in the Administration (5:7) would argue against the thought that the city of Babylon was coming to an end.
- 4) The feast was in celebration of Babylon's security. Even though his father Nabonidus had been defeated, Belshazzar believed that Babylon would stand. The city's fortifications were considered invincible, consisting of both outer and inner walls and a moat. Further, the Euphrates River offered a constant water supply to the city, and they had food reserves that would last them for many years. Herodotus said that since "they had taken precautions of accumulating in Babylon a stock of provisions sufficient to last many years, there were able to regard the prospect of a siege with indifference. Xenophon wrote that "the [Babylonians] upon the walls laughed [Cyrus'] siege-works to scorn, in the belief that they had provisions enough for more than twenty years."

- 5) The great banquet may have been part of an annual festival, perhaps in honor of a god. Herodotus reported that, when Babylon was invaded by the Persians, “there was a festival going on, and they continued to dance and enjoy themselves until they learned the news the hard way.” Xenophon said that, when the Persians attacked, “a certain festival had come around in Babylon, during which all Babylon was accustomed to drink and revel all night long.” This last option may be the most likely one.

It was common in ancient times for kings to hold feasts with numerous guests (Esther 1:1-4). At such festivities, wine flowed freely (Esther 1:7, 8). At this particular feast, Belshazzar was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. Perhaps he was on an elevated platform for all those in attendance to watch as he drank. The number “thousand” may be a rounded figure.

What is the significance of a human hand writing on the wall? In the ancient world, a victorious army would cut off the hands of the slain in order to count the number of enemy soldiers fallen in battle. A severed hand was a symbol of death, yet this hand was animated! Perhaps it symbolized that the God of the Jews, whom the Babylonians considered defeated, was very much alive and well—and He had a message for the king.

The king offered to Daniel the same reward he had previously offered to anyone who would interpret the handwriting on the wall. He fulfilled his promise to Daniel at the conclusion of this revelation, even though his reward was short-lived.

Daniel stood before the king and told him to keep his gifts or give them to someone else. He was not showing disrespect to the king; but having been told already by God the interpretation of the handwriting on the wall, Daniel knew that such gifts had no value. Within the night, the authority would no longer be the king’s to bestow.

Daniel proceeded to describe the total dominance of Babylonian monarch, whose every thought was the rule of the kingdom. He then related the events of chapter 4, the madness and exile of Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar had failed to acknowledge the God who had given him life-breath. The king had not glorified the Lord by the way he lived. Therefore, the king received this message from the hand of God.

Each word of the inscription stands for a short sentence. The Babylonians were renowned for their expertise with numbers, and God spoke to Belshazzar in those terms. Fortunately, we are not left to try to determine the meaning of such a message, for Daniel gave the interpretation.

“**Mene**”—*God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.* The God of heaven had given the Babylonian kingdom a number of days to exist, and that number had run out.

“**Tekel**”—*you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.* God had weighed Belshazzar on the divine scales of justice, and he “did not measure up to the divine standards.”

“**Peres**”—*your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.* The Babylonian Empire would be replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire. In the phrase “the Medes and Persians” there were not two, but one imperial kingdom which succeeded Babylon. A play on words exists between “divided” and “Persians.”

Verses 30 & 31 contain the record of a very important event in Old Testament history. They relate the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire. That same night the city fell, and the kingdom came to an end. Both Isaiah (Is 13:1-22) and Jeremiah (Jer. 50:1-51:58) had prophesied concerning the fall of Babylon. Considerable evidence exists that Cyrus blocked and rechanneled the flow of the Euphrates River, which ran through Babylon underneath the city’s walls, coming in from the north and exiting through the south. While Belshazzar and his government were engaged in drunken revelry, the Medes and Persians simply came in through the nearly dry riverbed, overcame what little opposition they found and killed Belshazzar. In this way, the Babylonian Empire came to an end. The head of gold Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Babylon, was now replaced by a chest and arms of silver, the Medes, and Persians (ch 2).

Several historical sources indicate the precision with which Daniel summed up the events of the termination of the Babylonian Empire. Four prominent references are Herodotus (450 BC); Xenophon (360BC); the Annalistic Tablet, translated in 1880; and the Cyrus Cylinder, found in the ruins of Babylon in 1880. These historical details that confirm the narration of Daniel.

Chapter 6 In The Lions’ Den

Chapter 6 contains the second and last conflict story, being parallel to chapter 3 (the story of the fiery furnace). Daniel’s being cast into the lions’ den is one of the most familiar stories in all the Bible. It is celebrated as a victory for God because His servant Daniel remained faithful in his prayer life and was delivered from the mouths of the lions. This most remarkable story has been the subject matter of poems and songs. Anyone who gives the Bible a casual reading cannot miss the narrative of Daniel’s courage. Nevertheless, it is more than what one man did. The deeper message is the story of God’s giving His great care to His people. While it is a look at Daniel, on a far

higher plane, it is a look at Daniel's God. That make it one of greatest stories of all times.

Daniel was faithful to his king; however, he was also faithful to his God. The other commissioner sought to make Daniel's integrity before God a crime.

Darius appears to have been a man of good character as well. His prejudices are not revealed. He recognized a valuable asset in Daniel; he saw him as a man of character. Darius was evidently more interested in the efficiency of his government than in the history of his officials.

The other officials were envious of Daniel. They were aware not only of his success, but also of his goodness. They could "find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption" (6:4). Obviously, they did not like Daniel. Perhaps they were simply jealous because the king favored him. Another possibility is that they did not like him because of his Jewish background. Another suggestion is that they did not like Daniel because of his honesty. Josephus said that "he was above all the temptations of money, and despised bribery." He was not susceptible to the "normal" political collusions and strife, since he maintained his honor and integrity.

The officials took a proposed decree to the king, knowing that Daniel would never submit to it. When the conspirators approached Darius, they said that their proposal came from "all the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors" (6:7). Obviously, they were lying, since Daniel was an official in the kingdom and was not consulted in regard to this decree. Even if one were to assume that a conference had been called among the 120 satraps, like many political forums throughout history, they may have been able to get a quorum with only 61 percent, and pass a resolution with only a majority (31); that is, only about 25 percent may have actually agreed to such a scheme. The commissioners probably consulted only those whom they knew would be for such a decree, refraining from mentioning it to the government officials who might oppose it.

Their injunction read, "Anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den" (6:7). The proposal has more than one possible interpretation. Was it presented as a way to deify the king? The idea would be consistent with the egos of many emperors in history who have considered themselves divine.

Chapter 5 indicates that the Babylonians themselves had appealed to the new conqueror to remove some of the foreign religious influences from their city. This concern was likely expanded upon by the conspirators. While they had qualified the request, specifying that no prayers should be made to anyone but the king, Josephus understood

the decree to mean that no request, petition, or prayer of any kind could be made for thirty days. The foolishness of envy is even more demonstrable if these rulers were denying petition to any god, even their own.

Another qualifier for the decree was its duration, “thirty days” (6:8). Did this mean that for a period of thirty days the edict could neither be amended nor voided? It is more reasonable to believe that such an edict would be in effect for thirty days.

Whoever was guilty of disobeying the king’s decree would be thrown into “the lions’ den” where they would be torn to pieces. The Babylonians burned people alive (3:6, 20), but the Persians, who worshiped the fire, threw people into a lion’s den. The Assyrians and Persians captured lions and put them in cages so they would be available for this purpose (as well as for hunting). The word for “den” refers to a large pit, either natural or man-made, into which people were thrown.

Trapped, the king ordered that Daniel be placed in the lions’ den. Darius proclaimed to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.” These are remarkable words from a pagan king that show the influence Daniel had exerted on him. Verse 17 is simple narrative, apparently with the purpose of showing that every precaution was taken to eliminate escape. Ironically, these precautions served the divine purpose most wonderfully.

Whether or not Daniel expected God to deliver him did not alter his faith. His loyalty to God was uppermost in his mind. We saw in the first chapter that some decisions cannot be postponed: One has to determine in advance that he will be faithful to God, regardless of the consequences. A prior determination makes the choice easier when the ultimate challenge comes.

At the break of day, King Darius hurried to the lions’ den to inquire concerning Daniel. His statement in verse 16 was not an idle one; he believed it was possible for Daniel’s God to deliver him. His inquiry in verse 20 was met with Daniel’s statement of faith in 6:22 “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me.” As he had consistently done in his interpretations of dreams and visions, Daniel gave all the glory to God. However, he also defended himself before the king, recounting his innocence. Verse 23 emphasizes that “he had trusted in his God.”

Upon the release of Daniel from the lions’ den, the king ordered Daniel’s accusers to be executed in the same manner in which they had attempted to have Daniel executed (6:24). This command may seem unduly harsh, at least at first. Actually, this form of justice was a prerogative of divine law for God’s people, according to Deuteronomy 19:18, 19. For example, when a man was falsely charged in a court of law, and the

charge was proven false, the sentence imposed on the one making the false charge was the same as the sentence sought against the defendant. This injunction was to instill in God's people the serious nature of their system of justice and to reduce frivolous charges. It also imposed a respect for the law against perjury.

This decree was quite different from the one Darius was urged to make in 6:6-9. It was even distinct from Nebuchadnezzar's decree in 3:29, after the fiery furnace scene. In that decree, Nebuchadnezzar declared that nothing should be said against the God of Daniel. The proclamation made by Darius in this section (6:25-28) openly avowed God's greatness. A grand statement concerning God's kingdom is found in verse 26: "His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." Again, the evidence of Daniel's influence on the king appears.

The most obvious result of this incident was the continued success enjoyed by Daniel (6:28). He had been able to serve as counselor to many kings in two empires over nearly seven decades. This career was as remarkable as it was rare. Truly, God was ruling in the affairs of men.

Chapter 7 The Vision of the Four Beasts

With chapter 7, the second half of the Book of Daniel begins. While the first half is concerned with narratives about Daniel and his three friends, here the text turns to reporting visions and dreams, which had to be interpreted by divine oversight. Daniel interpreted the dreams of others in the first half of the book, in the second half he needed interpretation given to him about what he was seeing.

In these chapters, four visions seen by Daniel are described: the vision of the four beasts (ch 7), the vision of a ram and a goat (ch 8), the vision of the seventy weeks (ch 9), and the final vision (ch 10-12). Most of the visions occurred within the time frame of the first six chapters. The kings mentioned are named to help establish the chronology of the visions. The accuracy of his prophecies is so astonishing that some who lack a commitment to the integrity of the Scriptures contend that Daniel could not have predicted these events. As a result, they date the book much later than the sixth century B.C.

Symbolic images of animals and numbers are used. Such language is frequently used in apocalyptic literature and seems almost peculiar to it. A significant rule of interpretation of apocalyptic writings is that the symbols used have different meanings, depending upon the usage and the context. The fact that a symbol or number represents a definite meaning in one setting does not demand that it have the same meaning every time, regardless of setting or context.

Daniel was inspired by God, and God instructed him to write down these visions for those who would follow him. It is unreasonable to believe that God would give His people a written message knowing that it could not be understood. However, this section of the Scriptures is admittedly difficult.

Daniel’s first recorded vision took place during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. Therefore, the vision occurred before the events of chapter 5 and 6. He wrote down the vision, probably for the benefit of his Jewish readers (since the vision pertained to them). This recording of it may have been necessary while the events were still fresh on his mind. In addition, the writing of it events were still fresh on his mind. In addition, the writing of it made the vindication of it more accessible.

Since the vision is interpreted in the latter part of the chapter, no one has to speculate about what the various parts of the vision mean. As will be seen, the vision appears to parallel the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2.

<u>The Dream of Daniel 2</u>	<u>Kingdom</u>	<u>The Vision of Daniel 7</u>
Head of Gold	Babylonian	Lion with the wings of an eagle
Chest & Arms of Silver	Medo-Persian	Bear with ribs in his mouth
Belly & Thighs of Bronze	Greek	Leopard with four heads & wings
Legs of Iron & Feet of Iron & Clay	Roman	Beast with iron teeth & ten horns
Rock/Mountain	Eternal Kingdom	Eternal Kingdom of the Son of Man

While the hybrid beasts described in verses 4 through 8 may surprise modern readers, the Jewish exiles in Babylon would not have been too surprised. In the capital city, they would have seen hybrid creatures in reliefs and sculptures.

The first of these beasts was like a lion, only this lion had the wings of an eagle. This is parallel to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, in which, according to Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar was the “head of gold” (2:38). At that time, Babylon indeed qualified as the most powerful and most fierce of the worldly kingdoms. The eagle’s wings may suggest the speed with which Nebuchadnezzar expanded the Babylonian Empire and made it dominate.

As Daniel watched, the beast’s wings were plucked. This plucking forms, perhaps, a reference to Babylon’s many conquests that were eventually stopped by the rebellion of the Medes and Persians. Also, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the empire began to disintegrate internally.

Daniel saw this beast “lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it (7:4). This part of the vision may refer to the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar after the period of his insanity (4:33-36). This had taken place before Daniel’s vision. If the first beast represents the Babylonian Empire, then the vision included several events which had already been accomplished; for example, the establishment of the empire and the speed of its conquests. For this reason, the fact that something had already been accomplished at the time of the vision does not necessarily exclude it from the vision. Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration is a reasonable judgment concerning the meaning.

However, alternative interpretations have some validity. The beast was given “the heart of a man,” as opposed to a lion’s heart. Isaiah had prophesied that the Babylonians would be cowardly, saying that “every man’s heart will melt” (Is 13:7). Therefore, the vision’s language may refer to the decline and defeat of Babylon.

Out of the sea came a second beast, one “resembling a bear” (7:5). This beast corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar’s second part of the statue, the chest and arms of silver. At that time, the largest species of bears in that part of the world was thought to be forested in the mountains of Media. The bear well could have been used to symbolize the Persians because of their reputation for cruelty.

Pictorially, this bear was “raised up on one side” (7:5). Was it in a posture of attack? The significance of its position appears to be that one part (the Persians) would become more dominant in the blend of cultures that made up the Medo-Persian Empire. “Three ribs were in its mouth” (7:5). Some versions have “tusks” or “bones.” Perhaps they imply the conquest of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. The number “three” may suggest something of divine nature, such as God’s granting power and success to this beast. “And thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’” (7:5). Daniel may have seen angels, but no evidence is available on this question.

A third animal came from the great sea—one “like a leopard” (7:6). Again, the beast corresponds to the next part of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the belly and thighs of bronze. This part of the statue likely refers to the establishment of the Greek Empire.

The leopard like animal “had on its back four wings” (7:6). If the wings of the first beast were symbolic of speed, it is reasonable to assume that these represent the same idea. Here we see four wings instead of two, perhaps indicating even greater speed. Within a brief time, Alexander the Great conquered a sizable portion of the world, from Greece to India.

“The beast also had four heads” (7:6). Whether the number “four” is symbolic for the world, suggesting mastery over the whole world—illuminating the phrase “dominion was given of alexander’s empire among his four generals is uncertain. It is reasonable to view this as a reference to the division of the empire. After Alexander’s death, Antipater ruled over Macedonia and Greece, and Lysimachus ruled over Thrace and Asia Minor. Especially important to the Jews and to later material in the Book of Daniel, Seleucus ruled over Syria and Ptolemy ruled over Egypt. The expression regarding “dominion” could refer to any of the world kingdoms. God gave dominion to each of them. This truth is the emphasis that is given throughout Daniel.

Curiously, the “fourth beast” (7:7) is not identified with any specific animal. In Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, the fourth part of the great statue included legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. This beast is described as having iron teeth. The fourth great world empire, and the successor to the Greeks, was the Roman Empire.

The next part of Daniel’s vision presents a very difficult image in the book. Verse 7 refers to “ten horns.” The word “horn” is a familiar symbol of power. “Ten” may be a specific number (and many have tried to interpret it specifically). On the other hand, it may be a symbolic number, representing a “limitless” number that is an infinite total. Much is made of various interpretations of the numbers “ten,” “one hundred,” “one thousand,” and other multiples of “ten”; but the key seems to be that they are multiples of “ten.”

Verse 8 describes “another horn, a little one.” No certain indication is given in the Scriptures as to who or what this horn represents. Does it stand for some particular king or power? Whatever it means, this force would oppose the people of God, proclaiming for itself the power of God (7:11, 12). The little horn was to arise after ten kings (7:24) and seize “three of the first horns” (7:8). If this refers to a specific event, the identity is difficult to discern with confidence.

The rest of Daniel’s visions (and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar) seem to focus on the people of God. More specially, the central focus is the Jewish people themselves, and that emphasis dovetails into the “everlasting kingdom” that was to come (7:14, 27).

If the events in chapter 7 are, in fact, parallel with the events of the dream of chapter 2, then the little horn must be associated with the time of the fourth kingdom. The horn’s pulling out three horns by their roots may be a symbolic image, rather than one having a specific historical fulfillment. Since the number “three” is often used as a symbolic number for spiritual things, it may be that the little horn was claiming divine attributes. This horn “possessed eyes,” perhaps a claim to wisdom, and was “uttering great boasts,” or self-glorification (97:8). Taking upon itself the authority of heaven, this corrupt power

began to persecute God’s people. Such acts were done in history during the time of the Roman Empire.

It is possible that there could have been a historical fulfillment. Domitian was persecuting the people of God when John was given the revelation of Jesus on the isle of Patmos. That persecution was caused, in a great part, by the Roman Senate’s proclamation declaring Domitian to be “Lord and God,” the savior of the world. All citizens were to take a loyalty oath acknowledging belief in the emperor’s deity—an oath to which a faithful Christian would never subscribe.

One problem readily apparent in this view, however, lies with the fact that by the time of the persecution of the church, the Jewish nation had been conquered by the Romans, nearly a generation before. The emphasis throughout these visions seems to be on the people of the Jewish nation. The inclination, then, is to say that the horns are symbolic, not specific.

The ten horns refer to ten kings, not ten kingdoms. The ten horns are a part of the fourth best, which symbolizes the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire.

Augustus	31 BC—A.D 14
Tiberius	A.D 14-37
Caligula	A.D 37-41
Claudius	A.D 41-54
Nero	A.D 54-68
Galba	A.D 68-69
Otho	A.D 69
Vitellius	A.D 69
Vespasian	A.D 69-71
Titus	A.D 79-81
Domitian	A.D 81-96

In **verse 9**, the scene within Daniel’s vision shifted, from emphasizing the beasts and their activities to “the Ancient of Days,” who brought judgment upon the fourth beast, destroying it (7:11, 26). In Revelation, a similar picture of “the Ancient of Days” is given in relation to the “son of man” (Rev 1:13-16).

Verse 10 mentions a “river of fire” coming from His throne. In Revelation 22:1, the “water” of the “river of...life” is said to flow from the throne for the benefit of the saved. Again, Daniel was using symbolic language to depict judgment, which is consistently identified with fire in the Scripture (Mt 3:8-12; 2 Thess 1:7,8). “Myriads upon myriads [ten thousands of ten thousands] were standing before Him.” In symbolic language,

this number need not be a specific number but simply an infinite number. (Ten thousand multiplied by ten thousand would be one hundred million, and the writer uses plurals.) hence, there were myriads of people. As all of these people stood before God, “the books were opened.” This is exactly the language used of judgment in Revelation 20:12.

Of the first three beasts, **verse 12** says, “Their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them.” God does what He does in His own time and in His own way. If, in fact, the four beasts represent four kingdoms (7:17), then they have long been vanquished as empires. Only a few artifacts remain of Babylon; nothing remains of the power that once belonged to that great empire. We still find traces of cultural influence from the other beasts as well, but they are no longer powers in the world.

The establishment of a new kingdom is presented in **verses 13 and 14**. The kingdom mentioned here was either given to the Son of Man or surrendered by the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days (depending upon which One is indicated in the phrase “to Him” at the beginning of verse 14). If Daniel saw Christ giving the kingdom to God, then we have a parallel picture in First Corinthians 15:24: “Then comes the end, when [Christ] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.” If the kingdom was being given to the Son of Man, then the kingdom that is established would be parallel to the stone and subsequent mountain in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (2:44, 45).

Upon seeing all of this, Daniel was “distressed”; the visions “kept alarming” him. After the interpretation was given to him Daniel was still alarmed (7:28). Daniel “desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast” (7:19).

The earlier verses of chapter 7 specified that the “Ancient of Days” would pass judgment on the beast (7:9-12). Consequently, our concern with 7:15-28 is with the new material, added by the interpreter, in response to Daniel’s request.

While verses 23 and 24 repeat the interpretation of verse 8, verse 25 adds a new symbol in the phrase “times, times, and half a time.” This expression is also found in Revelation 12:14, where it is used in reference to persecution. Also in Revelation we see the expressions “forty-two months” and “twelve hundred and sixty days” (11:2, 3; 12:6; 13:5), which are thought to be equivalent to three and a half years.

What does this phrase mean? As with other portions of this vision, where no specific biblical reference reveals exactly what is meant, the interpreter of the Scriptures must be open to a number of possibilities.

- (1) It is symbolic of an indefinite period of time—not an infinite time (otherwise, some variation involving “ten” would surely appear), but an inexact period. The “war with the saints” (7:21) would go on for an unspecified period of time.
- (2) Perhaps the “three and a half” represents the conflict itself, as opposed to any reference to an actual period of time. The number “three” tends to represent the spiritual realm, and the number “four” often is representation of the natural world (in reference to the four seasons and the four directions of the compass—the proverbial “four corners of the earth”). The number “three and a half,” then, is the point where “three” and “four” comes into conflict. It is not quite “four,” but it is more than “three.”

Spiritually, the people of God are always in conflict with the world (see Jas 4:4). The New Testament makes several references to fighting, living as a soldier, and competition (see Eph 6:13-17). This “battle” will go on as long as the world exists. God’s people will overcome (Rom 8:37; Rev 2:7), and we will know peace; but we do not know when the battle will end for all of God’s people. It will continue for an unspecified period of time. This may be the significance of “time, times, and half a time.”

Verse 27 says that “the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints.” Verses 18 and 22 emphasize the same truth: The saints will ultimately overcome the kingdoms of men. This is surely not intended to be a reference to an earthly dominion (Jn 18:36), but to the fact that all will someday bow to Christ, acknowledging Him as King (Phil 2:10-11).

The point of Daniel’s visions—indeed, the purpose of the whole book—is to comfort God’s people in a time of tribulation. In the end, God’s kingdom (God’s people) will overcome. The victory of the saints will come without suffering, not without some loss; but the saints will overcome!

Daniel said he was greatly alarmed and grew pale. This brings two observations. (1) However Daniel understood the vision and the interpretation given to him, it distressed him to know the turmoil and struggles awaiting God’s chosen people (2) In the future, however far into it the vision referred, so distressed a prophet of God who was “esteemed,” do we dare believe we understand the vision so well?

Chapter 8—The Vision of A Ram And A Goat

The vision of chapter 8 came two years after the one in chapter 7. This divine revelation covers the time span of the second and third kingdoms of chapters 2 and 7—Medo-Persia and Greece. As the prophecy relates to the vision of chapter 2, it is a further description of the chest and arms of silver (Medo-Persia) and the belly and thighs of bronze (Greece). As it relates to the vision of chapter 7, it is a further description of the bear (Medo-Persia) and the Leopard (Greece).

Fortunately, no one has to guess concerning the significance of this vision, for the chapter reveals its meaning. Certain details are explained later, when Daniel sought further clarification of the vision's interpretation. And examination must be made of the interpretation given in this chapter alongside the vision itself.

In the third year of Belshazzar, Daniel had another vision. In the vision, Daniel saw himself at Susa, by the Ulai Canal.

Daniel first saw a ram, which represented the kings of Media and Persia (8:20). In Daniel's previous vision, the kingdom was depicted as a bear (more a symbol of Media). In this one, it is symbolized by a ram (more a symbol of Persia). The ram had two horns; again, a symbol of the two ethnic aspects of the dominant powers of this empire. The second horn (Persia) became greater than the first (Media). In Daniel's previous vision, the bear was "raised up" on one side (7:5), indicating that one part was to be a dominant. The ram "did as he pleased" (8:4). The Medo-Persian Empire was virtually "unstoppable" for a time, defeating nations to the west, to the north, and the south. Reasonably soon, however, the empire would taste a succession of defeats by another power, represented by a goat.

Daniel then saw a male goat coming from the west (8:5). The goat is "the kingdom of Greece" (8:21). This is an appropriate symbol, for the Greeks had been known as the "goats' people" some two hundred years before Daniel's time. The "horn" between the eyes of the goat is a reference to Alexander the Great, who conquered most of the known world from Europe to India in about ten years' time. His forces were greatly outnumbered but well-disciplined.

A series of battles between the Greeks, under Alexander, and the Persians is identified in verse 6 and 7. Notice that Daniel saw the ram standing by the canal. Alexander managed to cross the Granicus River at flood stage, a feat considered impossible by the Persians. The Persian emperor had tried to bribe Alexander's military leaders and had engaged in a failed conspiracy to have Alexander assassinated. In response, the Greeks destroyed the Persians before moving eastward into India.

At the height of his power, "the large horn was broken" (8:8). The breaking of the horn (8:22) is a foreshadowing of the death of Alexander the Great. This portion of the

history is similar to a parable told by Jesus about a “rich fool” (Lk 12:16-21). This rich man imagined great things for himself. In the midst of his prosperity, he was told that he was going to die. As the shades of death enclosed around him, he was asked, “Who will own what you have prepared?” Alexander had no dire heir to whom he could leave his empire. His son, born after his death, was killed. Consequently, his vast domain was broken up after only a short time of unification. This division of the empire is depicted in verse 8 by “four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven,” which came up in place of the one.

Verse 9 says that one of the four horns grew “exceedingly great.” Apparently, this horn is a reference to the Seleucid dynasty of Syria. The verse specifically says that this horn came out of one of the four. It was from among them, not a successor to them.

The focus of Daniel’s vision was the people of God. This vision did not give a detailed prophetic forecast of world history, but it followed mainly the history concerning the Jews. The emphasis in the rest of this vision, then, was on the Syrian division of Alexander’s empire. Therein was the power that would have the most immediate impact on the Jewish people. Chapter 11 will give even more specific details regarding the continued conflict between the Syrians and the Jews.

Verses 10 and 11 apparently are a reference to Antiochus IV, also known as Antiochus Epiphanes. This member of the Seleucid dynasty abused the temple and removed “the regular sacrifice” the “[offering of] continuity” or the daily offering. This, according to verse 12, was because of “transgression.”

Verses 13 and 14 present the most difficult portion of this vision to this point because no corresponding interpretation in Daniel tells what the phrase “2,300 evenings and mornings” means. Symbols in apocalyptic literature may have different meanings, depending upon their context. Various numbers have special meanings, and their combinations or multiples also suggest meanings. The number “ten” seems to signify an almost infinite number. Multiples of “ten” seem to suggest a more intense repetition of the same meaning. The number “2,300” is certainly a multiple of “ten,” but the “23” seems to be without any comparable identification. Consequently, we are left with uncertainty in regard to the meaning of this phrase.

The annual celebration of this event is referred to in John 10:22 as “the Feast of the Dedication.” It is also known as “the Feast of Lights” and “Hanukkah.” (“Hanukkah” is transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning “dedication.”)

Gabriel was commanded to relate the meaning of the vision to Daniel (8:16). Being referred to as a “son of man,” Daniel was reminded gently of his humanity, even though he was being taken into confidence by an angel. One thinks of Paul, who, though he was allowed to see things, was given a thorn in the flesh—a messenger of Satan—to keep

him from exalting himself (2 Cor 12:1-10). Daniel, upon hearing the voice of the angel, seems to have fainted (8:18).

It must be remembered that the main thrust throughout the Book of Daniel is that God rules in the affairs of men. Whatever power this king might obtain, it would be, in truth, because God gave it to him.

This king would practice diplomatic deceit to get his way. Throughout history, men, tribes, and nations have often obtained by negotiation what they were unable to take by military force.

Eventually, this king was to be “broken without human agency” (8:25). Men would not be able to stop this king, but God would!

In verse 17, Gabriel told Daniel that “the vision pertains to the time of the end.” It is natural to ask, “The end of what”?

Adding to our difficulty, Gabriel referred in verse 25 to the “Prince of princes.” Who is the “Prince of princes”?

Certainly, the “time of the end” seems to be a reference to God’s judgment. However, it may be “symbolic” language used to refer to more than one particular incident. That is probably the best explanation. That is probably the best explanation.

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus referred to Daniel 9 (a parallel to this vision), saying that the language referred to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Consequently, many have understood this passage to refer to that incident also. Others have assumed that the “time of the end” refers to the ultimate and universal day of judgment before God at the end of time.

This accents the use of symbolic imagery in this type of literature. It is evident from Jesus’ statement that this language in Daniel foreshadows the overthrow of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (by the Romans). In regard to the other interpretation, no Bible believer can deny that there is to be a day of judgment by God at time’s end. A dual prophecy could well have been intended here.

The emphases throughout the latter half of the Book of Daniel seems to be on the history directly affecting God’s people during and after the time of the Babylonian captivity. Whereas the visions in the earlier part of the book foretold the coming of God’s kingdom, the visions of the latter part place more of an emphasis on the Jews themselves.

The images Daniel saw in his vision represent the Medes and Persians and the Greeks (and the eventual successors to Alexander’s empire, including specifically the Seleucid dynasty of Syria). The “time of the end” most logically refers here to that time in keeping with the rest of the vision (8:17). A “holy one” asked in verse 13, “How long will

the vision...apply...?” The answer was given in reference to the ceasing of the daily sacrifices, which occurred during Antiochus IV’s capture of Jerusalem. With the help of some Jews, he corrupted the priesthood, in effect selling it to the highest bidder. During this time, the Jews suffered greatly.

“The end” is a phrase used in the Old Testament prophets, often with a direct reference to the specific event or time about which the prophet spoke or wrote or during which he lived. Probably in this context “the end of the end” should be taken to mean the end of the events prophesied in this chapter, namely, the persecution of the Jews and their deliverance in the Maccabean period. Antiochus IV is certainly in view here.

The “Prince of princes” in verse 25 is likely parallel to the “Commander of the host” in verse 11. From Him, the sacrifices were removed. Although the language may be similar to that identifying the Christ, the context of the passage here is better suited to God Himself.

After hearing the interpretation, Daniel was told to “keep the vision secret” (8:26). Part of the purpose of the symbols in apocalyptic literature may have been to keep the message hidden from enemies of God’s people. Jesus, in Matthew 24 and in His letters to the seven churches (Rev2;3), did not specifically identify the Romans by name, even though it is generally agreed that they were who the Lord principally had in mind. How would the Romans have reacted if they had understood Jesus’ disciples were teaching that God would someday overthrow the Roman Empire? Similarly, how would the Persians have reacted upon the seizure of the Babylonian Empire if they discovered that Daniel was predicting the destruction of the Medes and Persians.

Daniel concluded with the personal note that he was “exhausted and sick for days.” Daniel was favorable to us in withholding the details of the future from us. Except for the glories of eternity that will be enjoyed by the saved, we do not know what our tomorrows hold for us. It is probable that, if God showed us everything about the future, we would not like what we saw.

Chapter 9—The Prophecy of The Seventy Weeks

Chapter 9 contains the penitential prayer of Daniel (9:1-19) and the prophecy of the seventy weeks (9:20-27). It evidences the prophet's concern for the future of his people. He earnestly prayed that God would forgive their sins and restore them to their land, just as He had promised.

Within this chapter may be the most difficult passage in the book, 9:24-27. In other parts of his writing, the prophet gave a dream/vision and a rather detailed interpretation of what had been revealed in the vision. In the latter part of this chapter, Daniel gave Gabriel's interpretation, without giving an abundance of specific details. The nature of the case demands that this text be examined historically, prophetically, and scripturally according to the available information we have. Speculation should be kept to a minimum, and the greatest emphasis should be given to what can be known.

When Daniel remembered reading in the book of the prophet Jeremiah that the Babylonian captivity was to last seventy years, he calculated that the completion of that time was at hand. Perhaps he had an even greater need for communication with God as a result. In response, he prayed the beautiful prayer we find in 9:4-19.

According to the chronology of Daniel, this prayer happened before the events of chapter 6. Perhaps Daniel's more earnest endeavor in prayer was what led to the idea of the plot against him in that chapter. In any event, the decree to return the Jews to Jerusalem had not yet been given by Cyrus.

Daniel was eager for God's people to return to their homeland, so he said, "I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications." His approach of fasting, sackcloth, and ashes was an attitude of sincere penitence and confession. When Daniel understood the Scripture, he prayed.

Daniel's prayer was in part a response to the ordinance prescribed at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8:47, 48. Solomon, in this dedication ceremony, declared what must be done if Israel should ever rebel against God and be removed from their land. He reminded them that wherever they were, in the places to which God might carry them, the people should face the land and the city of Jerusalem and penitently make supplication. In this way, God would hear them and restore them. All of this was surely on Daniel's mind as he offered this prayer dominated by the confession of sin.

The great prophet referred to "those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them" (9:7). The noticeable aspect of this statement is the absolute righteousness of God in His dealing with His people. As He first brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, He had warned them to be separate from the inhabitants there. God is not prejudiced against any race or group of people, but He did not want the Israelites to be drawn into the idolatrous practices common among these people. Israel

did not completely followed God's command; they mingled with the people of the land which He gave to them. Consequently, He removed them from their and to foreign countries. Daniel was fully aware of God's purpose.

In his prayer, Daniel seemed to place a heavier weight of responsibility on the leaders of Israel for the sinfulness which engulfed the people (9:6, 8). The leadership of God's people is an awesome responsibility, not to be taken lightly.

As he prayed, Daniel specifically cited the people's sins and rebellions against Him. Throughout his prayer, he stressed their rejection of God's Word. It is only through the revealed Word of God that we have any specific knowledge of Him; everything else is, at best, guesswork. To reject the Word is to reject His authority and to reject Him.

Daniel's confession of sin in 9:15 was precisely what was required of God's people in order to be forgiven and restored. He made a fourfold appeal in 9:16-19 to the Lord in his prayer. First, he asked that the Lord turn His anger and wrath away from Jerusalem (9:16). Second, he desired that the Lord's face might once again shine on the ruins and give the sanctuary a new day which would be glorious (9:17). Third, he wanted the Lord to open both His ear and His eye to hear the petitions and see the desolations which had come upon His people (9:18). Fourth, he asked the Lord to forgive His people and take action regarding their land and the temple (9:19). With each request, Daniel gave reasons why God should grant what he asked.

Daniel used another approach in his prayer to God as he recounted God's previous dealing with Israel when He brought them out of bondage in Egypt. Even then, they had been a rebellious people; but God had delivered them. He acknowledged that the people had no inherent righteousness, no "merits of [their] own." He simply stated that they counted on God's "great compassion" (9:18), and his appeal was to God's grace.

The Prophecy of the seventy weeks (9:20-27)

The prophet had gone without food for some time and had been pouring out his heart to the Lord (9:3). When Gabriel arrived, it was about the time of the evening offering, that is, 3:00pm to 4:00pm. According to the Law, sacrifices were made every morning and evening. Even though the Jews were in exile and the temple sacrifices had ceased, they still measured time in this way. It was common to use these times of the day to pray (Ezra 9:5; Ps, 141:2). The Jews would have to return to Jerusalem and build a proper altar prior to reinstating sacrifices (Ezra 3:1-3).

Verses 24 through 27 are considered among the most difficult passage in Daniel. The question of the "seventy weeks" is the major problem of the passage. Though often overshadowed by the discussion of the puzzling timelines, six important purposes to be accomplished by God are given (9:24).

A prominent view identifies the “seventy weeks” with Jesus’ first coming (including the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70). Another identifies it with His second coming. Variations on these various interpretations depend upon the meaning given to the “seventy weeks.”

One of the keys to understanding the points of view is the use of the term “Messiah” in verse 25 and 26. Is this a reference to Jesus and only to Him? The difficulty here is the final “week.” To bring the time to Jesus’ death or even the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it is hard to be consistent with a literal 490 years, regardless of when the period of “seventy weeks” of years is said to begin. The inconsistency of making the 483 (or even 486 ½) literal and the rest symbolic seems to be straining the text.

An Old Testament prophecy can sometimes have more than one fulfillment. It is likely that the concept of dual fulfillment is the case with Daniel 9:24-27, especially regarding the six purposes named in verse 24:

- 1) **“To finish the transgression.”** If this is indeed a reference to the time of Jesus, then the accomplishment is effected in the work of the gospel. It could also refer to the transgression mentioned in Daniel 8:12, the transgression of Israel, referring first to them and second to the atonement that Jesus brought about for all sin.
- 2) **“To make an end of sin,”** Jesus’ sacrifice brought to an end the need for continual sin offerings (Heb 10:1-18). From another point of view, this could be a reference to the interruption of the daily sacrifice during the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dan 8:11). It would seem, in either case, that the expression may have been “sin sacrifice,” rather than “sin.” Perhaps the original readers would have understood the meaning as the reading stands.
- 3) **“To make atonement for iniquity.”** Certainly, Jesus’ sacrifice is portrayed throughout the New Testament as the atonement for sins. An additional reference here could be to the reestablishment of the sacrifices for the sins of the people offered according to the Law after the conquest by Syria in the mid-second century B.C.
- 4) **“To bring in everlasting righteousness.”** The righteousness of God is “everlasting,” and Christ establishes it (Rom 3:21-26; 2 Cor 5:21). However, the concept of “forever” in the Old Testament does not mean “eternal” or “perpetual” every time it is used. God promised the people that He would establish them in their land “forever”; but obviously, they were removed from the land, the first time in the captivity in which Daniel was taken to Babylon.
- 5) **“To seal up vision and prophecy.”** The visions and prophecies would be sealed up in the sense of being fully and finally completed. The fullness of the revelation, in the sense of the giving of the Scriptures, was not completed in the time of Jesus nor in the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D.70). Therefore,

this could be a reference to the fulfillment of the vision which Daniel was told to “seal up” in 8:26. The angel may have been pointing to the time when the vision and the prophecy were to be completed.

The designation “seventy weeks” does create chronological difficulties. It seems that the only comfortable resolution is to say that the passage has more than one fulfillment.

Among many interpreters there is a fairly consistent agreement that the seventy weeks represent 490 years. What is the significance of 490 years other than the ending of the Old Testament era and the coming of the Messiah?

Daniel said that “on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate” (9:27). Jesus applied a similar phrasing to the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:15. This similarity may be an indication of dual fulfillment of prophecy rather than a specific attempt to define the duration of the “seventy weeks.” The specific duration, as to its beginning and its ending, may remain a difficult for us.

A very possible solution is to see “490” as a symbolic number, depicting God’s completion of His work. In apocalyptic imagery, “seven” tends to be the divine number, and “ten” tends to represent an infinite number. Often multiples of “ten” seem to suggest not an unlimited number but an imprecise number.

Whether “490” is a reference to the time of the coming of Jesus or fits a scenario in which it concludes with the destruction of Jerusalem, there is no reason why it could not be a beautiful, though appropriate, symbol. Even though it may approach the appropriate number of years between the time of Daniel’s vision and the time at which Jesus comes upon the scene as “the Lamb of God,” it may function as a powerful figurative designation.

No single interpretation of 9:24-27 answers every question. However, any understanding that goes beyond the period of the fourth kingdom of Daniel’s vision is a very suspect interpretation of the passage. The proper interpretation has to be confined to the historical dimensions that agree given in the Old and New Testaments.

Of the wide variety of interpretations that have been offered, three main schools of thought are prominent:

- 1) The view that, like Daniel 8 chapter 9 relates to the desolation of the temple by Antiochus IV (168BC) and its rededication under Judas Maccabeus (165 BC).

- 2) The interpretation that the passage predicts the passion of Jesus, the Messiah (A.D. 30), as well as the destruction of the temple by the Romans (A.D. 70).
- 3) The view that the prophecy not only deals with the Messiah but also the Antichrist and the end times. This third view has been embraced by premillennialism. While the first two views are plausible, the third view has to be dismissed for a complete lack of evidence.

It is best, when all the evidence is weighed, to interpret the “seventy weeks” as a dual prophecy. Its immediate fulfillment came in the close of the Jewish age, while its ultimate and full completion was in the work of Jesus, the Messiah. The strength of this approach to this section of the Scriptures lies in what the Old and New Testaments actually portray as having happened.

The prophecy of the “Seventy weeks” involved Daniel’s “people” (the Jews) and his “holy city” (Jerusalem). Any interpretation which does not take these two points into consideration cannot be seriously valued.

Verse 24 contains six infinitives which identify actions that would occur within the seventy-week period.

- 1) **To finish the transgression.** In his prayer for himself and his people, Daniel had confessed that Israel had “transgressed” the law of God (9:11). Gabriel revealed to Daniel that their transgression was not yet complete. More transgression would come in the future.
- 2) **To make an end of sin.** In His death at Golgotha, Jesus paid the price required for sin—the death of Jesus for the guilt of the sinner. Jesus died so we, through His forgiveness, would not have to die eternally. The sin offering that Jesus provided is frequently addressed in Hebrews, where the effect of the offering of animals is contrasted with the offering of Jesus Christ.
- 3) **To make atonement for iniquity.** When Christ died and rose again, He atoned for the sins of the world. Reconciliation was made possible through His death. This phrase describes what we mean when we speak of the vicarious death or substitutionary atonement.
- 4) **To bring in everlasting righteousness.** Righteousness is a prominent picture in the kingdom of God. This righteousness comes from the willing sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Heb 10:5-18).
- 5) **To seal up vision and prophecy.** The Old Testament prophecy regarding Christ and His kingdom completed the plan of God for His people. God put His “seal” of vindication on biblical prophecy, making prophecy the conclusion of God’s redemptive plan of history.

- 6) **To anoint the most holy place.** “The most holy place” could also be translated “the most holy One.” Therefore, how an individual interprets this phrase depends on whether he understands “the most holy” to refer to a place or a person. If the phrase designates a place, it must be the sanctuary in Jerusalem. While the old sanctuary (holy place) was to be destroyed, the Holy Spirit would come upon the new temple, Christ’s church, making it “the most holy place.” If “the most holy” refers to a person, it must be the Messiah, alluding to the fact that the Holy Spirit was upon Him. The Lord’s anointed, then, was ultimately to be a person who was “greater than the temple” (Mt 12:6).

The “Seventy Weeks” (9:24-27)

9:25	7 weeks
9:25	+62 weeks
	=69 weeks
9:27	+ 1 week
9:24	=70 weeks

From the time of “a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince” would be “seven weeks and sixty-two weeks,” for a total of sixty-nine weeks. Following this, the one final week would make up the “seventy weeks.”

To which decree does this verse refer? Four decrees were given, but only one of them could possibly fulfill this promise.

1. The decree of Cyrus (538 B.C.). After establishing the Medo-Persian Empire, Cyrus sent Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). If one begins here, a literal 483 years would end around 55 B.C., which is much too early.
2. The decree of Darius I (519 B.C.). After the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they encountered opposition from those living in Samaria, and the work on the temple came to a halt. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah motivated the people to resume their efforts. When the governor over that area wrote to Darius about the matter, the king searched the royal archives and found Cyrus’ decree (Ezra 6:1-5). Darius then ordered that no one interfere with the Jew’s work and that the cost of the temple as well as sacrifices be paid from the royal treasury (Ezra 6:6-12). If one begins at 519 B.C., a literal 483 years would end about 36 B.C., which also appears to be too early.
3. The decree of Artaxerxes I in his seventh year (457 B.C.). Nearly sixty years after the temple had been rebuilt, Artaxerxes decreed for Ezra the priest to go to Jerusalem and teach the people the law of God (Ezra 7:11-26). Starting at 457

B.C., the 483 years would end around A.D. 27, which would be approximately the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

4. The decree of Artaxerxes I in his twentieth year (444 B.C.). A little more than a decade after he commissioned Ezra, Artaxerxes send Nehemiah to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls (Neh 2:1-8). In this case, the 483 years would conclude about A.D 40, a decade after the end of Jesus' ministry in A.D. 30.

<i>The Decree</i>		<i>The Date</i>	<i>Plus 483 Years</i>
Cyrus	Ezra 1:1-4	538 B.C.	55B.C
Darius I	Ezra 6:8-12	519 B.C.	38 B.C.
7 th year of Artaxerxes I	Ezra 7:11-28	457 B.C.	A.D. 27
20 th year if Artaxerxes I	Neh 2:1-8	444 B.C.	A.D. 40

Verse 26. The prophecy now points to a time after the sixty-two weeks, that is, to the seventieth week. Preceding the “sixty-two weeks” was a period of “seven weeks.” Therefore, for interpretative purposes, the text should be read “after the sixty-nine weeks.” At that time, the Messiah [would] be cut off and have nothing. In the prophecy’s ultimate reach, the crucifixion of Christ must be in view, which would occur in the middle of seventieth week.

Mushrooming out from Jesus’ death are terminal implications: “The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Jerusalem and its temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The Jews would return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple in 516 B.C. After the Messiah came, the temple would again be destroyed in A.D. 70. It would be leveled by the Romans under the leadership of Titus. The temple, in chronological sequence, would remain until the end of the seventieth week.

The end of Jerusalem would come like a flood. It would come with a climactic end when the Roman armies overwhelmed the city and brought about its destruction. Even to the end there [would] be war; desolations are determined. Indeed, the long struggle would begin in A.D. 66 with the Roman siege of Jerusalem, and it would take four years for the fall.

Verse 27. Four statements in this verse complete the picture of the events of the “seventy weeks.”

1. “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week.” The pronoun “he” refers to “the Messiah” of the previous verse. When the Messiah came,

- He spoke of the “blood of the covenant” which was “poured out for many” (Mt 26:28). After Pentecost, the gospel was preached first to the Jews, and many believed on Him.
2. “In the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.” The middle of the week would mean after 3 ½ years. Again, the reference must be to what Jesus would do when He died on the cross after His brief ministry. The death of Jesus put an end to the effectiveness of the sacrifices of the Jewish law (Col 2:14; Heb 8:13).
 3. “On the wing of abominations will come one who make desolate, even until a complete destruction.” The ultimate application of this statement appears to be to the abomination of desolation of judgment which fell upon Jerusalem in A.D 70 when Titus, the Roman general, destroyed the city (Mt 24:15,, 16; Luke 21:20-24).
 4. “One that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” The final statement decries the judgment brought upon Rome, “the one who [made] desolate,” because of her ungodliness and the destruction she brought upon the city and the people of God.

Chapter 10—An Angel’s Explanation

These last three chapters form a unit that pertains to the lives of Jewish people in the Persian and Greek periods (10:14). The period of time is referred to as “the latter days” (10:14), and the words were to be closed and sealed “until the time of the end” (12:9). The appearance of a celestial being (10:1-11:1) leads up to the revelation of future events concerning the Persian and Greek Empires (11:2-12:4). Following this multi-faceted prophecy, the book closes with final instructions for Daniel (12:5-13). Nowhere else in the text of the Old Testament Scriptures does one find such prophetic detail as is given in this last vision.

Especially unique to chapter 10 are the clues concerning the working of angels, at least of Michael and (by inference) of Gabriel. Reference is made to their activities, but little is said about the specifics of how they work.

Two years earlier (Ezra 1:1), Cyrus had issued the decree allowing the captives to return to Jerusalem. It may have been at this time that the enemies of the Jewish people began to interfere with the rebuilding work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:4-5). Such a struggle for the Jews could have been the cause of Daniel’s mourning and fasting “for three entire weeks” (Dan 10:2-3).

Daniel referred to himself in the third person as saying, “...a message was revealed to Daniel...and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision” (10:1). For “one of great conflict,” the NIV has “it concerned a great war.” While the KJV suggests no particular conflict, the evidence points toward a conflict or warfare that was about to come.

After Daniel fasted for three weeks, he was by the bank of the Tigris River, where he saw a “certain man” (10:5). While the description of the man given in verse 5 and 6 is very much like John’s description of the “one like a son of man” in Revelation 1:12-16. In this context, the language is intended to show the splendor of the one who appeared to Daniel.

Just as Saul (Paul) alone saw the Lord in his vision in Acts 9, “Daniel, alone, saw the vision” (10:7a) Even though no one else saw the vision, something happened on this occasion frightened the men who were with Daniel (10:7b). Verse 8 and 9 reveal that when the man in the vision spoke, Daniel was so frightened that apparently, he fainted.

The man in the vision began with an encouraging message for Daniel, announcing that he was highly esteemed. He explained that he had been sent to answer his prayers.

A pattern appears here for the comforting of Daniel. In verse 10, he was touched and lifted; in verse 16, he was touched and enabled to speak; and in verse 18, he was touched and strengthened. In verse 12 and 19, Daniel was told not to be afraid, in part because he was “of high esteem” (10:11, 19).

A loving relationship with the Lord was the basis for Daniel’s being sustained and strengthened. John wrote, “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). When a man loves God, he is not afraid of what He says to him—even if he does not like what He tells him. Just as Daniel responded, “May my lord speak” (10:19), we can open the Scriptures and allow God to speak to us.

The man told Daniel, “...from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard...” (10:12). Prayers are answered. According to verses 2 and 3, Daniel could have been praying for three weeks for a better understanding of the vision he had seen. Later in the chapter, there is an explanation, in part, as to why the direct answer to Daniel’s prayer had been so long coming (see 10:13, 20, 21).

Daniel was informed by the messenger, “I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days” (10:14). If one reads the expression “latter days” with a Christian perspective, he will apply this vision to the Christian age. He may even apply the whole interpretation of the vision to the Christian Era, culminating either in the end of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or in the end of the world and the judgment by God for eternity. In light of the reference in Hebrews, it is certainly proper for Christians to refer to the current times as the “last days” or “latter days.” However, that does not necessarily mean that the term was perceived in such a fashion. Daniel referred to previous visions in chapter 8 and 9 regarding the future history of his people. Any interpretation of those visions must include events surrounding the history of the Greek Empire and its divisions after the death of Alexander the Great—specifically the Syrian (Seleucid) and Egyptian (Ptolemaic) kingdoms, which are key nations in the events of Chapter 11. Perhaps the events described in the vision should be seen as a “type” for the eventual “antitype”—the suffering of God’s people. His overthrow of their tormentors, and His execution of judgment upon His enemies.

The announcement that the vision pertained to days “yet future” apparently dismayed Daniel (10:15), but one resembling a man, possibly Gabriel, touched and encouraged Daniel (10:16-19). No indication is given of whether this was the same individual who had appeared to him in verse 5 and 6 or was someone altogether different.

Having been strengthened, Daniel was able to begin understanding the vision. Actually, next little section goes through 11:1. The inspired writers of the Scriptures did not give

chapter and verse divisions. That numbering system was a later invention for our convenience. Sometimes the arbitrary divisions fall in inappropriate places, and this is one such case. The message for Daniel at this point was a repetition of the reason for the angel's delay in granting understanding (see 10:12-14).

The vision concerned two kingdoms. First, the angel would go and fight against the prince of Persia. The Medo-Persian Empire existed for a little more than two centuries (539-331 B.C.). Daniel 11:1, 2 briefly discusses the history of future Persian kings. What relevance would this conflict between the angel and "the prince of Persia" have for God's people?

Second, the angel would deal with the prince of Greece who would come in the future. Daniel 11:3-45 discusses the Greek Empire (331-168 B.C.) in much more detail. In this case, the Jews would return to the Promised Land and would be located in the middle of the conflicts between the Seleucids in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt. Moreover, they would be persecuted by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

This chapter concludes with the angel saying, "Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince." The phrase "Michael your prince" opens the possibility that this archangel had special responsibilities over the nation of Israel. In Daniel 12:1, it is said that Michael would protect the people of Israel during their time of struggle with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In Revelation 12:7-12, the war in heaven was led by Michael, who along with his angels, expelled Satan (when Christ made atonement for the sins of the world and was exalted to the throne of God).

Chapter 11--Understanding of the Vision

Chapters 10 through 12 are a unit. They relate in through to the visions recorded in chapter 8 and 9. Regardless of how the words spoken to Daniel by this messenger may be interpreted, it is only reasonable to understand them in view of the previous visions.

In the vision of chapter 8, Daniel saw two great beasts: a ram and a goat. The goat had one great horn broken off, and four other horns replaced it. From one of these four horns came a king (or a kingdom) whose power was used against the people of God until he was broken off “without human agency: (8:25). The two beasts of chapter 8, the ram and the goat, correspond to the second and third beasts of Daniel’s vision in chapter 7, the bear and the winged leopard. Further, they correspond to the second and third parts of the statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, the chest and arms of silver and the belly and thighs of bronze. In each case, it is clear that these images represent the Medo-Persian and the Greek Empires.

Both for consistency and the integrity of the Scriptures, the understanding of this passage cannot begin with the prophetic future beyond the time of the beasts and the four horns. Rather, we should look first at the time of the kingdoms represented by these beasts.

In addition, it is necessary to keep in mind that prophetic writers did not necessarily record sequential pictures of future events. Sometimes they wrote of events which would occur at the same time, but not one after the other. Obviously, they could not describe two events at exactly the same moment, so they would tell about one, then tell about another. If one always attempts to view the events in prophetic literature—especially apocalyptic literature—as events occurring in sequence, he risks misinterpreting the passage.

Various interpretations of these last passages in Daniel indicate that Daniel anticipated one of the following: (1) the beginning of the Christian Era, (2) the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, (3) the coming of the papacy and the apostate church, (4) the establishment and the breaking up of the Ottoman Empire, (5) the establishment of the modern political state of Israel, or even (6) the second coming of Christ.

God was not concerned with detailed, biographical summation of all the kings of the Persian Empire, but only the connections that affected the history of the Jews. After speaking of four Persian kings (11:2), the angel spoke of a “might king” who would arise (11:3), which is a reference to Alexander the Great. It is proven both from history and previous information in Daniel that Alexander’s empire was ultimately divided among

four of his generals. The two kings (and kingdoms) of primary concern in Daniel are Seleucus I Nicator, who ruled Syria, and Ptolemy I Soter, who ruled Egypt. Their two nations bordered Palestine and therefore had the most impact on Israel.

The “King of the South” introduced in verse 5 is a reference to Ptolemy I Soter. The prince mentioned in verse 5 is the Syrian Seleucus I Nicator. In verse 6, the angel said that these enemies, Egypt and Syria, would “form an alliance,” which occurred when Berenice, the daughter of the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy II Philadelphus, married Antiochus II Theos, the king of Syria. Antiochus II divorced his first wife Laodice, who later took her revenge by poisoning Antiochus II, Berenice, and their son. Her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus, then gained the throne of Syria. This series of events led Ptolemy III Euergetes I of Egypt, the brother of Berenice, to invade Syria to avenge his sister’s death. Verse 9 relates how Syria would invade Egyptian territory unsuccessfully, and would afterward return to the north.

In verse 10, Daniel was told that Antiochus III (known as Antiochus the Great; the son of Seleucus II) would invade Egypt and would be opposed by Ptolemy IV Philopator. This Ptolemy eventually defeated Syria in 217 b.C. Verse 13 describes how Antiochus III, with a greater army than before, would again invade Egypt.

Because of the invasion of Egypt by Antiochus III the Great, the Jews revolted against Ptolemy V and allied themselves with the Syrians. During this campaign, Antiochus III captured Sidon (11:15), giving him complete control of Palestine (“the Beautiful Land”).

Apparently tired of so much fighting, Antiochus III gave Cleopatra I in marriage to Ptolemy V of Egypt, perhaps hoping to weaken the Egyptians by her serving as a spy among them (11:17). However, she was loyal to her husband. Antiochus III then turned his attention to conquering several islands along the coast of Asia Minor (11:18). He also attempted an invasion of Greece but was defeated by the Romans in 190 B.C. At this point in time, Antiochus III was confronted with a revolt in Syria. He fled eastward to recapture his capital and later died, fulfilling the statement of verse 19, “He will stumble and fall and be found no more.”

In these words the angel gave the prophet a characterization of the man who would bring much grief to Israel. Verse 21 identifies him as “despicable,” and one upon whom the kingdom had not been “conferred.” Instead, he would seize it by ‘trickery.’ All of which is to say that Antiochus IV engaged in a conspiracy to seize a kingdom not rightfully his. Verse 22, with its somewhat strange expressions “overflowing” and “flooded,” conveys that Antiochus IV would go about consolidating his power through ruthless maneuverings.

Verses 23 through 26 narrate the conquest of Judea by Antiochus IV through the lens of prophecy. Verse 25 relates that eventually, Antiochus IV openly challenged the military might of Egypt. Previously, he had used stealth and conspiracy to gain his ends, probably not acting openly; now, his ego caused him to be open. He made preparation to go to war with Egypt, which he did in A.D. 169.

The last part of verse 25 and verse 26 show the success of Antiochus IV against Egypt under Ptolemy VI Philometor. After defeating Egypt, he displayed his liberality, his accomplishments, and his power. On one occasion, he gave a “parade” in which were 45,000 troops trimmed with gold and silver; 140 chariots pulled by horses and elephants; 36 additional elephants; 1,300 cattle; 600 slaves; and 780 women, 200 of them sprinkling perfumes on the spectators. Sometimes he walked through the streets tossing handfuls of money to watch people scramble for it.

Having defeated Egypt, Antiochus IV negotiated with Ptolemy VI Philometor. In the way of evil men, both tried to gain by negotiation what they could not apparently gain on his advantage in Egypt that time, so he returned to Syria. However, as he returned, he went by way of Judea. He attacked Jerusalem and looted the temple.

The angel announced to Daniel, “But this last time it will not turn out the way it did before” (11:29). When Antiochus IV waged war against Egypt yet again, on the verge of another conquest, the Romans interfered. Their navy positioned itself at the mouth of the Nile, and Antiochus IV was forced to withdraw from Egypt. He acted like a spoiled child, venting his fury upon the Jews (11:30-35). He assaulted Jerusalem, killing some forty thousand people and capturing as many more, sending them into slavery. After this, he erected an altar to Zeus in the temple and sacrificed swine, thus defiling the altar and the temple. This desecration of the temple is referred to as the “abomination of desolation” in 11:31.

The history of the Jews is interwoven throughout this prophecy. Their territory lay between two warring empires. Every time one invaded the other, their armies passed through Israel. Most of us can only imagine the suffering a nation endures when foreign armies are marching through its territory, regardless of whose side the nation may support. Many of the Jews finally chose to support what they supposed to be the “winning side” (Syria). In so doing, they betrayed both their nation and their faith (11:32).

God always leaves Himself a remnant. In this situation, some faithful Jews would be persecuted to death (11:33). However, the angel told Daniel that “the appointed time” was still to come (11:35).

The importance in this chapter of the use of “time” and “appointed time” should not be missed. This seems to be God’s way of assuring His people that none of the tragedies they suffer are strictly by accident, but are rather a part of God’s predetermined plan to accomplish His purposes. In view of what is still to be revealed, the faithful then, needed such reassurance. **Those of the age of Christ must also remember that God is in control, even when it appears no one is.**

Verse 31. Three phrases carry significant importance:

- 1) To desecrate the sanctuary fortress depicts robbing the sanctuary of its treasures and vessels. The looting of the temple had already occurred, but verse 31 indicates that more of it would take place. The house of the Lord was also profaned in other ways.
- 2) To do away with the regular sacrifice means to ban the daily offerings made by the priests at the altar of burnt offering. In 168 B.C., the suppression of all Jewish practices began. Jews were forbidden to practice circumcision, possess Scripture, offer sacrifices, and observe feast days. If they did not comply, they would receive the penalty of death.
- 3) To set up the abomination of desolation refers to December 15, 168 B.C., when an altar devoted to Zeus was erected in the temple. On December 25, the heathens sacrifice a pig on the altar and in this way desecrated the temple. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus used the language of Daniel 11:31 when He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, these words had their ultimate fulfillment in A.D. 70, when Rome destroyed the temple, ending the Jewish sacrificial system.

Beginning at verse 36, the difficulty in understanding Daniel’s vision increases. Some have seen a transition to Roman power in this part of the vision. Others, not seeing such an emphasis on Rome, still see a transition; but they do not believe that the descriptions in 11:36-45 are still referring to Antiochus IV.

The exaltation of “the king” in verse 36 is a reasonably simple declaration that Antiochus IV would set himself up against God, God’s people, and their religious observances. Having sacked Egypt, Antiochus IV dedicated the spoils of war—gold, silver, and other treasures—to his new god (either a reference to himself or to Zeus). Antiochus IV, representing all that is the worst in political trickery, had a long history of bribery and conspiracy, among his people and the Egyptians. So it was the case with some of the Jews; many sold out to Antiochus IV, betraying their own (Hanukkah) was established to commemorate the event.

Beginning with verse 40, a new problem of interpretation arises. Is this a sequential event (that is, an occurrence after the events of verses 36 through 39), or is this a depiction of the same events mentioned from verse 25 through verse 39, from another

point of view? Considering the number of visions in Daniel which are parallel accounts, the idea of a different perspective on the same events seems a valid consideration.

Throughout chapter 11, the “King of the North” has referred to Syria, the Seleucid dynasty, and, in more recent verses, Antiochus IV. The “King of the South” has referred to the Ptolemies of Egypt. No reasonable answer has surfaced as to why the reference here should now refer to entirely different characters and countries.

Chapter 12—The End of Daniel’s Prophecy

The last chapter concludes the revelation that was started in chapter 10. The message of the angel continues without a break through verse 4. Two questions were then asked. Once was by another heavenly messenger. “How long...?” (12:6); and another was by Daniel “what will be the outcome...?” (12:8). These questions prompted “the man dressed in linen” to speak further in 12:7 and even further in 12:9-12. Daniel was told to go on with his word for the Lord “to the end,” for the Lord would reward him for his faithfulness (12:13).

Michael, the angel named in verse 1, was traditionally believed to be the guardian angels of the Jews (10:21). It is difficult to identify or examine the roles of angels in the lives of God’s people. To a large degree, the servant of the Lord accepts by faith that they have such roles.

The angel, Michael, “will arise. And there will be a time of distress” (12:1). This statement has been applied in at least three different ways. (1) It has its fulfillment in the persecution of Antiochus IV. (2) It could be fulfilled in the events of A.d. 70, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Jesus in Matthew 24:21 associated this time of distress with the destruction of the state of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in A.D 70. (3) Because of the language of verse 2, some see that the “time of distress” is the destruction of the world at the second coming of Christ. It is possible that verse 1 has multiple applications. God prophetic writings, resulting in a dual prophecy.

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life...” (12:2). Ultimately, the truth of God’s Word will be proven by the resurrection to everlasting life, but is that the primary focus of “at that time”?

Daniel’s prayers concerning the restoration of the people were inspired by his reading Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the “seventy years” (9:2). He knew that time to be fast approaching. It was then that a messenger of God appeared to interpret the vision he had seen, to explain to Daniel that the ultimate triumph of God’s people would not rest in the temporary return to Jerusalem and the God had in mind something far superior for them. Nonetheless, God did restore the people; and they, in turn, experienced more disasters. Therefore, these first four verses refer, first of all, to “that time.”

Interestingly, in Ezekiel 37:12, 13 (the resurrection of the “dry bones”), the vision of Ezekiel represented the return of Israel to their land. “I will open your graves.” It seems reasonable that Daniel’s vision could be understood to mean the same thing here. “Those who sleep” must refer to “your people” (specifically the Jews), and “these to everlasting life” refers to the same ones. “Others to disgrace and everlasting contempt”

also refers back to “your people.” However, the names of these individuals are not written in the book. They are sentenced to “everlasting contempt.” A sense of disgrace falls upon anyone who does not remain loyal to a nation, a cause, or a vow. The name Judas, for example, reminds us of how history judges those “others” who do not stay the course and remain faithful.

Certainly, those who have been faithful to God in any era, from the days of Genesis to the end of time, will be delivered (rescued) from death to everlasting life. Those who have committed evil deeds will face a resurrection of judgment (Jn 5:28, 29). The promise of resurrection to everlasting life is the reward to the faithful, especially those who have been martyred for their faith (Rev 2:10).

“Those who lead the many to righteousness” seems to be a reference to any who have led others to walk in the light of the Lord. These will “shine...like the stars” because they demonstrate the light of their Lord, the Light that cannot be overcome by darkness (Jn 1:5).

Daniel was told that this was the end of the revelation to him (12:40). He was told to “Seal up the book until the end of time.” The prophet was to preserve the message, which would be fulfilled in the distant future.

Verse 2—Premillennialists use this resurrection language to bolster a theory, which moves from the Antichrist (11:36-45) to Armageddon (12:1) to the final judgment (12:2). Nevertheless, even if the final judgment is under consideration in verse 2, it in no way proves their previous contentions.

A difference is drawn in 12:10 between the understanding (and apparently the result) of the wicked and the “refined” who have been “purified.” A similar statement was made to John at still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy (Rev 22:11).

The idea seems to be that one is to remain faithful regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself; and that those who are in rebellion against God, at least for the most part, will continue in rebellion, going further and further from God’s truth and law. Certainly, this was the condition of the people throughout the time of the prophets in the Old Testament.