

# Daniel

## Introduction

### Overview

#### Author:

Daniel

#### Purpose:

- To prepare the king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar to receive the bad news of chapter 4 by building confidence in the reliability and truthfulness of Daniel's prophecies and the omnipotence of his God in the preceding chapters.
- Reassure the Israelites (captives and first returnees to the Land) that God is in control of history and that His prophet Daniel was telling the truth when he spoke of a prolonged period of oppression before the final phase of God's kingdom.
- To prepare the generations of the distant future for the persecution that will await them in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- To prepare believers in the even more distant future for the coming of the Messiah in the time of the fourth kingdom.

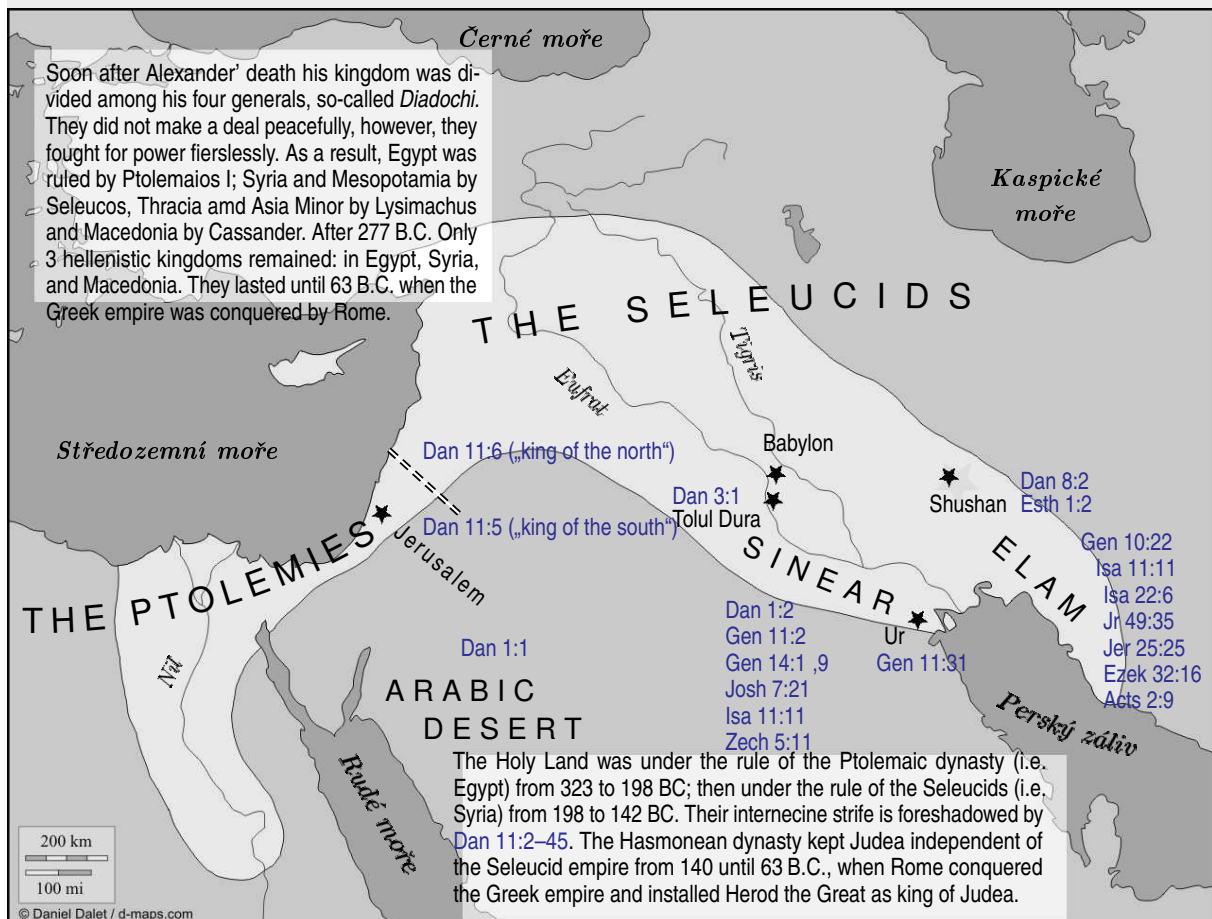
#### Date:

Shortly after 539 B.C.

#### Key truths:

- Daniel and his friends were faithful to God even in exile.
- Daniel can be trusted to tell the truth because he never compromised his faith, even under pressure from his slavers.

### The empires of Daniel's distant visions



- God is the absolute ruler of all history.
- Israel's slavery is prolonged until a total of four kingdoms (of which Babylon is the first) succeed in dominion over her because God's people have not turned away from their sins.
- Although there is much suffering in Israel's future, God's Anointed, Christ, will one day come to bring salvation.

### Author

The authorship of Daniel is a subject of protracted debate among interpreters. Many scholars date the book's composition between 170 and 165 B.C., during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, long after the lifetime of the prophet Daniel (the so-called Maccabean dating, cf. the article "Who was Darius the Mede?"). This date, however, is contradicted by the book itself, which indicates that Daniel is its principal author (9:2; 10:2) and that it was written shortly after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C. Furthermore, Christ himself explicitly links the book to the prophet Daniel (Matt 24:15).

### Time and place of origin

The dispute over the dating of the book of Daniel involves three basic issues:

1. the nature of the prophecy,
2. the alleged historical errors in Daniel, and
3. the linguistic features of the Hebrew and Aramaic in the book.

Generally speaking, Israel's prophets were primarily concerned with religious and social circumstances affecting themselves and their peers. When the prophets predicted the future, it usually concerned near future events. For this reason, some interpreters are of the opinion that Daniel's vision concerning „king of the north“ and „king of the south“ (11:2–12:3) is too detailed to have been written by Daniel, who lived some 200–300 years before the events depicted in the prophecy.

However, this position denies the supernatural nature of the prophecy, as is the case with the occasional practices of other prophets (e.g., 1Kgs 13:2; Isa 44:28). Although the passage Dan 11:2–12:3 is unusual, it is certainly not impossible that Daniel knew such details; after all, it was to him that God revealed secrets as to no one else (cf. e.g. 2:19–23).

Some advocates of late dating argue historical inaccuracies attributed to the book by Daniel. They question Belshazzar's relationship to Nebuchadnezzar (see note 5:2), as well as the identity of Darius the Mede (see note on 6:1).

In addition, they identify the four kingdoms foretold by Daniel (chs. 2; 7) as Babylon, Medea, Persia, and Greece (including the Seleucids and Ptolemies). However, this identification is problematic because there is no historical evidence for an independent Mede kingdom in the interval between the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia. The Persian king Cyrus (550–530 BC) conquered Medea in 549 BC and Babylon in 539 BC (see notes 5:1 and 5:31).

Advocates of the early dating of the book understand the four kingdoms sequence to predict Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This view is supported by the allusion to the „Medes and Persians“ in 5:28, which shows that the author considered both nations to be parts of one kingdom.

Supporters of the late date argue that several terms borrowed from Greek to refer to musical instruments occur in the text (see note 3:5), as do late Hebrew and Aramaic terms (see note 2:4). None of these arguments, however, is convincing. There is abundant evidence of contact between the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East before the time of Alexander the Great. These are quite sufficient to explain the existence of a minimal number of words taken from Greek before Alexander's conquest.

The original names of musical instruments commonly accompany their bearers without a corresponding equivalent in the local language; compare today's Czech untranslated terminology associated with musical instruments: „gibson“, „jumbo“, „stratocaster“, „telecaster“, „Les Paul“, „stage piano“, „hohner“, „humbucker“, „single-coil“,

etc. On the contrary: Proponents of Maccabean dating have trouble explaining the complete absence of terms adopted from Greek, *outside* musical terminology. If the book had been written under Greek rule, commercial, military, political, administrative, etc. terminology would have been rife with Greek terms. But there is nothing of the sort in the book.

The Aramaic and Hebrew of the book of Daniel can be dated anywhere between the late sixth and early second centuries B.C. In other words, the linguistic evidence does not give much weight to either aspect: neither late nor early dating.

The argument for a second-century B.C. date is at odds with the biblical claim regarding the date and authorship of the book of Daniel, and the late dating does not demonstrate the late dating convincingly enough. A date shortly after 539 B.C. (see 1:21) best fits the nature of the prophecy, the historical dates, and the language of the text.

### **Purpose and Distinctiveness**

Daniel contains two different types of material. In the first six chapters there are six historical narratives; in the second half (chapters 7–12) there are four visions, almost exclusively predictive. Among the six narratives of the first half, chapter 2 stands out because it also contains a prediction.

An examination of the content of the historical narratives shows that they are independent wholes, pieced together with a purpose. The narrative offers neither a history of Israel under Babylonian or Persian rule nor a biographical account of Daniel and his friends. It has two main emphases.

On the one hand, the stories show how God's absolute sovereignty extends into the affairs of all nations (2:47; 3:17–18; 4:28–37; 5:18–31 6:25–28). Jerusalem was in ruins, God's people in captivity, and wicked rulers seemed to triumph, but God remains sovereign. According to his unwavering will, he enters among the kingdoms of this world to establish a universal kingdom of which there will never be an end.

Although all nations have believed that deities are territorial, that they have power only over the territory where their people dwell (and because they want to rule the whole world, their people must conquer other territories for themselves and establish their religion there), the experience of the Israelites in captivity shows that their Lord is not limited in any way, not even territorially; He is Lord over the whole earth, including the deities of other nations. And that he does not abandon his people wherever they go. Sometime around that time, the idea began to emerge that since the sacred is not a place on earth where God dwells apart from other places, then time will be sacred. And the holidays on the calendar began to take on importance.

The visions of chapters 7–12 contain predictions of future times during which the truth of the narrative will become more important to God's people. Although the Israelites suffered under the rule of both the Babylonians and the Persians, they did not suffer any widespread and systematic attack on their faith. This did not occur until Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ruler over the Seleucid empire between 175–164 B.C., sought to eradicate the religion of the Jews and force them to conform to Greek religious practices. Many Jews obeyed him, but others resisted and suffered adversity. One of the main reasons for writing the book of Daniel is to prepare God's people for the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and to encourage perseverance in those who would live through the coming times of persecution.

The book also looks beyond the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the coming of Christ who will one day destroy all human empires and establish His eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. All of these events are in view in the prophecies of Daniel. The book has served as a powerful encouragement to God's people suffering oppression and continues to be an inspiration to persecuted believers today.

*One never does evil so fully and gaily, as when one does it through a false principle of conscience.*  
*Blaise Pascal*

## Christ in Daniel

Daniel's focus on the restoration of Israel after the exile turns the attention to Jesus quite directly. Like some other prophets, Daniel predicted a glorious future for God's people, the fulfillment of which the New Testament is linked to the first and second coming of Christ, as well as to the whole history of the Church.

While much controversy surrounds the details of the fulfillment of Daniel's visions, the basic structure of Daniel's visions leaves no one in doubt that Christ is the fulfillment of the prophet's hopes. This is most clearly seen in the way Jesus refers to Himself as the „Son of Man“ (e.g., [Matt 9:6](#); [10:23](#); [12:8](#)). Daniel used the term in the sense of God's exalted Davidic king, representing God on earth. Jesus, the Messiah, is the ultimate Davidic King; only he fulfills the predictions of the Son of Man in Daniel's visions (see [notes on 7:13](#) and [7:14](#); see the theological article [Kingdom of God Mt 4](#)).

In addition, Daniel learned in chapter 9 that Jeremiah's prediction of 70 years of exile would be extended to „seventy weeks“ years ([9:24](#)), or about 490 years. This prediction reaches its initial fulfillment at Christ's first coming. The delay corresponds to the series of four foreign empires that will oppress God's people ([2:1–49](#)) and to the rock that became „a great mountain that filled the whole earth“ ([2:35](#)), which Daniel refers to as „a kingdom that will not be destroyed“ ([2:44](#)). This is the kingdom of Christ, which was inaugurated by His first coming, continues and grows to this day, and will reach its consummation at Christ's glorious return (see the theological articles [The Kingdom of God Mt 4](#) and [The Plan of the Ages Heb 7](#).)

Daniel foresaw other, even more concrete events that have come to the fore again in the New Testament. For example, Jesus refers to Daniel's prediction of „exact abomination“ (see [note on 9:27](#); [11:31](#); [12:11](#)), which originally pointed to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Greece (see [Introduction: Intent and Peculiarities](#)) as a foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus in 70 CE (see [notes on Mt 24:15](#) and [Mk 13:14](#)).

Most Christians associate this typology with Antichrist, whose spirit is already at work in the world (see [notes on 1Jn 2:18](#)) and will appear in fullness, apparently as a specific person, near Christ's return (see [notes on 2Te 2:3](#)).

## Outline

### I. Narration ([1:1–6:28](#))

- A. The loyalty of Daniel and his friends ([1:1–21](#))
- B. ([2:1–49](#))
- C. Deliverance from the fiery furnace ([3:1–30](#))
- D. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream ([4:1–37](#))
- E. The Judgment of Belsazar ([5:1–31](#))
- F. Deliverance from the lion's den ([6:1–28](#))

*The stories of Daniel and his friends illustrate both their loyalty to God and his supremacy over all nations.*

### II. Vision ([7:1–12:13](#))

- A. Vision of the Four beasts ([7:1–28](#))
- B. The vision of the ram and the goat ([8:1–27](#)).
- C. Vision of the seventy weeks ([9:1–27](#))
- D. Vision of the future of God's people ([10:1–12:13](#))
  - 1. The angel's message to Daniel ([10:1–11:1](#))
  - 2. From Daniel to Antiochus IV Epiphanes ([11:21–12:3](#))

*Daniel's visions of the future of God's people, looking back to the long after the end of the exile. God revealed to Daniel that the four great kingdoms would dominate and persecute Israel. At the time of the fourth of these, God will set up His kingdom, of which there will be no end.*



*You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first.*  
C. S. Lewis

### 3. Final message to Daniel (12:4–13)

the temple of his god. Marduk was the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon (cf. Jer 50:2).

## Four Young Israelites at the Babylonian Court

**1** In the third year of the rule of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem, shutting it in with his forces. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord gave into his hands Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he took them away into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he put the vessels into the store-house of his god.

<sup>3</sup> And the king gave orders to Ashpenaz, the captain of his unsexed servants, to take in some of the children of Israel, certain of the king's family, and those of high birth; <sup>4</sup> Young men who were strong and healthy, good-looking, and trained in all wisdom, having a good education and much knowledge, and able to take positions in the king's house; and to have them trained in the writing and language of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup> And a regular amount of food and wine every day from the king's table was ordered for them by the king; and they were to be cared for for three years so that at the end of that time they might take their places before the king.

<sup>6</sup> And among these there were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>7</sup> And the captain of the unsexed servants gave them names; to Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar, to Hananiah the name of Shadrach, to Mishael the name of Meshach, and to Azariah the name of Abed-nego.

<sup>8</sup> And Daniel had come to the decision that he would not make himself unclean with the king's food or wine; so he made a request to the captain of the unsexed servants that he might

**1:1–21** *Vindication of Daniel and His Friends.* The prophet set the context of his book by narrating his (and his companions') personal history of captivity, training, faithfulness and service to King Nebuchadnezzar. **1:1–6:28** *The Narratives.* This first section of the book highlights both God's absolute control over the kingdoms of this world and the sincere devotion that Daniel and his friends offered to God. Daniel wanted his readers to learn that although God's people are sometimes persecuted, kings and kingdoms rise and fall according to God's purpose. Daniel also taught that God would greatly bless those who paid attention to him as God's faithful spokesman. This material divides into six separate narratives: the vindication of Daniel and his friends (1:1–21), Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49), deliverance from the furnace (3:1–30), Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (4:1–37), judgment on Belshazzar (5:1–31) and Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions (6:1–28).

**1:1** In the third year of the rule of Jehoiakim. In 605 B.C., the same year Nebuchadnezzar defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish and initiated Babylon's rise to international power. Subsequent to victory at Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jehoiakim (2Ki 24:1–2; 2Ch 36:5–7) and took Daniel and a number of other Judahites captive. This was the first of three invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The second was in 597 B.C. (2Ki 24:10–14) and the third in 587 B.C. (2Ki 25:1–24). The apparent discrepancy between Dan 1:1 and Jer 25:1 and 46:2 (where Jeremiah placed Nebuchadnezzar's attack against Jehoiakim during Jehoiakim's fourth rather than third year) may be explained by the difference between the Babylonian and Jewish systems of chronology. Under the Babylonian system, which Daniel apparently used, the first year of a king's reign was viewed as an "accession year," and the reign itself was counted as beginning on the first of the month of Nisan in the following year. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians to victory at Carchemish in 605 B.C. as crown prince and commander of the army. Shortly after this victory he assumed the Babylonian throne upon the death of his father, Nabopolassar (626–605 B.C.). Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605–562 B.C.) forms the historical background for much in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

**1:2** And the Lord gave into his hands. Israel's defeat by the Babylo-

nians is not to be explained simply by analysis of the military and political conditions of the time. God was sovereignly at work in the affairs of the nations. He used the Babylonians to judge his own people' breaking their covenant obligations (2Ki 17:15, 18–20; 21:12–15 24:3–4).

**He took them away.** Refers to the plunder of vessels from the temple, not to the deportation of captives.

**1:4** The writing and language of the Chaldeans. Babylonian literature was written in cuneiform and primarily on clay tablets. Thousands of these tablets have been discovered. Study of this literature would have introduced Daniel and his friends to the polytheistic worldview of the Babylonians, which prominently featured magic, sorcery and astrology.

**1:5** From the king's table. Jehoiachin later received the same provision under the rule of the Babylonian king Evil-Merodach (2Ki 25:27–30).

**1:6** Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Characteristic Hebrew names. Two of them contain the Hebrew component *el*, meaning "God," and two the component *yah*, a shortened form of "Yahweh" ("the LORD"). Daniel means "My judge is God," Hananiah "Yahweh is gracious," Mishael "Who is what God is?" and Azariah "Yahweh has helped."

**1:7** Belteshazzar ... Shadrach ... Meshach ... Abednego. The meanings of these names are disputed. Suggestions for Belteshazzar: "Bel [another name for Marduk, the chief Babylonian god] protect his life" or "Lady, protect the king." Shadrach: "I am very fearful (of God)" or "The command of Aku [the Sumerian moon god]." Meshach: "I am of little account" or "Who is what Aku is?" Abednego: "Servant of the shining one."

**1:8** He would not make himself unclean. The reason for Daniel's conclusion that the king's food would defile him and his friends is not given. Perhaps eating it involved violation of the dietary laws of the Mosaic legislation (Lev 11:1–47), which prohibited eating pork or meat from which blood had not been drained (Lev 17:10–14). It may also have involved partaking of food that had been offered to Babylonian idols.

not make himself unclean. <sup>9</sup> And God put into the heart of the captain of the unsexed servants kind feelings and pity for Daniel. <sup>10</sup> And the captain of the unsexed servants said to Daniel, I am in fear of my lord the king, who has given orders about your food and your drink; what if he sees you looking less happy than the other young men of your generation? then you would have put my head in danger from the king. <sup>11</sup> Then Daniel said to the keeper in whose care the captain of the unsexed servants had put Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: <sup>12</sup> Put your servants to the test for ten days; let them give us grain for our food and water for our drink. <sup>13</sup> Then take a look at our faces and the faces of the young men who have food from the king's table; and, having seen them, do to your servants as it seems right to you. <sup>14</sup> So he gave ear to them in this thing and put them to the test for ten days.

<sup>15</sup> And at the end of ten days **their faces seemed fairer and they were fatter in flesh** than all the young men who had their food from the king's table. <sup>16</sup> So the keeper regularly took away their meat and the wine which was to have been their drink, and gave them grain.

<sup>17</sup> Now as for these four young men, **God gave them knowledge and made them expert in all book-learning and wisdom**: and Daniel was wise in all visions and dreams. <sup>18</sup> Now **at the end of the time fixed by the king** for them to go in, the captain of the unsexed servants took them in to Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> And the king had talk with them; and among them all there was no one like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; so they were given places before the king. <sup>20</sup> And in any business needing wisdom and good sense, about which the king put questions to them, he saw that they were ten times better than all the **wonder-workers and users of secret arts** in all his kingdom. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel went **on till the first year of King Cyrus**.

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

**2** **In the second year** of the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and **his spirit was troubled and his sleep went from him**. <sup>2</sup> Then the king gave orders that **the wonder-workers, and the users of secret arts, and those who made use of evil powers, and the Chaldaeans**, were to be sent for to make clear to the king his dreams. So they came and took their places before the king. <sup>3</sup> And the king said to them, I have had a dream, and my spirit is troubled by the desire to have the dream made clear to me. <sup>4</sup> Then the Chaldaeans said to the king in the **Aramaean** language, O King, have life for ever: give your servants an account of your dream, and we will make clear to you the sense of it. <sup>5</sup> The king made answer and said to

**1:15 Their faces seemed fairer and they were fatter in flesh.** God blessed Daniel and his friends for their obedience to the Lord and their refusal to compromise their faith in a heathen environment (**Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4**).

**1:17 God gave them knowledge and made them expert in all book-learning and wisdom.** God's blessing was not limited to physical well-being but included outstanding success in intellectual development during their three years of Babylonian education. visions and dreams of all kinds. With a view to what follows in the book (chs. 2; 4-5) Daniel was distinguished from his companions by his ability to interpret dreams and visions, much as Joseph had been set apart by the same in the court of Pharaoh (**Ge 40:8; 41:16**).

**1:18 At the end of the time fixed by the king.** After the three years mentioned in **verse 5**.

**1:20 Wonder-workers and users of secret arts.** The term here translated "magician" is also used in **Ge 41:8** and **24** and **Ex 7:11**. The term translated "enchanters" occurs only here and in **2:2** and is sometimes rendered "conjurer" or "soothsayer." Daniel and his friends demonstrated superior insight on the matters about which they were questioned.

**1:21 On till the first year of King Cyrus.** Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon. Daniel lived through the entire period of the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus issued a decree in the first year of his reign that permitted the Israelites to return from captivity and to take with them the vessels from the temple that had been seized by Nebuchadnezzar (**Ezr 1:7-11**). The statement does not signify that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus's reign (**10:1**).

**2:1-49 Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream.** While in the service of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel interpreted the king's dream, revealing that Daniel

was greatly blessed by God and that God was moving history toward the establishment of his kingdom.

**2:1 In the second year.** There is no contradiction between this statement and the completion of the three-year period of training for Daniel and his friends mentioned in **1:5** and **18-20** if one understands that the first year of training was considered Nebuchadnezzar's "accession year," while the second and third years would correspond with the "first" and "second" years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It was during Nebuchadnezzar's second year, according to the Babylonian system of accession-year dating, that the dream occurred (see **note on 1:1**).

**His spirit was troubled and his sleep went from him.** It was widely believed in the ancient Near East that the gods spoke to human beings in dreams. Nebuchadnezzar's agitation is understandable because the dream had implications for the future of his kingdom. When a dream could not be remembered, it was believed to be a sign that the deity was angry with the person involved.

**2:2 The wonder-workers, and the users of secret arts.** See **note on 1:20**.

**Those who made use of evil powers.** Practitioners of divination through means such as witchcraft. Their activities were prohibited by God (**Ex 22:18; Dt 18:10; Isa 47:9, 12; Jer 27:9**).

**Chaldaeans.** This term translates the Hebrew term for Chaldeans; it is probably used here as a designation for a class of soothsayers concerned with astrology rather than as a designation for an ethnic group. See **1:4; 3:8; 5:30; 9:1** and NIV text notes.

**2:4 Aramaean.** From here until the end of chapter 7 the text is written in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew (**Ezr 4:8-6:18** was also written in Aramaic). It is not clear why the two languages were used, but Aramaic may have been used for the sections containing prophecies that would have been of more interest to non-Jews.

the Chaldeans, This is my decision: **if you do not make clear to me the dream and the sense of it**, you will be cut in bits and your houses made waste. <sup>6</sup> But if you make clear the dream and the sense of it, you will have from me offerings and rewards and great honour: so make clear to me the dream and the sense of it.

<sup>7</sup> A second time they said in answer, Let the king give his servants an account of his dream, and we will make clear the sense. <sup>8</sup> The king made answer and said, I am certain that you are attempting to get more time, because you see that my decision is fixed; <sup>9</sup> That if you do not make my dream clear to me there is only one fate for you: for you have made ready false and evil words to say before me till the times are changed: so give me an account of the dream, and I will be certain that you are able to make the sense of it clear. <sup>10</sup> Then the Chaldeans said to the king in answer, There is not a man on earth able to make clear the king's business; for no king, however great his power, has ever made such a request to any wonder-worker or user of secret arts or Chaldaean. <sup>11</sup> The king's request is a very hard one, and **there is no other who is able to make it clear to the king, but the gods**, whose living-place is not with flesh.

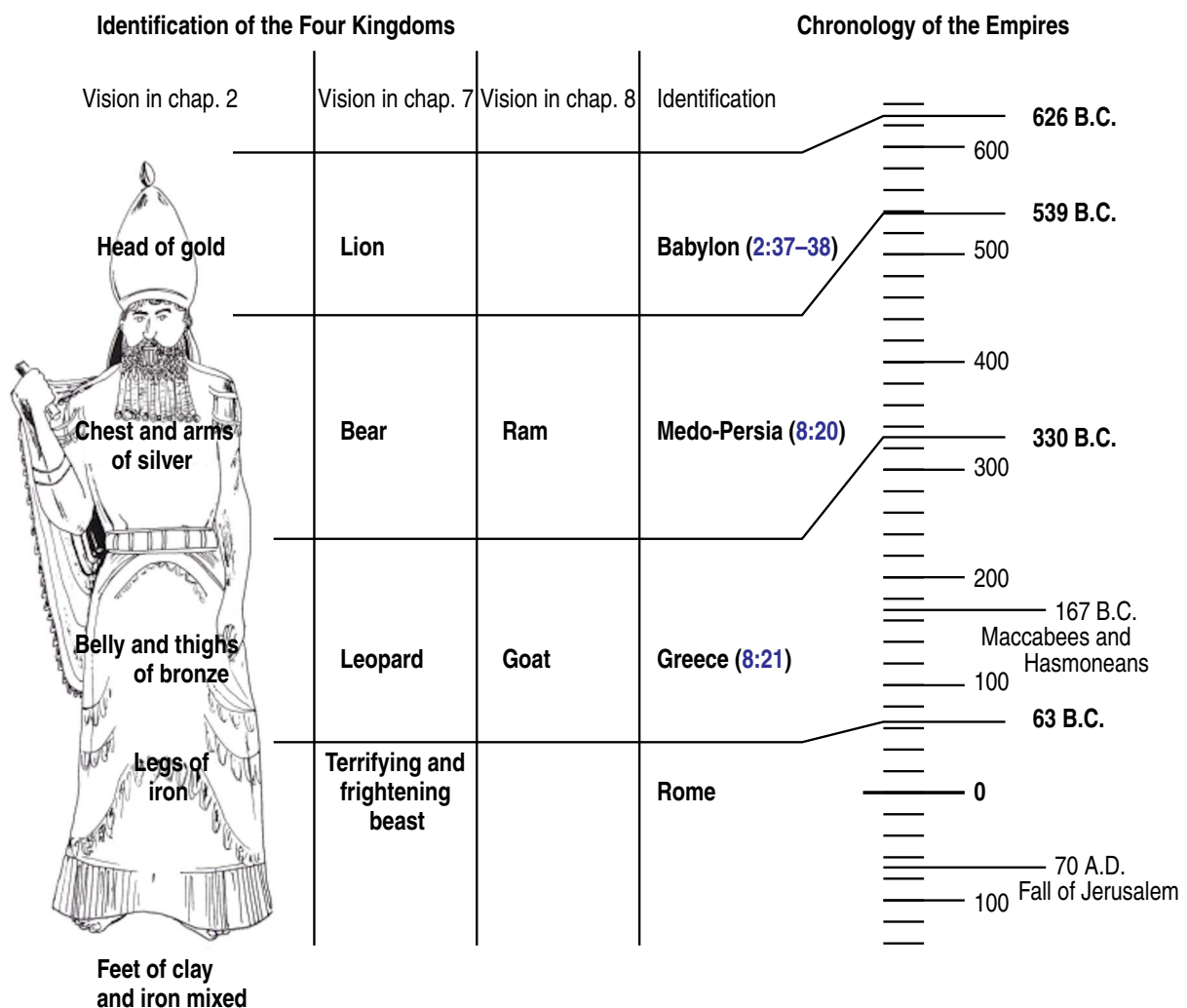
<sup>12</sup> Because of this the king was angry and full of wrath, and gave orders for the destruction of all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>13</sup> So the order went out that the wise men were to be put to death; and they were looking for Daniel and his friends to put them to death. <sup>14</sup> Then Daniel gave an answer with wisdom and good sense to Arioch, the captain of the king's armed men, who

**2:5 If you do not make clear to me the dream and the sense of it.** Nebuchadnezzar formulated a plan for testing his advisors. If they could not relate the dream back to him he would have no confidence in their interpretation (see v. 9).

**but the gods.** The wise men were forced to confess that they were unable to do what the king asked. They claimed that only the gods have such power and that they do not reveal such things to men. See [Exod 8:18–19](#).

**2:11 There is no other who is able to make it clear to the king,**

#### Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms



had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon; <sup>15</sup> He made answer and said to Arioch, O captain of the king, why is the king's order so cruel? Then Arioch gave Daniel an account of the business. <sup>16</sup> And Daniel went in and made a request to the king to give him time and he would make clear the sense of his dream to the king.

### God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

<sup>17</sup> And Daniel went to his house and gave his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah the news: <sup>18</sup> So that they might **make a request for the mercy of the God of heaven in the question of this secret**; so that Daniel and his friends might not come to destruction with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. <sup>19</sup> Then the **secret** was made clear to Daniel in a vision of the night. And Daniel gave blessing to the God of heaven. <sup>20</sup> And Daniel said in answer, May the name of God be praised for ever and ever: for wisdom and strength are his: <sup>21</sup> By him times and years are changed: **by him kings are taken away and kings are lifted up**: he gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those whose minds are awake: <sup>22</sup> **He is the unveiler of deep and secret things**: he has knowledge of what is in the dark, and the light has its living-place with him. <sup>23</sup> **I give you praise and worship, O God of my fathers**, who have given me wisdom and strength, and have now made clear to me what we were requesting from you: for you have given us knowledge of the king's business.

### Daniel Interprets the Dream

<sup>24</sup> For this reason Daniel went to Arioch, to whom the king had given orders for the destruction of the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, Do not put to death the wise men of Babylon: take me in before the king and **I will make clear to him the sense of the dream**. <sup>25</sup> Then Arioch quickly took Daniel in before the king, and said to him, Here is a man from among the prisoners of Judah, who will make clear to the king the sense of the dream. <sup>26</sup> The king made answer and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to make clear to me the dream which I saw and its sense? <sup>27</sup> Then Daniel said in answer to the king, No wise men, or users of secret arts, or wonder-workers, or readers of signs, are able to make clear to the king the secret he is searching for; <sup>28</sup> But **there is a God in heaven, the unveiler of secrets**, and he has given to King Nebuchadnezzar knowledge of what will take place in the last days. Your dreams and the visions of your head on your bed are these:

<sup>29</sup> As for you, O King, the thoughts which came to you on your bed were of what will come about after this: and the unveiler of secrets has made clear to you what is to come. <sup>30</sup> As for me, this secret is not made clear to me because of any wisdom which I have more than any living man, but in order that the sense of the dream may be made clear to the king, and that you may have knowledge of the thoughts of your heart.

<sup>31</sup> You, O King, were looking, and a great image was there. This image, which was very great, and whose glory was very bright, was placed before you: its form sent fear into the heart. <sup>32</sup> As for this image, its **head** was made of the best gold, its breast and its arms were of silver, its middle and its sides were of brass, <sup>33</sup> Its legs of iron, its feet were in part of iron and in part of potter's earth. <sup>34</sup> While you were looking at it, a **stone** was cut out, but not by hands, and it

**2:18 Make a request for the mercy of the God of heaven in the question of this secret.** Daniel also realized that human wisdom was insufficient to meet the king's demand (see [note on 2:11](#)). Daniel addressed God as the ruler of the stars to which the heathen astrologers looked for guidance.

**2:19 Secret.** Here the word denotes an enigma that can be interpreted only by God's revelation. The term was later used by Daniel as a reference to God's hidden purpose at work in history ([4:9](#)).

**2:21 By him kings are taken away and kings are lifted up.** Daniel alluded to the content of the dream. See [BC 36](#).

**2:22 He is the unveiler of deep and secret things.** See [note on 2:11](#).

**2:23 I give you praise and worship, O God of my fathers.** Daniel was deeply grateful for God's mercy in responding to his prayer. The divine revelation he received was in stark contrast to the silence of the false deities of the heathen soothsayers. Only God knows all things and is sovereign over all creation. God chose to exalt Daniel by imparting to him special knowledge.

**2:24 I will make clear to him the sense of the dream.** Daniel spoke here only of the interpretation of the dream. The text assumes that he already knew the content.

**2:28 There is a God in heaven, the unveiler of secrets.** As Joseph had done in Egypt ([Ge 10:8](#); [41:16](#)), Daniel attributed his knowledge

of the dream and its interpretation to divine revelation. God showed himself superior in his ability to reveal secrets and mysteries. in days to come. Literally, "in the after part of the days." This expression can mean "in the end times" or "in the last days," which is the time of restoration after the exile (see [Dt 4:30](#)). The phrase may also simply refer to the general future ([Ge 49:1](#); [Dt 4:30](#); [31:29](#)). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) interprets it here as "in the last days," although it is difficult to determine Daniel's intended usage. The Greek expression is used five times in the New Testament, two with reference to the age begun at Pentecost ([Ac 2:17](#); [Heb 1:2](#)) and three with regard to the end of the age preceding the second advent of Christ ([2Ti 3:1](#); [Jas 5:3](#); [2Pe 3:3](#)).

**2:32-33 Head ... gold, ... breast and arms ... silver, ... middle and sides ... brass, legs ... iron, ... feet in part of iron and in part of potter's earth.** Moving from the head to the feet of the image, there is a decrease in both the value and weight of the materials but a general increase in its strength. The image was clearly too heavy with fragile feet.

**2:34 Stone ...not by hands.** Unlike the kingdoms represented by the statue, this rock would be formed by God himself. In the Old Testament a rock is often associated with kingship; here it is linked to the kingdom



gave the image a blow on its feet, which were of iron and earth, and they were broken in bits.<sup>35</sup> Then the iron and the earth, the brass and the silver and the gold, were smashed together, and became like the dust on the floors where grain is crushed in summer; and the wind took them away so that no sign of them was to be seen: and the stone which gave the image a blow became a great mountain, covering all the earth.<sup>36</sup> This is the dream; and we will make clear to the king the sense of it.<sup>37</sup> You, O King, king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory,<sup>38</sup> Wherever the children of men are living; into whose hands he has given the beasts of the field and the birds of heaven, and has made you ruler over them all, **you are the head of gold.**<sup>39</sup> And after you another kingdom, lower than you, will come to power; and a third kingdom, of brass, ruling over all the earth.<sup>40</sup> And the fourth kingdom will be strong as iron: because, as all things are broken and overcome by iron, so it will have the power of crushing and smashing down all the earth.<sup>41</sup> And as you saw the feet and toes, part of potter's work and part of iron, there will be a division in the kingdom; but there will be some of the strength of iron in it, because you saw the iron mixed with the potter's earth.<sup>42</sup> And as the toes of the feet were in part of iron and in part of earth, so part of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will readily be broken.<sup>43</sup> And as you saw the iron mixed with earth, they will give their daughters to one another as wives: but **they will not be united** one with another, even as iron is not mixed with earth.<sup>44</sup> And **in the days of those kings**, the God of heaven will put up a kingdom which will never come to destruction, and its power will never be given into the hands of another people, and all these kingdoms will be broken and overcome by it, but it will keep its place for ever.<sup>45</sup> Because you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that by it the iron and the brass and the earth and the silver and the gold were broken to bits, a great God has given the king knowledge of what is to take place in the future: the dream is fixed, and its sense is certain.

<sup>46</sup> **Then King Nebuchadnezzar, falling down on his face**, gave worship to Daniel, and gave orders for an offering and spices to be given to him;<sup>47</sup> And the king made answer to Daniel and said, Truly, **your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings**, and an unveiler of secrets, for you have been able to make this secret clear.<sup>48</sup> Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him offerings in great number, and made him **ruler over all the land of Babylon**, and chief over all the wise men of Babylon.<sup>49</sup> And at Daniel's request, the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego authority over the business of the land of Babylon: but Daniel was kept near the king's person.

### Daniel's Friends Are Tested

**3** Nebuchadnezzar the king made **an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide**: he put it up in **the valley of Dura**, in the land of Babylon.<sup>2</sup> And Nebuchadnezzar the king

itself (see 1Co 10:4 and its [note](#)). It is likely that Daniel had in mind the Messiah, the great son of David, who would establish God's kingdom over all of the earth—including the Gentile nations ([v. 35](#))—after the restoration from exile. See theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Matthew 4](#). It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay. Some interpreters view the mixture of iron and clay in the feet of the image as representing a second phase of the fourth kingdom—as distinguished from the legs, which were made of solid iron (cf. [vv. 41–43](#)).

**2:38–40 You are the head of gold ... another kingdom ... third kingdom ... fourth kingdom.** The four kingdoms represent the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. The climax of the dream occurs in the time of the fourth kingdom (see "Introduction" and chart "Visions in Daniel," at Daniel 2).

**2:43 They will not be united.** The fourth kingdom would constitute a composite of peoples who would not adhere together well. Efforts to combine the diverse elements of the kingdom would not succeed.

**2:44 In the days of those kings.** Some interpreters surmise that "those kings" refers to the succeeding kings of the fourth kingdom. It seems best, however, to understand them as referring to the succession of the rulers of the four kingdoms previously mentioned in this chapter. the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Like other prophets Daniel spoke of the kingdom of God that would be established after the exile as permanent (e.g., [Isa 9:7](#); [Joel 2:26–27](#); [Am 9:15](#)). The New Testament explains that the kingdom began with the first coming of Jesus and will reach its consummation

at Christ's glorious return. See theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Matthew 4](#).

**2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar, falling down on his face.** In a remarkable reversal of roles Daniel was exalted to a position of great honor by virtue of the Lord's intervention on his behalf. Nebuchadnezzar's reaction anticipated the coming kingdom of God.

**2:47 Your God is a God of gods.** Nebuchadnezzar's statement does not signify that he recognized Israel's God as the only true God, but he did perceive him to be superior to the deities of the Babylonian pantheon.

**And a Lord of kings.** Nebuchadnezzar declared that Israel's God was supreme also over human rulers and their kingdoms. This is a unifying theme of Daniel [1:1–6:28](#).

**2:48 Ruler over all the land of Babylon.** The Babylonian Empire was divided into provinces. Daniel was appointed the ruler (cf. [3:2](#)) of the province in which the capital city was located. For accounts of similar ascents to political power by Jews in foreign lands, see [Ge 41:37–44](#) (Joseph) and [Est 8:1–2](#) (Mordecai). Daniel's friends were similarly exalted as his assistants ([v. 49](#)). The divine approval of Daniel is another dominant theme in this portion of the book. Although prominent in Babylon, he never compromised his faith: he was a reliable prophet of God.

**3:1–30 Deliverance From the Furnace.** Daniel recounted God's miraculous deliverance of his friends from the fiery furnace to instruct his

sent to get together all the captains, the chiefs, the rulers, the wise men, the keepers of public money, the judges, the overseers, and all the rulers of the divisions of the country, to come to see the unveiling of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had put up.<sup>3</sup> Then the captains, the chiefs, the rulers, the wise men, the keepers of public money, the judges, the overseers, and all the rulers of the divisions of the country, came together to see the unveiling of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had put up; and they took their places before the image which Nebuchadnezzar had put up.

<sup>4</sup> Then one of the king's criers said in a loud voice, To you the order is given, O peoples, nations, and languages,<sup>5</sup> That when the sound of the horn, pipe, harp, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all sorts of instruments, comes to your ears, you are to go down on your faces in worship before the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king has put up:<sup>6</sup> And anyone not falling down and worshipping will that same hour be put into a burning and flaming fire.<sup>7</sup> So at that time, all the people, when the sound of the horn, pipe, harp, trigon, psaltery, and all sorts of instruments, came to their ears, went down on their faces in worship before the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king had put up.

<sup>8</sup> At that time certain Chaldeans came near and made a statement against the Jews.<sup>9</sup> They made answer and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, O King, have life for ever.<sup>10</sup> You, O King, have given an order that every man, when the sound of the horn, pipe, harp, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all sorts of instruments, comes to his ears, is to go down on his face in worship before the image of gold:<sup>11</sup> And anyone not falling down and worshipping is to be put into a burning and flaming fire.<sup>12</sup> There are certain Jews whom you have put over the business of the land of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men have not given attention to you, O King: they are not servants of your gods or worshippers of the gold image which you have put up.

<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in his wrath and passion gave orders for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to be sent for. Then they made these men come in before the king.<sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar made answer and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you will not be servants of my god or give worship to the image of gold which I have put up?<sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready, on hearing the sound of the horn, pipe, harp, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all sorts of instruments, to go down on your faces in worship before the image which I have made, it is well: but if you will not give worship, that same hour you will be put into a burning and flaming fire; and what god is there who will be able to take you out of my hands?<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answering Nebuchadnezzar the king, said, There is no need for us to give you an answer to this question.<sup>17</sup> If our God, whose servants we are, is able to keep us

readers that God's people must admire Daniel's companions and be faithful to God alone. He also illustrated that God would eventually frustrate even the mightiest kings who tempt his people to abandon their God to worship another.

**3:1 An image.** Opinions differ as to whether this extraordinary image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself or of a Babylonian deity or whether it was merely an obelisk. From what is known of Babylonian religious tradition, it seems likely that the image was either of Bel or of Nabu, Nebuchadnezzar's patron deity. Prostration before the image of this deity would also indicate submission to Nebuchadnezzar, the deity's representative (cf. 2:46).

**Of gold.** Probably gold overlay, the fabrication of the image being much like that described in Isa 40:19, 41:7 and Jer 10:3-9.

**Sixty cubits high and six cubits wide.** The proportions are the reason some have concluded that the image was an obelisk rather than a human form (the proportions of the human body are six to one). However, the image may have stood on a pedestal or had a stylized shape.

**The valley of Dura.** Its location is uncertain. It is usually associated with Tolul Dura, located about six miles south of Babylon.

**3:2 The captains, the chiefs, the rulers, the wise men, the keepers of public money, the judges, the overseers.** The precise responsibilities of these seven different types of officials are not known. Five of the seven terms seem to be of Persian origin, perhaps indicating that Daniel did not complete the writing of this account until after the beginning of Persian rule in 539 B.C.

**3:4-6** See WLC 130.

**3:5 Horn, pipe, harp, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe.** Three of the six terms used for different types of musical instruments account for the only Greek loanwords ("zither," "harp" and "pipes") in Daniel. This is not surprising, since the exchange of musicians and their instruments at royal courts has a long history. The presence of these Greek terms does not therefore constitute compelling evidence that this account was written after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

**3:6 Burning and flaming fire.** Furnaces, or kilns, were widely used in Babylon for the firing of bricks (Ge 11:3). It was not unusual to use such furnaces for execution by burning (Jer 29:22; see Herodotus. 1.86; 4.69; see also 2 Maccabees 7).

**3:8 Chaldeans.** See NIV text note and note on 2:2. The term "Chaldeans" as used here is best understood as indicating nationality rather than function. The informants looked down on the Jews simply because they were Jews (v. 12; Est 3:5. The privileged position of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (2:49) heightened the Chaldeans' hostility toward them (v. 12).

**3:12 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.** See note on 1:7. Daniel was either not present or exempted from demonstrating his loyalty because of his high position (2:48).

**3:15 What god is there who will be able to take you out of my hands?** From Nebuchadnezzar's polytheistic, heathen perspective there was no god capable of such deliverance. Unwittingly Nebuchadnezzar challenged the power of the God of Israel.

**3:17-18 Our God, whose servants we are, is able ... we will not be**

*Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality.*  
C.S.Lewis

safe from the burning and flaming fire, and from your hands, O King, he will keep us safe.<sup>18</sup> But if not, be certain, O King, that we will not be the servants of your gods, or give worship to the image of gold which you have put up.

<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of wrath, and the form of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: and he gave orders that the fire was to be heated up seven times more than it was generally heated.<sup>20</sup> And he gave orders to certain strong men in his army to put cords on Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and put them into the burning and flaming fire.<sup>21</sup> Then these men had cords put round them as they were, in their coats, their trousers, their hats, and their clothing, and were dropped into the burning and flaming fire.<sup>22</sup> And because the king's order was not to be put on one side, and the heat of the fire was so great, the men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were burned to death by the flame of the fire.<sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, with the cords about them, went down into the burning and flaming fire.

### God Delivers His Servants

<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar, full of fear and wonder, got up quickly, and said to his wise men, Did we not put three men in cords into the fire? and they made answer and said to the king, True, O King.<sup>25</sup> He made answer and said, Look! I see four men loose, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not damaged; and the form of the fourth is like **a son of the gods**.

<sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came near the door of the burning and flaming fire: he made answer and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you servants of **the Most High God**, come out and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the fire.<sup>27</sup> And the captains, the chiefs, and the rulers, and the king's wise men who had come together, saw these men, over whose bodies the fire had no power, and not a hair of their heads was burned, and their coats were not changed, and there was no smell of fire about them.<sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar made answer and said, Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent his **angel** and kept his servants safe who had faith in him, and who put the king's word on one side and gave up their bodies to the fire, so that they might not be servants or worshippers of any other god but their God.<sup>29</sup> And it is my decision that any people, nation, or language saying evil against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, will be cut to bits and their houses made waste: because there is **no other god** who is able to give salvation such as this.

<sup>30</sup> Then **the king gave** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego even greater authority in the land of Babylon.

**the servants of your gods.** The men did not assert that God always protects his people from physical harm (*Isa 43:1-2*). Although he may opt to do so, and certainly is able, the central idea is that God's people should remain obedient to their Lord no matter what the circumstances because he is far more trustworthy than any human ruler and more powerful than any force on Earth. Thus the first six chapters of Daniel exalt the prophet and his friends as men who were unflinchingly faithful to God throughout their ordeals. See WLC 109.

**3:25 A son of the gods.** In the ancient world the expression "son of the gods" could refer to various types of heavenly beings. Here it meant "angel" (v. 28). No explanation is given for why Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth person in the furnace as a heavenly being (see [note on v. 28](#)). Perhaps the miraculous presence of the fourth person was in itself sufficient reason for this conclusion.

**3:26 The Most High God.** A title for God's universal authority. As

in verse 29 ("no other god can save in this way") and in 2:47, this confession on the lips of a pagan was not an acknowledgment that Daniel's Lord alone was God but rather that Daniel's God was supreme above other deities (4:2, 17, 34). On the lips of an Israelite the same confession implied monotheism (4:24-32; 5:18, 21; 7:18-27).

**3:27** See WCF 5.3.

**3:28 Angel.** The angel may be identified with "the angel of the LORD," who may have represented an appearance of Christ prior to his incarnation (cf. 6:22; see notes on [Ge 16:7](#) and [Ex 3:2](#)). God promised his presence when Israel walked through fire (*Isa 43:1-3*).

**3:29 No other god.** See [note on verse 26](#). See also WCF 20.4.

**3:30 The king gave.** As this narrative makes clear, their prominence resulted from their faithfulness to God, not from compromise with the Babylonians.

**4** **Nebuchadnezzar the king**, to all the peoples, nations, and languages living in all the earth: May your peace be increased. <sup>2</sup> It has seemed good to me to make clear the signs and wonders which **the Most High God** has done with me.

<sup>3</sup> **How great** are his signs!

and how full of power are his wonders!

his kingdom is an eternal kingdom and his rule goes on from generation to generation.

### **Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of a Tree Chopped Down**

<sup>4</sup> I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my place, and all things were going well for me in my great house: <sup>5</sup> I saw a dream which was a cause of great fear to me; I was troubled by the images of my mind on my bed, and by the visions of my head. <sup>6</sup> And I gave orders for all the wise men of Babylon to come in before me so that they might make clear to me the sense of my dream. <sup>7</sup> Then the wonder-workers, the users of secret arts, the Chaldeans, and the readers of signs came in to me: and I put the dream before them but they did not make clear the sense of it to me. <sup>8</sup> But at last Daniel came in before me, he whose name was **Belteshazzar**, after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and I put the dream before him, saying, <sup>9</sup> O Belteshazzar, master of the wonder-workers, because I am certain that the **spirit of the holy gods** is in you, and you are troubled by no secret; this is the dream which I saw: make clear to me its sense.

<sup>10</sup> On my bed I saw a vision: **there was a tree** in the middle of the earth, and it was very high.

<sup>11</sup> And the tree became tall and strong, stretching **up to heaven**, and to be seen from the ends of the earth:

<sup>12</sup> Its leaves were fair and it had much fruit, and in it was food enough for all: the beasts of the field had shade under it, and the birds of heaven were resting in its branches, and it gave food to all living things.

<sup>13</sup> In the visions of my head on my bed I saw a **watcher**, a holy one, coming down from heaven,

<sup>14</sup> Crying out with a loud voice; and this is what he said:

Let the tree be cut down and its branches broken off; let its leaves be taken off and its fruit sent in every direction: let the beasts get away from under it and the birds from its branches:

<sup>15</sup> But keep its broken end and its roots still in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass; **let him** have the young grass of the field for food, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his part be with the beasts.

<sup>16</sup> Let his heart be changed from that of a man, and **the heart of a beast be given to him**; and let **seven times** go by him.

**4:1–37** *Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream.* The prophet narrated the story of the king's second dream and its interpretation. Once again Daniel was exalted and Nebuchadnezzar humbled before God.

**4:1** **Nebuchadnezzar the king.** This is the book's final incident associated with Nebuchadnezzar. It too is placed late in the king's 43-year reign, at a time when his building projects were completed and his power was at its height (cf. vv. 4, 30). At that time Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the most powerful kingdom on Earth, but he was no match for the God of Israel.

**4:2** **The Most High God.** See [notes on 2:47](#) and [3:26](#) and [28](#).

**4:3** **How great.** Nebuchadnezzar's confession in this verse and in [verses 34–35](#) communicates one of the central themes of the book of Daniel; namely, the absolute sovereignty of the God of Israel over the kingdoms of the earth and their rulers.

**4:6–7** See [notes on 1:20](#) and [2:2](#).

**4:8** **Belteshazzar.** See [note on 1:7](#).

**4:9** Although he spoke in pagan terms Nebuchadnezzar stated an important truth. The presence of God's Spirit in an individual has remarkable effects. Here his ability to give extraordinary insight into God's mystery, such as was later given to Paul and the church ([1Co 2:6–16](#)), is in view.

**4:9** **Spirit of the holy gods.** See [2:47](#) and [note on 2:19](#).

**4:10** **There was a tree.** See [Eze 31](#) for an extensive description of a nation (Assyria), using the imagery of a tree. Similar imagery is

found in [Ps 1:3](#); [37:35](#); [52:8](#); [92:12](#); [Jer 11:16–17](#) and [17:8](#) (see also [Mt 13:32](#)).

**4:11** **Up to heaven.** The term "sky" may also be translated "heaven," a key term in this chapter. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom reaching from Earth to heaven ([vv. 11, 20, 22](#)) and protecting birds, which defy the separation of the two spheres ([vv. 12, 21](#)). In truth the king was not only subject to the judgment of heaven for his pride ([vv. 13, 23, 31](#)) but also dependent on the God of heaven for his existence ([vv. 15, 22, 25, 33](#)) and sanity ([v. 34](#)).

**4:13** **Watcher.** Although Nebuchadnezzar continued speaking in terms of his pagan religion, he acknowledged that he saw a holy, heavenly being in his vision. This common ancient Near Eastern belief fits well with the Biblical truth that God involves himself in Earth's affairs through revelations by angels.

**4:15** **Let him.** From Hebrew pronoun "he" it becomes clear that the dream concerned a human being and not just a tree. See [note on verse 22](#).

**4:16** **The heart of a beast be given to him.** Nebuchadnezzar may have suffered from a recognized mental illness called lycanthropy which comes from the Greek words *lukos* ("wolf") and *anthropos* ("man") in which a person is deluded into behaving like a wolf or some other animal ([v. 33](#); see also [note on 4:33](#)).

**Seven times.** Seven periods of an unspecified duration (cf. [vv. 23](#),



<sup>17</sup> This order is fixed by the watchers, and the decision is by the word of the holy ones: so that the living may be certain that the Most High is ruler over the kingdom of men, and gives it to any man at his pleasure, lifting up over it the lowest of men.

<sup>18</sup> This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw; and do you, O Belteshazzar, make clear the sense of it, for all the wise men of my kingdom are unable to make the sense of it clear to me; but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

**Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

<sup>19</sup> Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was at a loss for a time, his thoughts troubling him. The king made answer and said, Belteshazzar, do not be troubled by the dream or by the sense of it. Belteshazzar, answering, said, My lord, may the dream be about your haters, and its sense about those who are against you. <sup>20</sup> The tree which you saw, which became tall and strong, stretching up to heaven and seen from the ends of the earth; <sup>21</sup> Which had fair leaves and much fruit, and had in it food for all; under which the beasts of the field were living, and in the branches of which the birds of heaven had their resting-places: <sup>22</sup> **It is you, O King**, who have become great and strong: for your power is increased and stretching up to heaven, and your rule to the end of the earth. <sup>23</sup> And as for the vision which the king saw of a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven, saying, Let the tree be cut down and given to destruction; <sup>24</sup> This is the sense of it, O King, and it is the decision of the Most High which has come on my lord the king: <sup>25</sup> **That they will send you out from among men, to be with the beasts of the field;** they will give you grass for your food like the oxen, and you will be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times will go by you, **till you are certain that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men**, and gives it to any man at his pleasure. <sup>26</sup> And as they gave orders to let the broken end and the roots of the tree be, so **your kingdom will be safe for you** after it is clear to you that the heavens are ruling. <sup>27</sup> For this cause, O King, let my suggestion be pleasing to you, and let your sins be covered by righteousness and your evil-doing by mercy to the poor, so that the time of your well-being may be longer.

<sup>28</sup> All this came to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup> At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of his great house in Babylon. <sup>30</sup> The king made answer and said, Is this not great Babylon, which I have made for the living-place of kings, by the strength of my power and for the glory of my honour? <sup>31</sup> While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice came down from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is said: The kingdom has gone from you: <sup>32</sup> And they will send you out from among men, to be with the beasts of the field; they will give you grass for your food like the oxen, and seven times will go by you, till you are certain that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men, and gives it to any man at his pleasure.

<sup>33</sup> That very hour the order about Nebuchadnezzar was put into effect: and he was sent out from among men, and **had grass for his food like the oxen**, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair became long as eagles' feathers and his nails like those of birds.

<sup>34</sup> And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifting up my eyes to heaven, got back my reason, and, blessing the Most High, I gave praise and honour to him who is living for ever, whose rule is an eternal rule and whose kingdom goes on from generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup> And all the people of the earth are as nothing: he does his pleasure in the army of heaven

25). Most interpreters conclude that "time" represents a period of one year. Verse 33 suggests that the period was longer than a day, week or month.

4:22 **It is you, O King.** With this statement—much like that of Nathan to David (2Sa 12:7)—a direct application was made to Nebuchadnezzar.

4:25 **That they will send you out from among men, to be with the beasts of the field.** In words more specific than those in verse 15 Daniel indicated the form of mental illness that God would bring upon the mighty Nebuchadnezzar. Similar symptoms occasionally afflicted King George III of England (1738-1820) and Otto of Bavaria (1848-1916). See note on 4:16.

**Till you are certain that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men.** The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was to compel him to recognize God's sovereignty. See WCF 2.2.

4:26 **Your kingdom will be safe for you.** Nebuchadnezzar was assured that, in spite of the severity and length of his illness, he would regain the throne subsequent to his acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. Heaven rules. For the first time in Scripture "heaven" is used as a substitute name for God (cf. v. 37). Compare Matt 5:3 with Lk 6:20.

4:30 See WLC 105.

4:33 **Had grass for his food like the oxen.** Because Nebuchadnezzar exhibited traits characteristic of oxen, the form of his mental illness is sometimes termed boanthropy. See note on 4:16.

4:34-69,37-34 Although Nebuchadnezzar confessed God's sovereignty in no uncertain terms, he never explicitly affirmed the God of Israel as the only supreme Creator of the universe. See WCF 2.2: 5.1.

*Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely*

*Lord Acton*

and among the people of the earth: and no one is able to keep back his hand  
, or say to him, What are you doing?

<sup>36</sup> At the same time my reason came back to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my honour and my great name came back to me; and my wise men and my lords were turned to me again; and I was made safe in my kingdom and had more power than before. <sup>37</sup> Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give worship and praise and honour to the **King of heaven**; for all his works are true and his ways are right: and those who go in pride he is able to make low.

### **Belshazzar Sees Mysterious Handwriting on a Wall**

**5** Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, drinking wine before the thousand. <sup>2</sup> Belshazzar, while he was overcome with wine, gave orders for them to put before him the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem; so that the king and his lords, his wives and his other women, might take their drink from them. <sup>3</sup> Then they took in the gold and silver vessels which had been in the Temple of the house of God at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his other women, took wine from them.

<sup>4</sup> They took their wine and gave praise to the gods of gold and silver, of brass and iron and wood and stone. <sup>5</sup> In that very hour the fingers of a man's hand were seen, writing opposite the support for the light on the white wall of the king's house, and the king saw the part of the hand which was writing. <sup>6</sup> Then the colour went from the king's face, and he was troubled by his thoughts; strength went from his body, and his knees were shaking. <sup>7</sup> The king, crying out with a loud voice, said that the users of secret arts, the Chaldeans, and the readers of signs, were to be sent for. The king made answer and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whoever is able to make out this writing, and make clear to me the sense of it, will be clothed in purple and have a chain of gold round his neck, and will be a ruler of high authority in the kingdom.

<sup>8</sup> Then all the king's wise men came in: but they were not able to make out the writing or give the sense of it to the king. <sup>9</sup> Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled and the colour went from his face, and his lords were at a loss. <sup>10</sup> The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the house of the feast: the queen made answer and said, O King, have life for ever; do not be troubled by your thoughts or let the colour go from your face: <sup>11</sup> There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, light and

**4:37 King of heaven.** This unique term brings together the theme of the chapter: the rule of God from heaven (see 4:26 and its note).

**5:1-31 Judgment on Belshazzar.** Daniel turned next to an account of God's judgment against Belshazzar. In this narrative the king is condemned for his impudent disregard for the holiness of Israel's God and of his temple.

**5:1 Belshazzar the king.** Belshazzar means "Bel, protect the king." It is not to be confused with Belteshazzar, the Babylonian name given to Daniel (see note on 1:7). From Babylonian sources we know that Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law, was the last king of Babylon. Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, was made co-regent with his father and placed in charge of affairs in Babylon while Nabonidus spent extensive periods of time at Tema in Arabia. The events of this chapter took place in 539 B.C., the year of Babylon's fall to the Persians and of the edict releasing Israelites from captivity. 42 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 563 B.C.

**Great feast.** The banquet scene juxtaposes the splendor of the event and the divine judgment that would soon be meted out (cf. Ge 40:20-22; Mk 6:21-28).

**5:2 Belshazzar, while he was overcome with wine.** Under the influence of alcohol Belshazzar committed a sacrilegious act. Even from a heathen standpoint the holy things of other religions were to be held in reverence.

**Gold and silver vessels ... from the Temple in Jerusalem.** See note on 1:2.

**His father.** Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar here

and in verses 11, 13 and 18, and in verse 22 Belshazzar is called the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar. Although we know that Belshazzar was the immediate son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar, the terms father and son were often used in the ancient world in the broader sense of "ancestor" or "predecessor" and "descendant" or "successor." respectively. It is likely that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother, Nitocris.

**5:4 Gave praise to the gods.** The temple vessels were defiled not only by being put to profane use but also by being used to honor the false deities of Babylon.

**5:7 The users of secret arts, the Chaldeans, and the readers of signs.** See notes on 1:20 and 2:2 (cf. 2:27; 4:7).

**Whoever is able to make out this writing, and make clear to me the sense of it.** Once again the king demanded a double requirement: to declare the portent and then to interpret it (cf. 2:3).

**A ruler of high authority in the kingdom.** Next in power under Nabonidus and his co-regent Belshazzar (see note on 5:1).

**5:8 They were not able to make out the writing or give the sense of it to the king.** See 2:2-13 and 4:7; see also Ge 41:8.

**5:10 The queen.** It is unlikely that she was a consort of Belshazzar since these women were already present at the banquet (vv. 2-3). She may have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, but it is more likely that she was Nitocris, the wife of Nabonidus, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and mother of Belshazzar.

**5:11 The spirit of the holy gods.** See 4:8. It is not surprising that the

reason like the wisdom of the gods were seen in him: and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, made him master of the wonder-workers, and the users of secret arts, and the Chaldeans, and the readers of signs; <sup>12</sup> Because a most special spirit, and knowledge and reason and the power of reading dreams and unfolding dark sayings and answering hard questions, **were seen to be in him**, even in Daniel (named **Belteshazzar** by the king): now let Daniel be sent for, and he will make clear the sense of the writing.

<sup>13</sup> Then they took Daniel in before the king; the king made answer and said to Daniel, So you are that Daniel, of the prisoners of Judah, whom my father took out of Judah. <sup>14</sup> And I have had news of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and reason and special wisdom have been seen in you. <sup>15</sup> And now the wise men, the users of secret arts, have been sent in before me for the purpose of reading this writing and making clear to me the sense of it: but they are not able to make clear the sense of the thing: <sup>16</sup> And I have had news of you, that you have the power of making things clear, and of answering hard questions: now if you are able to make out the writing and give me the sense of it, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain round your neck and be **a ruler of high authority in the kingdom**.

### **Daniel Interprets the Handwriting on the Wall**

<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel made answer and said to the king, **Keep your offerings** for yourself, and give your rewards to another; but I, after reading the writing to the king, will give him the sense of it. <sup>18</sup> As for you, O King, **the Most High God gave** to **Nebuchadnezzar, your father**, the kingdom and great power and glory and honour: <sup>19</sup> And because of the great power he gave him, all peoples and nations and languages were shaking in fear before him: some he put to death and others he kept living, at his pleasure, lifting up some and putting others down as it pleased him. <sup>20</sup> But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became hard with pride, he was put down from his place as king, and they took his glory from him: <sup>21</sup> And he was sent out from among the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts', and he was living with the asses of the fields; he had grass for his food like the oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he was certain that **the Most High is ruler** in the kingdom of men, and gives power over it to anyone at his pleasure. <sup>22</sup> And **you, his son**, O Belshazzar, have not kept your heart free from pride, **though you had knowledge of all this**; <sup>23</sup> But you have been lifting yourself up against the Lord of heaven, and they have put the vessels of his house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your women, have taken wine in them; and you have given praise to gods of silver and gold, of brass and iron and wood and stone, who are without the power of seeing or hearing, and without knowledge: and to the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not given glory; <sup>24</sup> **Then** the part of the hand was sent out from before him, and this writing was recorded. <sup>25</sup> And this is the writing which was recorded, **Mene, tekel, peres**. <sup>26</sup> This is the sense of the words: **Mene**; your kingdom has been numbered by God and ended. <sup>27</sup> **Tekel**; you have been put in the scales and seen to be under weight. <sup>28</sup> **Peres**; your kingdom

queen mother was more familiar with the events of Daniel's time than was Belshazzar. It is likely that Daniel was in his 80s by 539 B.C. He had been a young man when taken to Babylon 66 years earlier in 605 B.C. (see [note on 1:1](#)).

**5:12 Were seen to be in him.** This divine enablement can be described theologically as the presence of God's Spirit in an individual or as a person possessing a remarkable spirit.

**Belteshazzar.** See [note on 1:7](#).

**5:16 A ruler of high authority in the kingdom.** See [note on verse 7](#).

**5:17 Keep your offerings.** Some think that Daniel rejected Belshazzar's offer of reward not only because he did not seek such honors but also because of his consciousness that it was only by God's mercy that he had been able to respond to the king's request; he did not want to use his God-given role as a means of personal profit ([Ge 14:23](#)). Yet he had accepted such rewards before ([2:48](#)) and did so again later ([v. 29](#)). Perhaps he was avoiding any pressure to modify the ominous message ([Nu 22:18](#); [Mic 3:5, 11](#)).

**5:18 The Most High God gave.** See [2:37](#) and [4:36](#).

**Nebuchadnezzar, your father.** See [note on verse 2](#).

**5:20–21** See [4:31–33](#).

**5:21 The Most High is ruler.** This statement summarizes the book's theology (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives").

**5:22 You, his son.** See [note on verse 2](#).

**Though you had knowledge of all this.** Because the king was without excuse—even more so than his father—the time of mercy had passed (see [1Ti 1:13](#)). See [WLC 151](#).

**5:23** See [WLC 105](#).

**5:24 Then.** The writing on the wall was God's answer to the arrogant challenge presented by Belshazzar's pride and defiance of the God who had demonstrated his existence and sovereignty in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

**5:25 Mene, tekel, peres.** Literally, "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided" or "mina [a unit of weight], mina, shekel, half shekel."

**5:26 Mene.** The original script for this word could be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning "numbered" or "counted" and interpreted it as signifying that the days and years of Belshazzar's reign had been determined by God and were about to end.

**5:27 Tekel.** This word could also be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning "weighed" and interpreted it as signifying that Belshazzar failed to measure up to God's standards of righteousness.

**5:28 Peres.** Daniel construed this word as a verb meaning "divided" and interpreted it to signify that Belshazzar's kingdom would be taken from him and given to the Medes and Persians. If, as is likely, those

has been cut up and given to the Medes and Persians.<sup>29</sup> Then, **by the order of Belshazzar**, they put a purple robe on Daniel, and a gold chain round his neck, and a public statement was made that he was to be a ruler of high authority in the kingdom.<sup>30</sup> That very night **Belshazzar**, the king of the Chaldeans, was put to death.<sup>31</sup> And **Darius the Mede** took the kingdom, being then about sixty-two years old.

## Daniel is Thrown into a Lions' Den

**6** **Darius** was pleased to put over the kingdom a hundred and twenty captains, who were to be all through the kingdom;

present at the banquet understood the three terms as nouns that simply indicated various monetary weights (mene, a weight equivalent to 60 Babylonian shekels: tekell, the shekel: peres, a half shekel), then it is not surprising that they failed to comprehend the significance of the inscription. Medes and Persians. See "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives." See also BC 36.

**5:29 By the order of Belshazzar.** Like Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar honored Daniel (2:48), but unlike Nebuchadnezzar he did not honor Daniel's God (2:46–47). The honor that Daniel and his companions had repeatedly received because of their faithfulness to God had established Daniel's credibility as a prophet. He was not a compromiser; he was faithful to God. Therefore his later prophecies ("chs. 7-12" \_7:1>) could be fully trusted.

**5:30 Belshazzar ... was put to death.** Ancient Near Eastern texts and the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon record that Babylon was taken in a surprise attack by the Persians while the Babylonians

were engaged in reveling and dancing.

**5:31 Darius the Mede.** It has long been alleged that this and other references to "Darius the Mede" in the book of Daniel (6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1; 11:1) are historical errors. See [note on 6:1](#).

**6:1–28 Deliverance From the Den of Lions.** The prophet recounted his treatment under Darius the Mede, who succeeded Belshazzar. During his reign Daniel was thrown into a lions' den, and only through faith did he emerge unscathed.

**6:1 Darius.** See [note on 5:31](#). While it is true that Darius the Mede is not referred to in extant historical sources outside the Scripture and that there was no interval between Belshazzar/Nabonidus (see [note on 5:1N](#)) and the accession of Cyrus of Persia, this does not necessarily mean that the book of Daniel is in error. Most likely "Darius the Mede" was a throne name for Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire (see [note on v. 28N](#)). It is also possible, but not as likely, that it was a designation for Gubaru, a general who defected from

### Who was Darius the Mede?

He is first mentioned in [5:31](#). Some (mainly critical, i.e., liberal) theologians, advocating a late (so-called „Maccabean“) dating of the book of Daniel (according to them around 165 B.C.), claim that (1) Darius Medes never existed because he is not

*Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original: whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it.*

*C. S. Lewis*

mentioned in other ancient documents; (2) the name Darius was used by an unknown Maccabean author, poorly acquainted with Persian history, and confused it with the legendary Darius I (255–484) of Persia (not the Medes); (3) the author erroneously assumed that Babylon was conquered by Medea, not Persia, and that under the leadership of this legendary „Darius“ the Medes ruled the world empire for several years before it fell into the hands of the Persians.

As a result, advocates of the Maccabean (late) date can claim that the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream ([Dan 2](#)) are (1) Babylonian; (2) Median; (3) Persian; and (4) Greek, which gives them the advantage of limiting the horizon of Daniel's prophecies to no further than 165 B.C. (If the book was written at this time, all of the alleged „prophecies“ could be explained in retrospect by looking back at the historical events *after they occurred*. The problem with the traditional identification of the fourth kingdom as Rome for liberals is that such a view presupposes actual true predictive prophecy, which rationalist higher criticism fundamentally does not allow.)

The tenability of the Maccabean date hypothesis therefore depends on the above explanation of „Darius the Mede“ (since according to this explanation the Median kingdom pre-dates the Persian kingdom). Therefore, this figure is very important; its identification has serious theological implications.

However, the Persian Darius I, son of Hystapes, cannot be identified with Darius the Mede for several reasons:

1. Darius I was a Persian by birth, a cousin of king Cyrus; he was by no means a Mede.



<sup>2</sup> And over them were three chief rulers, of whom Daniel was one; and the captains were to be responsible to the chief rulers, so that the king might undergo no loss. <sup>3</sup> Then this Daniel did his work better than the chief rulers and the captains, because there was a **special spirit** in him; and it was the king's purpose to put him over all the kingdom. <sup>4</sup> Then the chief rulers and the captains were looking for some cause for putting Daniel in the wrong in connection with the kingdom, but they were unable to put forward any wrongdoing or error against him; because he was true, and no error or wrong was to be seen in him. <sup>5</sup> Then these men said, We will only get a reason for attacking Daniel in connection with **the law of his God**. <sup>6</sup> Then these chief rulers and the captains came to the king and said to him, O King Darius, have life for ever.

<sup>7</sup> **All** the chief rulers of the kingdom, the chiefs and the captains, the wise men and the rulers, have made a common decision to put in force a law having the king's authority, and to give a strong order, that **whoever makes any request to any god or man but you**, O King, for thirty days, is to be put into the lions' hole. <sup>8</sup> Now, O King, put the order in force, signing the writing so that it may not be changed, like **the law of the Medes and Persians** which may not come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For this reason King Darius put his name on the writing and the order. <sup>10</sup> And

Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, led the Persian conquest of Babylon and was made governor by Cyrus over the territories the Persians had taken from the Babylonians.

**6:3 Special spirit.** See 1:17; 4:8 and 5:12.

**6:5 The law of his God.** Daniel's adversaries affirmed not only his moral integrity but also the visible nature of his piety and commitment to the God of Israel. Thus the book's major theme of Daniel's holiness and reliability is affirmed once again.

**6:7 All ... have made a common decision.** The false implication was that Daniel had concurred with the proposal. These officials were

hypocritical in their seeming devotion to Darius. Their scheme was an attempt to manipulate him into securing their own designs.

**Whoever makes any request to any god ... but you.** The proposal would have seemed to Darius to be more political than religious and would have served to consolidate his authority over newly conquered territories.

**6:8 The law of the Medes and Persians.** See Est 1:19 and 8:8. The irrevocable nature of Persian law is also attested in extra-Biblical writings. The effect of the decree was to create a conflict for Daniel between allegiance to the Lord and obedience to human government.

2. Darius I was a young man of about twenty when he murdered the impostor Gaumata (who claimed to be Cyrus's son Smerdis) in 522 BC. He could not have been 62 (5:31).
3. Darius I was not king of Babylon before Cyrus as liberal theories claim. He did not become an independent ruler until seven years after the death of Cyrus (cf. Ezd 4:5).
4. Such confusion about the nationality and chronology of Darius and Cyrus was absolutely unthinkable in the Hellenistic world of the second century BC. Students must have read Xenophon, Herodotus and other Greek historians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. From Xenophon and Herodotus we have information about Cyrus and Darius. Any Greek writer who placed Darius before Cyrus would have ended his writing career in public ridicule; he would never be taken seriously again.

Thus, Darius Persian (Ezra 4:5) and Darius Median (Dan 5:31) have nothing to do with each other; the confusion is only on the part of the late date theorists, not on the part of the author of Daniel.

However, it is true that archaeology has not yet discovered any mention of *Darius*

*the Medes* from the time he lived, outside the Bible. (Until the nineteenth century, the same was true of Balsazar, the viceroy representing his father Nabonidus. Critical theologians, advocating Maccabean dating, have argued that Balsazar was another fictional character in Daniel until Babylonian tablets from his time were discovered confirming that Balsazar served as a junior king in the last years of his father Nabonidus' reign. Cf. note on 5:1).

Nevertheless, we can identify Darius the Mede. There are several indications in the book of Daniel that Darius was not a sovereign king, but was temporarily placed on the throne by some higher authority. In verse 9:1, we read that „was made king“. The passive root *hofal* is used here for the verb form „homlak“ (הִמְלִיךָ) instead of the common „malak“ (מָלַךְ „became king“) used in the context of gaining the throne by conquest or inheritance (e.g., 1Sam 13:1). Similarly, in verse 5:31 we read that Darius „took the kingdom“ („qabbel“ קָבַל), as if it had been conferred on him by a higher authority.

The very name Darius (Old Persian *Da-ri-ya-(h)u-(ú-)ish*/ 𐎠𐎼𐎷𐎡𐎴, Heb. דָּרְיוּשׁ) is probably related to *dara*, which appears

*Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.*

*C.S.Lewis*

Daniel, on hearing that the writing had been signed, went into his house; (now he had windows in his room on the roof **opening in the direction of Jerusalem**;) and **three times a day** he went **down on his knees** in prayer and praise before his God, **as he had done before**.

<sup>11</sup> Then these men were watching and saw Daniel making prayers and requesting grace before his God.

<sup>12</sup> Then they came near before the king and said, O King, have you not put your name to an order that any man who makes a request to any god or man but you, O King, for thirty days, is to be put into the lions' hole? The king made answer and said, The thing is fixed by the law of the Medes and Persians which may not come to an end. <sup>13</sup> Then they made answer and said before the king, Daniel, **one of the prisoners of Judah**, has no respect for you, O King, or for the order signed by you, but three times a day he makes his prayer to God. <sup>14</sup> When this thing came

**6:10 Opening in the direction of Jerusalem.** See 1Ki 8:44 and 48, as well as Ps 5:7 and 138:2.

**Three times a day.** See Ps 55:17–18.

**Down on his knees.** Standing may have been a regular posture in prayer (1Ch 23:30; Ne 9). While kneeling in prostration marked a lowering of oneself, appropriate in circumstances of particular solemnity (1Ki 8:54; Ezr 9:5; see also Ps 95:6; Lk 22:41; Ac 7:60; 9:40).

**As he had done before.** Evidently Daniel's prayer habits were public knowledge, a mark of his genuine piety.

**6:13 One of the prisoners of Judah.** This ethnic identification of Daniel is perhaps indicative of prejudice toward the Jews on the part of the other officials (cf. 3:8). That Daniel's ethnic identity was widely known reveals that he had not compromised his heritage in favor of success in captivity—an important lesson to the readers.

in Avestan (a dead northeastern ancient Iranian language) as an expression for a king. Like the appellation *augustus* among the Romans, the surname *dārayawush* („royal“) may have been a special honorary title that could also serve as a proper name, like the English surname „King“.

So it seems that soon after the defeat of Babylon by the Medo-Persian armies, Cyrus personal presence was forced by another front of his expanding empire. It seemed expedient to him, therefore, to entrust the kingdom to Gubar-Darius with the title of King of Babylon, to rule for about a year before Cyrus personally returned for his coronation ceremony in the temple of Marduk. After this year's reign as viceroy, Darius remained as governor of Babylon, but the crown was handed over to his superior ruler Cyrus (who later passed it on to his eldest son Cambyses, cf. [note on 11:2](#), at his coronation as king of Babylon).

This scenario is supported by the text of the book in that Daniel nowhere mentions any later year of Darius's reign than „first“ (9:1), indicating its very short duration. Even if this were to mean that the one-year reign belonged to the Medes (we know it did not; it belonged to Persian Cyrus), a one-year

empire could hardly have defended its legitimate position as the number two kingdom in a series of empires of considerably greater durability: the Babylonian lasted 73 years, the Persian 208 years, the Greek would have had 167 years of existence by 165 BC.

In addition, a pun on Daniel's interpretation of the inscription on the wall in 5:28, which combines two meanings of the same root P–R–S (פָּרַס): *p<sup>e</sup>risat*/פָּרִיסַת „divided“) and *pārās* לְמַדֵּי וּפָרַס („given to the Medes and Persians“), while assuring that the author of the book wrote in the belief that kingdom number one (Babylonian) would pass under to the rule of the Persians already allied with the Medes and thus becomes kingdom number two. The book of Daniel leaves no room for critical speculation about the earlier Median kingdom, which the author of the book may have had in mind.

The fourth kingdom, then, is Rome, the only one that has been able to subdue Greece (2:40), and during whose existence the eternal kingdom of which there will be no end (2:44) – the church – has come into being by divine intervention. (Cf. [chart Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms](#) on p. 7).

to the king's ears, it was very evil to him, and **his heart was fixed on keeping Daniel safe**, and till the going down of the sun he was doing everything in his power to get him free. <sup>15</sup> Then these men said to the king, Be certain, O King, that by the law of the Medes and Persians no order or law which the king has put into force may be changed. <sup>16</sup> Then the king gave the order, and they took Daniel and put him into the lions' hole. The king made answer and said to Daniel, **Your God**, whose servant you are at all times, will keep you safe. <sup>17</sup> Then they got a stone and put it over the mouth of the hole, and **it was stamped with the king's stamp and with the stamp of the lords**, so that the decision about Daniel might not be changed. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his great house, and took no food that night, and no ... were placed before him, and his sleep went from him.

### **God Rescues Daniel from the Lions**

<sup>19</sup> Then very early in the morning the king got up and went quickly to the lions' hole. <sup>20</sup> And when he came near the hole where Daniel was, he gave a loud cry of grief; the king made answer and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whose servant you are at all times, able to keep you safe from the lions? <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, O King, have life for ever. <sup>22</sup> **My God has sent his angel** to keep the lions' mouths shut, and they have done me no damage: because I was seen to be without sin before him; and further, before you, O King, I have done no wrong. <sup>23</sup> Then the king was very glad, and **gave orders for them to take Daniel up out of the hole**. So Daniel was taken up out of the hole and he was seen to be untouched, because he had faith in his God. <sup>24</sup> And at the king's order, they took those men who had said evil against Daniel, and put them in the lions' hole, with their wives and their children; and they had not got to the floor of the hole before the lions overcame them and all their bones were broken. <sup>25</sup> Then King Darius sent a letter to all the peoples, nations, and languages, living in all the earth: May your peace be increased.

<sup>26</sup> It is my **order** that in all the kingdom of which I am ruler, men are to be shaking with fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, unchanging for ever, and his kingdom is one which will never come to destruction, his rule will go on to the end. <sup>27</sup> He gives salvation and makes men free from danger, and does signs and wonders in heaven and earth, who has kept Daniel safe from the power of the lions.

<sup>28</sup> So this **Daniel did well** in the kingdom of Darius and in the kingdom of Cyrus the Persian.

**6:14 His heart was fixed on keeping Daniel safe.** Darius immediately perceived that he had been victimized by the intrigue of his own officials in order to trap Daniel. His appreciation for Daniel remained unshaken.

**6:16 Your God ... will keep you safe.** Against his own will Darius was forced to comply with the decree. Nevertheless, he hoped that Daniel's God would intervene on behalf of his faithful servant.

**6:17 It was stamped with the king's stamp and with the stamp of the lords.** Signet rings and cylinder seals were commonly used by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. The ring or cylinder was rolled across impressionable clay to leave the personal mark of the owner of the seal. Breaking open whatever was sealed in this way would be a violation of the law.

**6:22 My God has sent his angel.** Likely the angel of the Lord (see [note on 3:28](#)).

**6:23 Gave orders for them to take Daniel up out of the hole.** Darius could do this without violating the initial decree, since its demands had already been fulfilled.

**6:26-27** See [2:47](#); [3:17-18](#) and [28-29](#); [4:2-3](#) and [28-37](#) and [5:18-29](#).

As in the previous narratives the Lord revealed himself to be greater than human rulers or kingdoms, for his sovereignty extends over nature and history. But this decree went far beyond those earlier confessions in acknowledging God as a living, enduring and saving deity, whose kingdom is eternal and secure.

**6:26 Order.** Darius's decree does not imply that he actually converted from pagan polytheism to faith in Daniel's God alone any more than did Cyrus's proclamation that God had instructed him to send the Jews home ([Ezr 1:3-4](#); [Isa 44:28](#); [45:4](#)).

**6:28 Daniel did well.** The major theme of God's blessing toward Daniel appears again. Daniel remained faithful, refusing to compromise. For this reason he rose in prominence under both Babylonian and Persian kings. This fact exalted Daniel as a faithful Israelite whose prophecies could be trusted. the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus. The wording may be understood in two ways: (1) Daniel prospered under the rule of Gubaru (see [note on v. 1](#)) as well as under Cyrus; or (2) Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus. In the latter case, Darius the Mede and Cyrus are understood to be two names for the same ruler (see [note on v. 1](#)).

## Daniel has a Vision of Four Animals Coming up from the Sea

**7** In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream, and visions came into his head on his bed: then he put the dream in writing. <sup>2</sup> I had a vision by night, and saw the four winds of heaven violently moving the great sea. <sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up from the sea, different one from another. <sup>4</sup> The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings; while I was watching its wings were pulled off, and it was lifted up from the earth and placed on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. <sup>5</sup> And I saw another beast, like a bear, and it was lifted up on one side, and three side-bones were in its mouth, between its teeth: and they said to it, Up! take much flesh. <sup>6</sup> After this I saw another beast, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings like those of a bird; and the beast had four heads, and the power of a ruler was given to it. <sup>7</sup> After this, in my vision of the night, I saw a fourth beast, a thing causing fear and very troubling, full of power and very strong; and it had great iron teeth: it took its food, crushing some of it to bits and stamping down the rest with its feet: it was different from all the beasts before it; and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup> I was watching the horns with care, and I saw another coming up among them, a little one, before which three of the first horns were pulled up by the roots: and there were eyes like a man's eyes in this horn, and a mouth saying great things. <sup>9</sup> I went on looking till the seats of kings were placed,

and one like a very old man took his seat: his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like clean wool; his seat was flames of fire and its wheels burning fire. <sup>10</sup> A stream of fire was flowing and coming out from before him: a thousand thousands were his servants, and ten thousand

**7:1–28** *Vision of the Four Beasts.* Daniel reported his dream of four beasts. The dream traces the history of foreign kingdoms oppressing Israel until their earthly dominion was given to the "one like a son of man" and to the saints.

**7:1–12:13** *The Visions.* In these chapters Daniel turned from historical narrative to reports of visions. These visions depend on the two main themes set forth in the first six chapters of the book: Israel's God was in control of all nations, and Daniel could be trusted as God's uncompromising prophet. These chapters prepared an exiled Israel for the long delay of the restoration and the trials to come under the control of foreign powers. They also encouraged the people of God not to give up hope that God's kingdom would come at the end of these trials. Daniel touched on four main topics: the four beasts (7:1–28), the ram and the goat (8:1–27), the "seventy weeks" (9:1–27) and the future of God's people (10:1–12:13).

**7:1** *The first year of Belshazzar.* See note on 5:1. It is not known whether Belshazzar's coregency with Nabonidus began at the same time as the accession of Nabonidus (556 B.C.) or a few years later. In any case, the events of this chapter (and ch. 8) are here placed chronologically between those of chapters 4 and 5.

**7:2** *Great sea.* Whether or not this is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea is immaterial. What is clear is that the sea is symbolical of the chaotic restlessness that characterized the sinful nations oppressing Israel. See the interpretation given in verse 17 and in Isa 17:12–13 and 57:20.

**7:3** *Four great beasts.* These four beasts represent four kingdoms (vv. 17, 23). It is clear that there is a close correspondence between the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image in chapter 2 and those symbolized by the beasts in this chapter. For identification of the four kingdoms, see chart, "Visions in Daniel," at Da 2.

**7:4** *A lion ... eagle's wings.* The lion with eagle's wings is an appropriate symbol for the Babylonian Empire (cf. Jer 50:44; Eze 17:3). Winged lions were common Babylonian art forms often placed at the entrances of important public buildings.

*Wings were pulled off ... a man's heart was given to it.* Perhaps this is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and later restoration following a seven-year period of insanity (4:1–37).

**7:5** *Another beast, like a bear.* The Medo-Persian kingdom is symbolized by a beast with a voracious appetite. The raised side may represent the superior status of Persia, and the three ribs likely point to Persia's conquests over Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.) and Egypt (525 B.C.). See note on 8:3.

**7:6** *Another beast, like a leopard.* The Greek Empire is symbol-

ized by a leopard, which is known for its speed. Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) conquered the Persian Empire with great rapidity. He encountered the Persians in three major battles: (1) At the Granicus River (334 B.C.) he gained entry into Asia Minor. (2) At Issus (333 B.C.) he was enabled to occupy Syria, Canaan and Egypt. (3) At Arbela (331 B.C.) he destroyed the last Persian army and pushed onward toward India. See also 8:5–8. Shortly after his premature death at age thirty-three the empire he had established divided into four parts: Macedonia under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Syria under Seleucus and Egypt under Ptolemy.

**7:7** *A fourth beast ... causing fear and very troubling, full of power and very strong.* History has revealed that this unidentified beast represents Rome, the kingdom that ultimately assimilated the various parts of the divided Greek kingdom.

*It had ten horns.* The ten horns symbolize ten kings or kingdoms arising from the Roman kingdom (v. 24). It is not clear whether these horns are successive or contemporaneous. Some suggest that they represent a second phase of the fourth kingdom, "a revived Roman Empire" of the last days, but there is no evidence of such a distinction.

**7:8** *A little one, before which three of the first horns were pulled up by the roots.* The ten horns are prior in time to the "little horn" which uproots three of them. Here is another phase of the fourth kingdom. Many interpreters have suggested that the little horn symbolizes the rise of the antichrist (2Th 2:3–4, 8). If so, this is the first Scriptural reference to the antichrist.

*Eyes like a man's eyes in this horn, and a mouth saying great things.* The imagery suggests that this horn represents an individual rather than a kingdom.

**7:9** *A very old man took his seat.* The title "Ancient of Days" occurs in the Bible only in this chapter (vv. 13, 22). A similar expression appears in Ugaritic texts to designate the great God El. It is clearly used as a designation for God, who is sitting to judge, and it implies that God is eternal or that he has ruled from ancient times.

*Clothing ... hair.* Although God appeared in magnificent glory to Daniel, he still revealed himself in a recognizably human form so that Daniel could grasp what he saw.

*His seat ... its wheels.* The depiction of God's throne resembles that of Ezekiel's vision (Eze 1:15–28). As in other parts of the ancient world the divine throne is depicted as having wheels, like a mobile chariot throne used most notably in battle. Similar motifs lie behind the pillar of fire that led Israel during the Exodus (Ex 13:21–22).



times ten thousand were in their places before him: the judge was seated and **the books were open**.

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw—because of the voice of the great words which the horn said—I saw till the beast was put to death, and its body was given to destruction, and the beast was given to the burning of fire. <sup>12</sup> As for the rest of the beasts, their authority was taken away: but they let them go on living for a measure of time.

<sup>13</sup> I saw in visions of the night, and there was **coming with the clouds of heaven one like a man**, and he came to the one who was very old, and they took him near before him. <sup>14</sup> And **to him was given authority** and glory and a kingdom; and **all peoples**, nations, and languages were his servants: his authority is an eternal authority which will not come to an end, and his kingdom is one which will not come to destruction.

### **An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision**

<sup>15</sup> As for me, Daniel, my **spirit was pained** because of this, and the visions of my head were troubling me. <sup>16</sup> I came near to one of those who were waiting there, questioning him about what all this was. And he said to me that he would make clear to me the sense of these things. <sup>17</sup> These great beasts are four kings who will be cut off from the earth. <sup>18</sup> But **the saints of the Most High will take the kingdom**, and it will be theirs **for ever**, even for ever and ever. <sup>19</sup> Then it was my desire to have certain knowledge about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, a cause of great fear, whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass; who took his food, crushing some of it to bits and stamping on the rest with his feet; <sup>20</sup> And about the ten horns on his head and the other which came up, causing the fall of three; that horn which had eyes, and a mouth saying great things, which seemed to be greater than the other horns. <sup>21</sup> And I saw how **that horn made war on the saints and overcame them**, <sup>22</sup> **Till he came, who was very old**, and the decision was made and the authority was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came when the saints **took the kingdom**. <sup>23</sup> This is what he said:

The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom which will come on earth, different from all the kingdoms, and it will overcome all the earth, crushing it down and smashing it. <sup>24</sup> And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will come to power; and after them another will come up: he will be different from the first ones and will put down **three kings**. <sup>25</sup> And **he will say words against**

**7:10 The books were open.** See 12:1 (see also Ex 32:32; Ps 149:9; Isa 4:3; 65:6; Mal 3:16; Lk 10:20; Rev 5:1–5; 6:12–16; 20:12). See BC 37.

**7:11–12** A contrast is drawn between the complete destruction of the fourth kingdom and the measure of continuance granted the preceding kingdoms as their people and customs were absorbed into the succeeding kingdoms.

**7:13 Coming with the clouds of heaven.** Elsewhere in the Old Testament only God is said to appear on clouds (Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). The One like a man originates in heaven and comes by divine initiative. He is the same as the rock cut out of the mountain, but not by human hands (2:45; see note on 7:14).

**One like a man.** The term “son of man” may mean simply “a man.” The Hebrew equivalent is used for Daniel in 8:17 and is used many times of Daniel’s contemporary Ezekiel (e.g., Eze 2:1, 3, 6). In contrast to the beasts who misruled the earth, this “one” will preside over creation as God had intended before the fall; he will have dominion over the beasts (Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8). Daniel may have been the earliest witness to this special use of “son of man.” Later Jewish apocalyptic literature written between the Old and New Testaments draws upon this passage and speaks of the “son of man” as a supernatural human being who brings the power of heaven to Earth. Daniel saw someone like a man; i.e., someone who was to be compared with a man yet was somehow qualitatively different (v. 14). The expression “son of man” is used 69 times in the Synoptic Gospels and 12 times in John’s Gospel to refer to Christ. It is in fact the most common title Jesus used of himself.

**7:14 To him was given authority.** God gives him vice-regency over all the nations. He fulfills the symbolic rule of the rock cut out of a mountain (2:44–45).

**All peoples ... were his servants ... his kingdom is one which will not come to destruction.** The “son of man” whom Daniel envisioned was none other than the great son of David, the Messiah. Isaiah also spoke of his kingdom as never ending (Isa 9:7). Jesus clearly confirmed this Messianic connection by an allusion to this passage. For this he was accused by the religious leaders of his day of blasphemy (Mt 26:64–65; Mk 14:62–64). In serving him, people serve God.

**7:15 Spirit was pained ...were troubling.** Daniel was horrified by what he saw and asked an angel to elucidate the vision.

**7:18 The saints of the Most High.** See verses 21–22, 25 and 27. Not angels but true believers who will share responsibility in the administration of the kingdom (1Co 6:1–11; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 22:5).

**Will take the kingdom.** There is close identification between the “son of man” as King (vv. 13–14) and the “saints of the Most High” as those who participate in his kingdom (see “took the kingdom” at v. 22; see also v. 27).

**For ever.** See 6:26, 7:14 and their notes.

**7:21 That horn made war on the saints and overcame them.** Daniel recounted additional information about the hostility of the little horn (v. 8) toward the people of God (cf. Rev 13:7).

**7:22 Till he came, who was very old.** Although the little horn (v. 8) would prevail for a time against God’s people, in the end he would fall under the judgment of God (cf. Zec 14:1–4; Rev 13:7–17; 19:20).

**Took the kingdom.** God’s intervention in history will lead to what the New Testament calls “the kingdom of God” (see theological article “The Kingdom of God” at Mt 4).

**7:24 Three kings.** A few of the ten, but an indefinite number.

**7:25 He will say words against the Most High.** More details are

the Most High, attempting to put an end to the saints of the Most High; and he will have the idea of changing times and law; and the saints will be given into his hands for a time and times and half a time.<sup>26</sup> But the judge will be seated, and they will put an end to his authority, to overcome it and send complete destruction on it.<sup>27</sup> And the kingdom and the authority and the power of the kingdoms under all the heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and all powers will be his servants and do his pleasure.

<sup>28</sup> Here is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, I was greatly troubled by my thoughts, and the colour went from my face: but I kept the thing in my heart.

### Daniel Has a Vision of a Goat and a Ram

**8** In the third year of the rule of Belshazzar the king, a vision was seen by me, Daniel, after the one I saw at first.<sup>2</sup> And I saw in the vision; and when I saw it, I was in the strong town Shushan, which is in the country of Elam; and in the vision I was by the water-door of the Ulai.<sup>3</sup> And lifting up my eyes, I saw, there before the stream, a male sheep with two horns: and the two horns were high, but one was higher than the other, the higher one coming up last.<sup>4</sup> I saw the sheep pushing to the west and to the north and to the south; and no beasts were able to keep their place before him, and no one was able to get people out of his power; but he did whatever his pleasure was and made himself great.

<sup>5</sup> And while I was giving thought to this, I saw a he-goat coming from the west over the face of all the earth without touching the earth: and the he-goat had a great horn between his eyes.<sup>6</sup> And he came to the two-horned sheep which I saw before the stream, rushing at him in the heat of his power.<sup>7</sup> And I saw him come right up to the sheep, and he was moved with wrath against him, attacking the sheep so that his two horns were broken; and the sheep had not strength to keep his place before him, but was pushed down on the earth and crushed under his feet: and there was no one to get the sheep out of his power.<sup>8</sup> And the he-goat became very great:

given of the activities of the little horn (v. 8) as a ruler who opposes God.

**Put an end to the saints.** He will persecute God's people.

**For a time and times and half a time.** The word "time" is the same word used in 4:16 and 4:23 and, as there (see note on 4:16), may be understood as representing a period of one year (cf. Rev 12:14). It is best understood as symbolic of a period of time that will be shortened when God suddenly intervenes.

**7:26 The judge.** The court of heaven (see v. 10).

**7:27 Will be given to the people of the saints.** After God's people face the trials of oppressive kingdoms they will rule over all forever. See note on 7:18.

**7:28 Greatly troubled by my thoughts, and the colour went from my face.** Thoughts of Israel falling under repeated and prolonged oppression from foreign powers still troubled Daniel, even though the ultimate outcome would be divine intervention resulting in victory for God's people. See also v. 15 and its note.

**Kept the thing in my heart.** Daniel mentioned this to inform his readers that he did not delight in the prospect of such a future for God's people. Despite his authority in the Gentile courts of Babylon and Persia, no one could rightly accuse him of betraying his loyalty to God's people. He spoke of these future events with regret.

**8:1-27 Vision of the Ram and the Goat.** The prophet recorded a vision concerning the treatment of God's people under the Medo-Persians and Greeks.

**8:1-12:13** Daniel resumed use of the Hebrew language in the book's last five chapters. He had written 2:4-7:28 in Aramaic (see note on 2:4).

**8:1 In the third year of the rule of Belshazzar the king.** That is, two years after Daniel's dream in chapter 7 (see note on 7:1).

**8:2 When I saw it, I was.** Daniel experienced a visionary journey like that of Ezekiel (Eze 3:10-15).

**The strong town Shushan, which is in the country of Elam.** In Daniel's time Shushan was the capital of Elam, about 230 miles east of Babylon. It is unclear whether Elam was then independent or aligned

with either Babylon or Media. Later, however, as one of three royal cities, Shushan became the diplomatic and administrative capital of the Persian Empire (cf. Est 1:2; Ne 1:1).

**Water-door of the Ulai.** This canal near Shushan connected two rivers that flowed into the Persian Gulf.

**8:3 A male sheep with two horns.** Verse 20 identifies the ram and its horns as a symbol for the kings of the Medo-Persian Empire. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. Medo-Persian history clarifies the symbolism here. The Medes became strong and independent of Assyria after 631 B.C. The Persians began as an insignificant segment of the Median kingdom but eventually rose to control it when Cyrus (reigned 559-530 B.C.) of Anshan (in Elam) brought Media under his control (550 B.C.). Cyrus added to his list of titles "King of the Medes." Thus both horns were long but the one representing Persia longer because it was superior in might, and later in growing because it came to power after the other.

**8:4 Pushing to the west and to the north and to the south.** Cyrus initially took Asia Minor; afterward, both northern and southern Mesopotamia. Subsequent rulers extended Medo-Persian control far to the East.

**Made himself great.** The Persian Empire became larger and more powerful than any previous empire in ancient Near Eastern history.

**8:5 Over the face of all the earth without touching the earth.** This depicts the amazing rapidity of Alexander's conquests (see note on 7:6). In only three years he was able to defeat the powerful Persian Empire.

**The he-goat had a great horn between his eyes.** Verse 21 identifies the goat as Greece and the large horn between his eyes as its first king. The symbolism is a clear depiction of the rise of the Greek Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.).

**8:8 The he-goat became very great.** Alexander's empire quickly exceeded the Persian Empire in size. By 327 B.C. Alexander had moved eastward into what is today Afghanistan and then on to the Indus Valley.

and when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and in its place came up four other horns turned to the four winds of heaven.

<sup>9</sup> And out of one of them came another horn, a little one, which became very great, stretching to the south and to the east and to the beautiful land. <sup>10</sup> And it became great, even as high as the army of heaven, pulling down some of the army, even of the stars, to the earth and crushing them under its feet. <sup>11</sup> It made itself great, even as great as the lord of the army; and by it the regular burned offering was taken away, and the place overturned and the holy place made waste. <sup>12</sup> ... against the regular burned offering; and ... crushed down to the earth, and it did its pleasure and things went well for it. <sup>13</sup> Then there came to my ears the voice of a holy one talking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was talking, How long will the vision be while the regular burned offering is taken away, and the unclean thing causing fear is put up, and the holy place crushed under foot? <sup>14</sup> And he said to him, For two thousand, three hundred evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be made clean.

### An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision

<sup>15</sup> And it came about that when I, Daniel, had seen this vision, I had a desire for the sense of it to be unfolded; and I saw one before me in the form of a man. <sup>16</sup> And the voice of a man came to my ears between the sides of the Ulai, crying out and saying, Gabriel, make the vision clear to this man. <sup>17</sup> So he came and took his place near where I was; and when he came, I was full of fear and went down on my face: but he said to me, Let it be clear to you, O son of man; for the vision has to do with the time of the end. <sup>18</sup> Now while he was talking to me, I went into a deep sleep with my face to the earth: but touching me, he put me on my feet where I had been. <sup>19</sup> And he said, See, I will make clear to you what is to come in the later time of the wrath: for it has to do with the fixed time of the end. <sup>20</sup> The sheep which you saw with two horns, they

**When he was strong, the great horn was broken.** When his own troops refused to advance farther eastward Alexander returned to Babylon, where he died at the age of thirty-two, most probably of typhoid fever.

**In its place came up four other horns.** Verse 22 indicates that these horns symbolize four kingdoms that emerged from Alexander's empire but were inferior in strength to its original domain. Historical records indicate that after a time of internal struggle four of Alexander's generals were able to secure portions of the former Greek Empire as their own kingdoms. See [note on 7:6](#).

**8:9 Another horn, a little one.** Verse 23 indicates that this horn symbolizes a wicked ruler who would arise in one of the four Greek kingdoms after an extended interval of time ("in the latter part of their reign"). The descriptions of the actions of this ruler ([vv. 9–14, 23–25](#)) identify him as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the ruler of the Seleucid kingdom from 175 to 164 B.C. This horn is not to be identified with the "little horn" of 7:8, which would arise during the Roman rather than the Greek period.

**To the beautiful land.** Daniel showed his love for the promised land by this expression.

**8:10 The army of heaven.** Or the stars (cf. [Jer 33:22](#)), symbolizing the people of God (cf. [12:3; Ge 12:3; 15:5; Ex 12:41](#)) and/or a heavenly army ([Isa 14:13](#); also see 2 Maccabees 9:10). Antiochus's coins picture a star above his head. Epiphanes means "God manifest." The attack against the people of God amounted to an attack against heaven itself. **Pulling down some of the army, even of the stars, to the earth and crushing them under its feet.** This is a symbolic depiction of the severe persecution of God's people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attempted to abolish Israel's traditional worship and way of life (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives": cf. [11:21–35](#); 1 Maccabees 1:10–64).

**8:11 As great as the lord of the army.** The "Prince" is to be understood as God, the Lord of hosts. See [verse 25](#), where the designation is "Prince of princes." Antiochus IV took the name Epiphanes ("God manifest") and viewed himself as the incarnate manifestation of Zeus (the chief god of the Greek pantheon).

**The regular burned offering was taken away.** See [verses 12–13](#) and [11:31](#). Antiochus IV ordered the cessation of all ceremonial observances related to the worship of the Lord at the Jerusalem temple and in the cities of Judah. the place of his sanctuary was brought low.

Antiochus IV not only entered the Most Holy Place and plundered the silver and gold vessels, but he also erected an altar to Zeus on top of the altar of the Lord in the temple court and offered swine upon it (see [note on 11:31](#)).

**8:12 Against.** God's people were subjected to the power of the horn that started small ([v. 9](#)), Antiochus IV. This entailed the cessation of regular temple observances.

**Things went well for it.** The vision depicts the apparent success of the wicked acts of Antiochus IV (the horn that started small). That success included the destruction of copies of the Hebrew Scripture (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:56–57).

**8:14 For two thousand, three hundred evenings and mornings.** The phrase "evenings and mornings" occurs in the Old Testament only here and in [verse 26](#). Some understand it as a reference to the evening and morning sacrifices (cf. [Ex 29:38–42](#)). On that basis it would represent 1,150 days. Others view it as simply an expression for 2,300 days. Since the beginning of the persecutions of Antiochus IV could be linked with any one of a number of incidents beginning early as 171 B.C., it is difficult to determine which understanding of the phrase is to be preferred. The number 23 may be symbolic of a fixed period, as in apocalyptic literature outside the Bible.

**The holy place will be made clean.** The temple was cleansed and rededicated under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus on December 25, 165 B.C. (see [note on 11:34](#); cf. [Zec 9:13–17](#)).

**8:16 Gabriel.** This angel is mentioned four times in Scripture ([9:21; Lk 1:11, 19, 26](#)). The name denotes one who is strong in the Lord (Gabriel means "strength of God") because of a relationship with him.

**8:17 Son of man.** See [note on 7:13](#). The "strong man of God" (see [note on v. 16](#)), the angel Gabriel, was speaking to this exalted mortal.

**The vision has to do with the time of the end.** See also [verse 19](#) ("the appointed time of the end"). This expression does not necessarily have to do with the absolute end of history. It occurs in [11:27](#) and [35](#) in contexts that probably refer to the end of the persecutions under Antiochus IV.

**8:19 What is to come in the later time of the wrath.** The "timed wrath" may here refer to the time of God's judgment on his people Israel during the period of their subjection to the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks.

**8:20 The sheep.** See [notes on verses 3–4](#).



are the kings of Media and Persia.<sup>21</sup> And the **he-goat** is the king of Greece: and the great horn between his eyes is the first king.<sup>22</sup> And as for that which was broken, in place of which **four** came up, four kingdoms will come up from his nation, but not with his power.

<sup>23</sup> And in the later years of their kingdom, when their evil doings have become complete, there will come up a king full of pride and expert in dark sayings.<sup>24</sup> And his power will be great, and he will be purposing strange things. And all will go well for him and he will do his pleasure; and he will send destruction on the strong ones.<sup>25</sup> And his designs will be turned against the holy people, causing deceit to do well in his hand; in his heart he will make himself great, and send destruction on **numbers** who are living unconscious of their danger; and he will put himself up against the **prince of princes**; but **he will be broken, though not by men's hands**.<sup>26</sup> And the vision of evenings and mornings which has been talked of is true: and **keep the vision secret; for it has to do with the far-off future**.

<sup>27</sup> And I, Daniel, was ill for some days; then I got up and did the king's business: and I was full of wonder at the vision, but no one was able to give the sense of it.

### Daniel Prays for His People

**9** In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans;<sup>2</sup> In the first year of his rule, I, Daniel, **saw clearly from the books** the number of years given by the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, in which the making waste of Jerusalem was to be complete, that is, seventy years.<sup>3</sup> And turning my face to the Lord God, I gave myself up to prayer, requesting his grace, going without food, in haircloth and dust.

<sup>4</sup> And I made prayer to the Lord my God, putting our sins before him, and said, O Lord, the great God, greatly to be feared. keeping your agreement and mercy with those who have love for you and do your orders;<sup>5</sup> We are sinners, acting wrongly and doing evil; we have gone

**8:21 He-goat ... horn.** See [notes on verses 5 and 8](#).

**8:22 Four.** See [note on verse 8](#).

**8:23–25** See [notes on verses 9–14](#). Some interpreters have found a picture of the antichrist in the descriptions of the horn of this chapter (v. 8) by viewing Antiochus IV as a type of any powerful opponent of God's people in the future.

**8:25 Numbers.** The faithful Jews, as well as "the mighty" or "the strong ones" of the [verse 24](#).

**Prince of princes.** A reference to God.

**He will be broken, though not by men's hands.** Antiochus IV was not assassinated, nor did he die in battle. His death in 164 B.C. resulted from a physical or nervous disorder. For variant accounts of his death see 1 Maccabees 6:1-16 and 2 Maccabees 9:1-28.

**8:26 Keep the vision secret.** A "seal" was used either to authenticate or certify something or to close up or secure something for confidentiality or safekeeping. The second sense seems most fitting in this context (see [note on 6:17](#)).

**For it has to do with the far-off future.** Literally, "[the vision] pertains to many days." The conquests of Alexander (333-323 B.C.) occurred nearly two centuries after Daniel's vision (c. 550 B.C.), while Antiochus IV was active about a century and a half after Alexander (171-164 B.C.).

**9:1–27 Vision of the Seventy Weeks.** Daniel recorded an account of a revelation he received concerning Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 years of Jerusalem's desolation. The vision followed Daniel's prayer in which he confessed the justice of Jerusalem's desolation and sought the favor of God for the restoration of the city and the temple. This vision revealed that the time of Judah's exile was extended because the people of God had not yet repented of the sins that had brought exile upon them.

**9:1 The first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus.** See [notes on 5:30–31 and 6:1](#). The term "Xerxes" (not the same person mentioned in [Est 1:1](#)) may be a royal title rather than a personal name. The

first year of Darius's reign was 539 B.C.

**9:2 Saw clearly from the books ... the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah ... waste of Jerusalem was to be complete, that is, seventy years.** See [Jer 25:11–12](#) and [29:10](#). Daniel was concerned because the 70 years of exile had nearly come to an end but the Israelites were not ready to return to the land. Interpreters differ on the dates of the beginning and ending of the 70-year period and on whether it is to be understood as a round number, suggesting a human lifetime, or an exact time period. Some date the period from 586 B.C. (the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar) to 515 B.C., when the restoration of the temple was completed under Zerubbabel ([Ezr 6:13–18](#); [Zec 4:9](#)). Others date the beginning of the period to the year of Daniel's own captivity (604 B.C.; see [note on 1:1](#)). Daniel was also undoubtedly aware that Isaiah had prophesied Israel's release from exile under the Persian ruler Cyrus ([Isa 44:28](#); [45:1–13](#)). As Daniel apparently did here, the writer of Chronicles cited Cyrus's release of the exiles as having taken place in 539 B.C. as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy ([2Ch 36:21](#)). In the literature of the ancient Near East 70 years was a standard time period during which a god would punish his people for disloyalty. This period could be lengthened or shortened by the reactions of the people. For this reason it is not surprising that there would be some flexibility in the ways different Biblical writers applied the number to Israel's history.

**9:4–19** Daniel's prayer is rooted in a covenantal understanding of the Lord's relation to his people (blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience; see especially [vv. 5, 7, 11–12, 14](#); [Lev 26:14–45](#); [Dt 28:15–68](#); [30:1–5](#)). For a similar prayer see [Ne 9](#). The prayer contains four parts: (1) worship ([v. 4](#)); (2) a confession of sin ([vv. 5–11a](#)); (3) recognition of the justice of God in his judgment on sin ([vv. 11b–14](#)); and (4) a plea for God's mercy based on concern for his name, kingdom and will ([vv. 15–19](#)). The prayer is grounded in God's promises ([v. 2](#)), was voiced in a spirit of contrition and humility ([v. 3](#)) and provides a model for appropriate elements of effective prayer.



against you, turning away from your orders and from your laws: <sup>6</sup> We have not given ear to your servants the prophets, who said words in your name to our kings and our rulers and our fathers and all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> O Lord, righteousness is yours, but shame is on us, even to this day; and on the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, and on all Israel, those who are near and those who are far off, in all the countries where you have sent them because of the sin which they have done against you. <sup>8</sup> O Lord, shame is on us, on our kings and our rulers and our fathers, because of our sin against you. <sup>9</sup> With the Lord our God are mercies and forgiveness, for we have gone against him; <sup>10</sup> And have not given ear to the voice of the Lord our God to go in the way of his laws which he put before us by the mouth of his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> And all Israel have been sinners against your law, turning away so as not to give ear to your voice: and the curse has been let loose on us, and the oath recorded in the law of Moses, the servant of God, for we have done evil against him. <sup>12</sup> And he has given effect to his words which he said against us and against those who were our judges, by sending a great evil on us: for under all heaven there has not been done what has been done to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> As it was recorded in the law of Moses, all this evil has come on us: but we have made no prayer for grace from the Lord our God that we might be turned from our evil doings and come to true wisdom. <sup>14</sup> So the Lord has been watching over this evil and has made it come on us: for the Lord our God is upright in all his acts which he has done, and we have not given ear to his voice. <sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, who took your people out of the land of Egypt with a strong hand and made a great name for yourself even to this day; we are sinners, we have done evil. <sup>16</sup> O Lord, because of your righteousness, let your wrath and your passion be turned away from your town Jerusalem, your holy mountain: because, through our sins and the evil-doing of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a cause of shame to all who are round about us. <sup>17</sup> And now, give ear, O our God, to the prayer of your servant and to his request for grace, and let your face be shining on your holy place which is made waste, because of your servants, O Lord. <sup>18</sup> O my God, let your ear be turned and give hearing; let your eyes be open and see how we have been made waste and the town which is named by your name: for we are not offering our prayers before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercies. <sup>19</sup> O Lord, give ear; O Lord, have forgiveness; O Lord, take note and do; let there be no more waiting; for the honour of your name, O my God, because your town and your people are named by your name.

### **Gabriel Gives to Daniel a Prophecy of Seventy Weeks**

<sup>20</sup> And while I was still saying these words in prayer, and putting my sins and the sins of my people Israel before the Lord, and requesting grace from the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; <sup>21</sup> Even while I was still in prayer, the man **Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at first** when my weariness was great, put his hand on me about the time of the evening offering. <sup>22</sup> And teaching me and talking to me he said, O Daniel, I have come now to give you wisdom. <sup>23</sup> At the first word of your prayer a word went out, and I have come to give you knowledge; for you are a man dearly loved: so give thought to the word and let the vision be clear to you.

<sup>24</sup> **Seventy weeks have been fixed** for your people and your holy town, to let wrongdoing be complete and sin come to its full limit, and for the clearing away of evil-doing and the coming in of eternal righteousness: so that the vision and the word of the prophet may be stamped as true, and to put the holy oil on a most holy place. <sup>25</sup> Have then the certain knowledge that from

**9:21 Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at first.** See [note on 8:16](#).

**9:24 Seventy weeks.** The "seventy 'sevens'" (lit., "seventy weeks") represent 490 years (see [note on 9:24-27](#)). The 70 years of exile (v. 2) are multiplied seven times in accordance with the pattern of covenantal curses ([Lev 26:14, 21, 24, 28](#)). God extended the exile because of Israel's continuing sinfulness. Just as the 70 years of exile predicted by Jeremiah may have followed a standard formula (see [note on v. 2](#)), the period of 490 years probably represented a standard formula as well. For instance, the intertestamental, non-canonical book Jubilees structures the whole of history into periods of 490 years. It is likely, therefore, that Daniel had in mind not a precise calculation of years but broadly defined segments of time. This extension of time was not absolute; it could be lengthened if the people continued to rebel or shortened if they repented.

**Have been fixed ... to.** Six things were to be accomplished during the period of "seventy 'sevens.'" As with all Old Testament prophecies about the restoration from exile in the latter days, these six items are fulfilled in the work of Christ in bringing the kingdom of God (see theological articles "The Kingdom of God" at [Mt 4](#) and "The Plan of the Ages" at [Heb 7](#)). The New Testament teaches that the kingdom was inaugurated in the first coming of Christ, continues now and will reach its consummation at Christ's return. Therefore, some aspects of these predictions are more closely related to Christ's first coming, others to his second coming and still others are fulfilled by both his first and second comings.

**9:25-27** The "seventy weeks" of years are divided into three subunits of 49 years (seven "sevens"; [v. 25](#)), 434 years (sixty-two "sevens"; [v. 26](#)) and seven years (one "seven"; [v. 27](#)). Interpreters differ over

the going out of the word for the building again of Jerusalem till the coming of a prince, on whom the holy oil has been put, will be seven weeks: in sixty-two weeks its building will be complete, with square and earthwork.<sup>26</sup> And at the end of the times, even after the sixty-two weeks, one on whom the holy oil has been put will be cut off and have no ...; and the town and the holy place will be made waste together with a prince; and the end will come with an overflowing of waters, and even to the end there will be war; the making waste which has been fixed.<sup>27</sup> And a strong order will be sent out against the great number for one week; and so for half of the week the offering and the meal offering will come to an end; and in its place will be an unclean thing causing fear; till the destruction which has been fixed is let loose on him who has made waste.

### An Angel Appears to Daniel

**10** In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a secret was unfolded to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, even a hard work: and he had knowledge of it, and the vision was clear to him.

<sup>2</sup> In those days I, Daniel, gave myself up to grief for three full weeks.<sup>3</sup> I had no pleasing food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, and I put no oil on my body till three full weeks were ended.

<sup>4</sup> And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month I was by the side of the great river;<sup>5</sup> And lifting up my eyes I saw the form of a man clothed in a linen robe, and round him there was a band of gold, of the best gold:<sup>6</sup> And his body was like the beryl, and his face had the look of

whether these subunits are to be viewed as a continuous sequence or as subunits separated by time intervals. Many attempts have been made to understand this chronology as precise numbers of years, but all attempts fall short of completeness due to the fact that these numbers were intended as round figures of representative periods of time. Although Daniel's calculations are not to be taken as precise, the basic pattern of his prediction may be discerned without falling into speculation. The order to rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25) was followed by seven "sevens" or 49 years (v. 25), at which time the rebuilding of Jerusalem was completed (see Ezra and Nehemiah). This was followed by sixty-two "sevens" or 434 years (v. 25), at which time the Messiah was cut off (v. 26; see note). The single "seven" was fulfilled during or near the time of Christ's earthly ministry (v. 27).

**9:25 A prince, on whom the holy oil has been put.** Two interpretations of this figure are possible: (1) He is the Messiah, the Christ. (2) He is a king whom God has anointed as his instrument in accomplishing his will (cf. Isa 45:1). While most interpreters take the anointed one and the ruler in verse 25 to be the same person, there is some disagreement as to whether or not this figure is identical to the person or persons referred to as "anointed one" and "ruler" in verse 26. In verse 26 the ruler appears to act against God. If the same ruler is intended in both verses, he is most likely not to be equated with the Messiah.

**9:26 One on whom the holy oil has been put will be cut off.** This is either a reference to the crucifixion of Christ or to judgment that God would bring against a king who had overstepped his bounds as God's instrument of judgment (see note on v. 25).

**The town and the holy place will be made waste together with a prince.** A reference either to the Greek Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a precursor to the Roman general Titus (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives") or directly to Titus and/or his armies, who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**9:27 A strong order will be sent out against the great number for one week.** The most likely antecedent of "he" is "the Anointed One" or the ruler" (v. 26). It is popular to interpret this statement as descriptive of an agreement that the antichrist will establish with Jewish people who have re-gathered in the land of Israel during the "tribulation" period, but this outlook is less likely. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. This may be a reference to

the termination of the Old Testament sacrificial system by the atoning death of Christ. It is also possible that it refers to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see note on v. 26). Some interpreters take the less likely view that this is a reference to the antichrist's prohibition of "sacrifice and offering" (perhaps standing for religious practice in general) by the re-gathered Jewish people after three and a half years (Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14) of the "tribulation" period. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation. Daniel most likely described the destruction of the temple under either Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see note on v. 26 and "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives"), rather than actions of a future antichrist. Phrases similar to "an abomination that causes desolation" occur in 8:13, 11:31 and 12:11 (see their notes), as well as in 1 Maccabees 1:54. Daniel 8:13 and 1 Maccabees 1:54 refer to the activities of Antiochus IV. Daniel used the same language to describe one who would defile the temple in the time near that of the Messiah. Jesus alluded to this abomination in Matt 24:15 and Mk 13:14.

**10:1-11:1 The Angel's Message to Daniel.** Daniel was prepared by an angelic being to receive a revelation pertaining to "a time yet to come" (10:14).

**10:1-12:13 Vision of the Future of God's People.** The prophet turned his attention to a final, lengthy vision that focused on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives") and looked beyond that reign as well. This material divides into four main sections: the angel's announcement to Daniel (10:1-11:1), events from Daniel until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:2-20), the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21-12:3) and a final message to Daniel (12:4-13).

**10:1 In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia.** In 537 B.C. See notes on 1:21, 5:30, 6:1 and 9:1. The repatriated exiles were at this time back in the land to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:1-4; 3:8), but they would soon have to give up the rebuilding (Ezr 4:24).

**10:2 Grief.** Daniel probably mourned because of the state of Jerusalem (Ne 1:4; Isa 61:3-4; 64:8-12; 66:10).

**10:5 A man clothed in a linen robe.** Verses 5-6 give a detailed description of an angel, perhaps Gabriel (9:21) or the one who spoke to Gabriel (8:16). His appearance was similar to that of the glory of the Lord (Eze 1:26-28; Rev 1:12-16). For other references to angels see Jdg 13:6, Eze 9:2-3; 10:2 and Lk 24:4.

a thunder-flame, and his eyes were like burning lights, and his arms and feet like the colour of polished brass, and the sound of his voice was like the sound of an army. <sup>7</sup> And I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see it; but a **great shaking** came on them and they went in flight to take cover. <sup>8</sup> So I was by myself, and I saw this great vision, and all my strength went from me; and the colour went from my face. <sup>9</sup> But the sound of his words came to my ears, and on hearing his voice I went into a deep sleep with my face to the earth. <sup>10</sup> Then a hand gave me a touch, awaking me, and putting me on my knees and my hands. <sup>11</sup> And he said to me, O Daniel, you man dearly loved, take in the sense of the words I say to you and get up on to your feet: for to you I am now sent; and when he had said this to me I got on to my feet, shaking with fear. <sup>12</sup> Then he said to me, Have no fear, Daniel; for from the first day when you gave your heart to getting wisdom and making yourself poor in spirit before your God, **your words have come to his ears: and I have come because of your words.** <sup>13</sup> **But the angel of the kingdom of Persia put himself against me** for twenty-one days; but **Michael, one of the chief angels, came to my help**; and when I came he was still there with the angel of the kings of Persia. <sup>14</sup> Now I have come to give you knowledge of the fate of your people in the later days; for there is still a vision for the days.

<sup>15</sup> And after he had said these words to me, I kept my face turned to the earth and was unable to say anything. <sup>16</sup> Then one whose form was like the sons of men put his finger on my lips; and opening my mouth, I said to him who was before me, O my lord, because of the vision my pains have come on me, and I have no more strength. <sup>17</sup> For how may this servant of my lord have talk with my lord? for, as for me, straight away my strength went from me and there was no breath in my body. <sup>18</sup> Then again one having the form of a man put his hand on me and gave me strength. <sup>19</sup> And he said to me, O man greatly loved, have no fear: peace be with you, be strong and let your heart be lifted up. And at his words I became strong, and said, Let my lord say on, for you have given me strength. <sup>20</sup> Then he said, It is clear to you why I have come to you. And now I will give you an account of what is recorded in the **true writings**: <sup>21</sup> **But I am going back to make war with the angel of Persia**, and when I am gone, **the angel of Greece** will come. And there is **no one** on my side against these, but Michael, your angel.

## 11 And as for me, **in the first year of Darius the Mede** I was on his side to make his position safe and make him strong. **The Angel Gives a Message to Daniel**

<sup>2</sup> And now I will make clear to you what is true. There are still **three kings to come in Persia**, and **the fourth** will have much greater **wealth** than all of them: and when he has become strong through his wealth, **he will put his forces in motion against all the kingdoms of Greece.** <sup>3</sup> And **a strong king will come to power**, ruling with great authority and doing whatever is his pleasure. <sup>4</sup> And when he has become strong, **his kingdom will be broken** and parted to the four winds of

**10:7 Great shaking.** See [Isa 6:5](#) and [Lk 5:8](#).

**10:12 Your words have come to his ears: and I have come because of your words.** The vision and revelation that Daniel received came as a direct response to his prayers.

**10:13 But the angel of the kingdom of Persia put himself against me.** In the context it is apparent that this prince refers to an evil, but powerful, spiritual being (cf. [Job 1:6-12](#); [Ps 82](#); [Isa 24:21](#); [Lk 11:14-26](#)) assigned by Satan to activity pertaining to Persian rule. Similarly, the archangel Michael is called "the great prince who protects" Israel ([12:1](#)). The host of heaven are said to fight for Israel elsewhere in the Old Testament ([Jdg 5:20](#); [2Ki 6:15-18](#); [Ps 103:20-21](#)).

**Michael, one of the chief angels, came to my help.** Michael is depicted as the commander of the holy angels in [Jude 9](#) and [Rev 12:7](#). Here a glimpse is given into the spiritual battles waged in the heavenly realms that affect events on Earth (cf. [Eph 6:12](#); [Rev 12:7-9](#)).

**10:20 True writings.** A metaphor for God's knowledge and control over all of history.

**10:21 I am going back to make war with the angel of Persia.** See [note on verse 13](#).

**The angel of Greece.** This is a fallen angel or demonic power assigned by Satan to participate in the affairs of the Greek kingdom (see [note on v. 13](#); see [Jn 14:30](#); [Eph 6:12](#)). Although both Persia and Greece would conquer God's people, Daniel was to understand that their power would be limited by the power of God, whose purposes always prevail.

**No one ... but Michael.** Michael's interest in protecting Israel (see [note on v. 13](#); cf. [12:1](#)) corresponded with that of the messenger, who was directly concerned about God's purposes.

**11:1 In the first year of Darius the Mede.** Earlier the angel who was speaking to Daniel had given assistance to Michael (see [note on 10:13](#)), perhaps in connection with the Persian decree to permit the Jews to return to their homeland.

**11:2-20 From Daniel Until Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** The revelation given to Daniel in 11:2-20 concerned ancient Near Eastern history from the time of Daniel until the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The prophet's vision was unusually detailed, describing intricate interconnections among events far beyond that normally given to an Israelite prophet. Such details drew the attention of early readers of this book and demonstrated Daniel's reliability.

**11:2 Three kings to come in Persia.** Cambyses (529-523 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata (523-2 B.C.) and Darius I (522-486 B.C.). **The fourth.** Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.).

**Wealth.** See [Est 1:4](#).

**He will put his forces in motion against all the kingdoms of Greece.** Xerxes waged a number of campaigns against Greece, beginning in 480 B.C.

**11:3 A strong king will come to power.** Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.). See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:5](#) and [8](#).

**11:4 His kingdom will be broken ... to the four winds of heaven.**



heaven; but not to his offspring, for it will be uprooted; and his kingdom will be for the others and not for these: but not with the same authority as his. <sup>5</sup> And **the king of the south** will be strong, but **one of his captains will be stronger than he** and will be ruler; and his rule will be a great rule. <sup>6</sup> And at the end of years they will be joined together; and **the daughter of the king of the south** will come to the king of the north **to make an agreement**: but **she will not keep the strength of her arm; and his offspring will not keep their place**; but she will be uprooted, with those who were the cause of her coming, and her son, and he who took her in those times. <sup>7</sup> But out of **a branch from her roots** one will come up to take his place, who will come against the army, **forcing his way into the strong place of the king of the north**, and he will take them in hand and overcome them: <sup>8</sup> And their gods and their metal images and their fair vessels of silver and gold he will take away into the south; and for some years he will keep away from the king of the north. <sup>9</sup> And **he will come into the kingdom of the king of the south, but he will go back to his land**. <sup>10</sup> And **his son will make war, and will get together an army of great forces**, and he will make an attack on him, overflowing and going past: and he will again take the war even to **his strong place**. <sup>11</sup> And **the king of the south** will be moved with wrath, and will come out and **make war on him, on this same king of the north**: and he will get together a great army, but the army will be given into his hand. <sup>12</sup> And the army will be taken away, and his heart will be uplifted: he will be the cause of the downfall of tens of thousands, but he will not be strong. <sup>13</sup> And again **the king of the north will get together an army greater than the first**; and he will make an attack on him at the end of years, with a great army and much wealth. <sup>14</sup> In those times, a number will take up arms against the king of the south: and the children of the violent among your people will be lifting themselves up to make the vision come true; but it will be their downfall. <sup>15</sup> So **the king of the north will come, and put up earthworks and take a well-armed town**: and the forces of the king of the south will make an attempt to keep their position, even the best of his army, but they will not have strength to do so. <sup>16</sup> And he who comes against him will do his pleasure, and no one will be able to keep his place before him: he will take up his position in **the beautiful land** and in his hand there will be destruction. <sup>17</sup> And it will be his purpose to come with the strength of all his kingdom, but in place of this **he will make an agreement with him; and he will give him the daughter** of women to send destruction on it; but **this will not take place** or come about. <sup>18</sup> After this, his face will be turned to the islands, and he will take a number of them: but **a chief,**

See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:8](#).

**11:5 The king of the south.** Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.).

**One of his captains will be stronger than he.** Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 B.C.). Seleucus broke with Ptolemy, became king of Babylon and controlled territories from the Indus River in the east, to Syria in the west.

**11:6-20** Verses 6-20 contain detailed predictions of relations between the king of the North (the Seleucid kingdom) and the king of the South (the Ptolemaic kingdom). This section may be divided into three parts: (1) events concerning Laodice and Berenice ([vv. 6-9](#)), (2) the career of Antiochus III ([vv. 10-19](#)) and (3) the reign of Seleucus IV ([v. 20](#)).

**11:6 The daughter of the king of the south.** Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.).

**To make an agreement.** Refers to a marriage alliance (c. 250 B.C.) between Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) of Syria and Ptolemy II of Egypt.

**She will not keep the strength of her arm; and his offspring will not keep their place.** Laodice, the former wife of Antiochus, instigated a conspiracy that resulted in the poisoning deaths of Berenice, Antiochus II and their infant son.

**11:7 A branch from her roots.** Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.), the brother of Berenice (see [note on v. 6](#)).

**Forcing his way into the strong place of the king of the north.** Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid kingdom, had Laodice (see [note on v. 6](#)) put to death and returned to Egypt with considerable booty.

**11:9 He will come into the kingdom of the king of the south, but he will go back to his land.** This refers to the unsuccessful campaign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.), the son of Laodice, against the Ptolemaic kingdom in 240 B.C.

**11:10 His son.** Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 B.C.) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.).

**Will make war, and will get together an army of great forces.** Anti-

ochus III fought with the Ptolemies from 222-187 B.C. and for a time gained control of Canaan, as well as western Syria.

**His strong place.** This probably refers to Raphia, a Ptolemaic fortress in southern Canaan. A major battle was fought there in 217 B.C.

**11:11 The king of the south.** Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 B.C.). **Make war on him, on this same king of the north.** Antiochus III. He suffered great losses (over 14,000 men) at the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.

**11:13 The king of the north will get together an army greater than the first.** In alliance with Philip V of Macedon, he raised an even larger army to invade the Ptolemaic kingdom. Ptolemy IV died in mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.), his four-year-old son.

**11:15 The king of the north will come, and put up earthworks and take a well-armed town.** This refers to the victory of Antiochus III at Sidon over the Egyptian general Scopas in 198 B.C. It marked the end of Ptolemaic rule in the area only much later referred to as Palestine.

**11:16 The beautiful land.** The promised land (see [vv. 41, 45; 8:9](#)).

**11:17 He will make an agreement with him; and he will give him the daughter.** Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus III, was given in marriage to the boy king Ptolemy V.

**This will not take place.** Cleopatra aligned herself with the Egyptians rather than with her father. She sought Roman help against the attempt of Antiochus III to take coastal cities in Asia Minor controlled by the Egyptians.

**11:18 A chief, by his destruction, will put an end to the shame offered by him.** The Roman general Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus III in several battles and forced him to cede Asia Minor to Roman control (the Peace of Apamea; 188 B.C.). At this time the second son of Antiochus III, later to be known as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was taken hostage to Rome.



by his destruction, will put an end to the shame offered by him; and more than this, he will make his shame come back on him.<sup>19</sup> Then his face will be turned to the strong places of his land: but his way will be stopped, causing his downfall, and he will not be seen again.<sup>20</sup> Then **his place will be taken by one** who will send out **a man with the glory of a king to get wealth together**; but after a short time destruction will overtake him, but not in wrath or in the fight.

<sup>21</sup> And his place will be taken by **a low person, to whom the honour of the kingdom had not been given**: but he will come in time of peace and will get the kingdom by fair words.<sup>22</sup> And his forces will be completely taken away from before him and broken; and even **the ruler of the agreement will have the same fate**.<sup>23</sup> And from the time when they make an agreement with him, he will be working falsely: for he will take up arms suddenly with a small force,<sup>24</sup> Against fertile places, and will make waste a part of the country; and he will do what his fathers have not done, or his fathers' fathers; he will make distribution among them of goods taken in war and by force, and of property: he will even make designs against the strong places for a time.

<sup>25</sup> And he will put in motion his power and his strength against **the king of the south** with a great army; and the king of the south will go to war with a very great and strong army: but **he will be forced to give way**, because of their designs against him;<sup>26</sup> And his fears will overcome him and be the cause of his downfall, and his army will come to complete destruction, and a great number will be put to the sword.<sup>27</sup> And as for these two kings, their hearts will be fixed on doing evil and they will say false words at one table; but it will come to nothing: for the end will be at the time fixed.<sup>28</sup> And **he will go back to his land with great wealth; and his heart will be against the holy agreement**; and he will do his pleasure and go back to his land.

<sup>29</sup> At the time fixed **he will come back and come into the south**; but in the later time it will not be as it was before.<sup>30</sup> For **those who go out from the west will come against him**, and he will be in fear and will go back, **full of wrath against the holy agreement**; and he will do his pleasure: and he will go back and be united with those who have given up the holy agreement.<sup>31</sup> And armies sent by him will take up their position and they will make unclean the holy place, even the strong place, and **take away the regular burned offering** and put in its place an unclean thing causing fear.<sup>32</sup> And those who do evil against the agreement will be turned to sin by his fair words: but **the people who have knowledge of their God will be strong** and do well.<sup>33</sup> And those who are wise among the people will be the teachers of the mass of the people: but they will come to their downfall by the sword and by the flame, being made prisoners and undergoing loss for a long time.<sup>34</sup> Now at the time of their downfall **they will have a little help**, but numbers will be joined to them in the town, and in their separate heritages.<sup>35</sup> And some of those who are wise will have wisdom in testing themselves and making themselves clean, till **the time of the end**: for it is still for the fixed time.

**11:20 His place will be taken by one.** Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.), the elder son of Antiochus III.

**A man with the glory of a king to get wealth together.** Heliodorus (see 2 Maccabees 3:7-40).

**11:21-12:3 The Rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** Daniel turned to the most important character in the history outlined thus far: the great Antiochus IV, who persecuted the Jews and defiled the temple. The prophet concentrated on his accession and character (11:21-24), his career (11:25-31), the conditions of God's people during his reign (11:32-35), a summary of his religious attitudes (11:36-39), his heart's ambition (11:40-45) and a description of his defeat (12:1-3).

**11:21 A low person, to whom the honour of the kingdom had not been given.** This is the infamous Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), brother of Seleucus IV but not his legitimate successor, since Seleucus IV had a son, Demetrius Soter, also known as Demetrius I. See [verses 23-24](#) and [notes on 8:9-14](#).

**11:22 The ruler of the agreement will have the same fate.** Perhaps this is a reference to the assassination of the high priest Onias III by the supporters of Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.) in Jerusalem in 171 B.C. (cf. 2 Maccabees 4:32-43 [an Apocryphal book]).

**11:25 The king of the south.** Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146 B.C.), son of Ptolemy V and Cleopatra and nephew of Antiochus (see [note on v. 17](#)).

**He will be forced to give way.** Antiochus IV defeated Ptolemy VI at Pelusium, located on the border of Egypt (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:16-19).

**11:28 He will go back to his land with great wealth; and his**

**heart will be against the holy agreement.** As a result of intrigues in Jerusalem against his supporters, Antiochus IV plundered the temple on his return from Egypt to Antioch in Syria (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:20-28).

**11:29 He will come back and come into the south.** Antiochus IV invaded Egypt again in 168 B.C.

**11:30 Those who go out from the west will come against him.** Roman armies under Gaius Popilius Laenas forced Antiochus IV to retreat from Egypt.

**Full of wrath against the holy agreement.** Antiochus determined to exterminate Jewish religion.

**11:31 Take away the regular burned offering ... an unclean thing causing fear.** The desecration of the temple in December 168 B.C. by Antiochus IV (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:54,59; 2 Maccabees 6:2 [Apocryphal books]; see [notes on 8:11](#); [9:27](#); [12:11](#)).

**11:32 The people who have knowledge of their God will be strong.** Refers to those who opposed Antiochus IV and remained faithful to the Lord even unto death (1 Maccabees 1:61-63 [an Apocryphal book]).

**11:34 They will have a little help.** Possibly this is a reference to Mattathias, an elderly priest, and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan), who waged a guerrilla war against Antiochus IV. Mattathias died in 166 B.C. His sons carried on the struggle and became known as the Maccabees. Victory was achieved under Judas Maccabeus in December 165 B.C., when the temple was cleansed and the daily sacrifices restored (cf. 1 Maccabees 4:36-39).

**11:35 The time of the end ... the fixed time.** See [note on 8:17](#).

<sup>36</sup> And the king will do his pleasure; he will put himself on high, lifting himself over every god, and saying things to be wondered at against the God of gods; and all will be well for him **till the wrath is complete**; for what has been purposed will be done. <sup>37</sup> He will have no respect for the gods of his fathers or for the god desired by women; he will have no respect for any god: for he will put himself on high over all. <sup>38</sup> But in place of this he will give honour to the god of armed places, and to a god of whom his fathers had no knowledge he will give honour with gold and silver and jewels and things to be desired. <sup>39</sup> And he will make use of the people of a strange god to keep his strongest places; to those whom he takes note of he will give high honour: and he will make them rulers over the mass of the people, and will make division of the land for a price.

<sup>40</sup> And **at the time of the end**, the king of the south will make an attack on him: and the king of the north will come against him like a storm-wind, with war-carriages and horsemen and numbers of ships; and he will go through many lands like overflowing waters. <sup>41</sup> And he will come into the **beautiful land**, and tens of thousands will be overcome: but these will be kept from falling into his hands: Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon. <sup>42</sup> And his hand will be stretched out on the countries: and the land of the south will not be safe from him. <sup>43</sup> But he will have power over the stores of gold and silver, and over all the valued things of the south: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians will be at his steps. <sup>44</sup> But he will be troubled by news from the east and from the north; and he will go out in great wrath, to send destruction on, and put an end to, great numbers. <sup>45</sup> He will put the tents of his great house between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain: but **he will come to his end with no helper**.

**12** And **at that time** Michael will take up his place, the great angel, who is the supporter of the children of your people: and there will be **a time of trouble**, such as there never was from the time there was a nation even till that same time: and at that time **your people will be kept safe**, everyone who is recorded in the book. <sup>2</sup> And a number of those who are sleeping in the dust of the earth **will come out of their sleep, some to eternal life and some to eternal shame**. <sup>3</sup> And those who are wise will be shining like the light of the outstretched sky; and those by whom numbers have been turned to righteousness will be like the stars for ever and ever.

<sup>4</sup> But as for you, O Daniel, **let the words be kept secret** and the book rolled up and kept shut till the time of the end: numbers will be going out of the way and troubles will be increased.

<sup>5</sup> Then I, Daniel, looking, saw two others, one at the edge of the river on this side and one at the edge of the river on that side. <sup>6</sup> And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was over the waters of the river, How long will it be to the end of these wonders? <sup>7</sup> Then in my hearing the man clothed in linen, who was over the river, lifting up his right hand and his left hand to heaven,

**11:36–39** This king “will do as he pleases ... [and] magnify himself above every god”. (v. 36). He will “show no regard for the gods of his fathers” (v. 37) but will “greatly honor those who acknowledge him” (v. 39).

**11:36–12:3** At his proudest moment this king will be destroyed right at Mount Zion in the heart of the Holy Land (vv. 44–45). His defeat in 12:1–3 is described in terms of the absolute end of history. Because these prophecies have not found a historical fulfillment, it is difficult to discern how literal or metaphorical they are, and our interpretation must be guarded. Certain details in 11:36–12:3 cannot be easily harmonized with the time of Antiochus IV. For this reason many evangelical interpreters understand these verses to be descriptive of the antichrist who will persecute God’s people just prior to the second advent of Christ (cf. 12:1–3). Yet this understanding requires the assumption of an extended time interval between the events depicted in 11:21–35 and those in 11:36–12:3, which the text does not communicate. It is possible that these prophesied events were averted, altered or delayed (see “Introduction to the Prophetic Books”).

**11:36** **Till the wrath is complete**. Just as in 8:17 and 11:35, the time of persecution is subject to God’s control.

**11:40** **At the time of the end**. See [note on 8:17](#).

**11:41** **Beautiful land**. Canaan (see [vv. 16, 45; 8:9](#)).

**11:45** **He will come to his end with no helper**. See [Joel 3](#) (see also [Zec 14:1–4](#); [2Th 2:8](#); [Rev 16:13–16](#); [19:11–21](#)).

**12:1** **At that time**. Michael, the angelic protector of Israel, will not permit God’s people to be persecuted forever. He will judge those who oppress his people. Michael, the great prince who protects your people. See [note on 10:13](#).

**A time of trouble**. See [Matt 24:21](#) and [Mk 13:19](#), where Jesus drew upon these prophecies about Antiochus IV to describe the time of the Roman siege against Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**Your people will be kept safe**. This deliverance is not necessarily from martyrdom (v. 2) but from the power of Satan (cf. [Mt 6:13](#); [2Ti 4:18](#)). As such the verse assures God’s people that he will deliver them from Satan’s temptation to apostatize during the time of distress.

**12:2** **Will come out of their sleep, some to eternal life and some to eternal shame**. This is a prediction of the bodily resurrection of the godly and ungodly prior to a final judgment ([Mt 25:46](#); [Jn 5:28–29](#)).

**12:4–13** **A Final Message to Daniel**. The book concludes by setting out a future course of events and by promising Daniel rest in the eternal state.

**12:4** **Let the words be kept secret**. The act of sealing was understood as giving something a mark of authentication (see [note on 8:26](#)).

took an oath by him who is living for ever that it would be **a time, times, and a half**; and when the power of the crusher of the holy people comes to an end, all these things will be ended.<sup>8</sup> And the words came to my ears, but **the sense of them was not clear to me**: then I said, O my lord, what is the sense of these things?

<sup>9</sup> And he said, Go on your way, Daniel: for the words are secret and shut up till the time of the end; <sup>10</sup> Till a number are tested and make themselves clean; and the evil-doers will do evil; for not one of the evil-doers will have knowledge; but all will be made clear to those who are wise. <sup>11</sup> And from the time when **the regular burned offering is taken away, and an unclean thing causing fear is put up**, there will be a thousand, two hundred and ninety days. <sup>12</sup> A blessing will be on the man who goes on waiting, and comes to the **thousand, three hundred and thirty-five days**. <sup>13</sup> But you, go on your way and take your rest: for you will be in your place at the end of the days.

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**12:7 A time, times, and a half.** See [note on 7:25](#).

**12:8 The sense of them was not clear to me.** Daniel did not comprehend the angel's response ([v. 7](#)) to his initial inquiry ([v. 6](#)), so he rephrased the question.

**12:11 The regular burned offering is taken away, and an unclean**

**thing causing fear is put up.** See [note on 9:27](#). The simile activity of Antiochus IV prefigured this activity of the Roman Titus in A.D. 70.

**12:12 1,290 days ... 1,335 days.** The angel clarified his previous answer ([v. 7](#); see [note on v. 8](#)). The significance of these time frames is obscure.