

THE REIGN OF GOD OVER THE KINGDOMS OF MEN

The Book of
Daniel



by Ted Stewart

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

The Book
of
Daniel

Ted Stewart

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The Book of Daniel

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This Book is Dedicated to

Brent, Kevin, Cherie, Trina

The children of Ted and Dot Stewart



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A special “*thank you*” to

The W.R. Collier family
for making the printing of this book possible.

Table of Contents

I	Introduction and Personal History of Daniel. (Daniel 1:1-21)	1
II	Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream..... (Daniel 2:1-49)	12
III	Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold..... (Daniel 3:1-30)	28
IV	Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of a Great Tree. (Daniel 4:1-37)	42
V	Belshazzar and the Handwriting on the Wall. (Daniel 5:1-31)	55
VI	King Darius' Foolish Decree. (Daniel 6:1-28)	69
VII	Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts..... (Daniel 7:1-28)	83
VIII	Daniel's Vision of the Ram and Male Goat (Daniel 8:1-27)	97
IX	Daniel's Vision of the Seventy Weeks..... (Daniel 9:1-27)	111
X	Revealing of the Messiah I. (Daniel 10:1-21)	128
XI	Future History Predicted..... (Daniel 11:1-25)	142
XII	Conclusion of the Visions of Daniel..... (Daniel 11:26-12:1-	153

A companion workbook on the study of Daniel by Ted Stewart is available for purchase through Sunset international Bible Institute External Studies: 1 (800) 687-2121

Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

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Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a video taped course. The voice track of the video tape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, to Darlene Morris and the staff of Sunset Translation Center who edited the manuscripts and to

each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

This book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible Study Library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders, and grow churches that plant other churches.

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Introduction And Personal History Of Daniel

Daniel 1:1–21

Introduction

Daniel is one of the most amazing books in the Bible. From the study of this book, the reader will find his faith strengthened by learning of the wondrous and wonderful ways God worked in Daniel's life. The book contains powerful examples of God's ability through His prophet Daniel, to foretell future events in great detail hundreds of years before they occurred. Several religious groups use the book of Daniel as a proof text for their existence. So it is very important to study Daniel.

Daniel is a book of wisdom and evidences. This book will cause readers to admire and love God more than ever. It will give you the opportunity to probe the very mind of God and observe the way the Bible interprets itself. Readers will find that parts of Daniel interpret other parts of the book, and secular history interprets the meaning of some of these prophecies.

To see God write history before it occurred is a remarkable aspect of the book. World empires are named before they came into existence. Evidence will prove that this book was written by Daniel at the time he claimed to have written it.

Daniel is a book about integrity, truthfulness, and remarkable future predictions. Throughout his life, Daniel obeyed God's will and never compromised his deep conviction. He showed his faith in God and became a great stalwart of the

Bible. He was a person who can be emulated in government, in business, and in daily living today.

The book of Daniel is about a man of God and about men of God. The virtues which characterized Daniel's life will inspire God's people to live for Him.

The book of Daniel also reveals God's Son, Jesus. So the book is not only a book about God's man, it is also a book about God's Son. The Messiah, God's Son, is shown to be at the very center of all history.

Perhaps the greatest concept in Daniel is the fact that God is revealed as the Creator of the world, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Ancient of Days, the One who holds His children in the palm of His hand, the One who can see into the future, the One who can strengthen His faithful ones in every affliction, and the One who gives eternal life. The God of Israel, the Most High God of the man Daniel is presented in the book of Daniel.

Deep truths are taught in the book of Daniel about God. Each chapter illustrates a different attribute of God. Chapter one reveals God as the righteous judge of His people who punished them by placing them in Babylonian captivity, while He also protected those who were faithful to Him. In chapter two God is shown as the omniscient revealer of the future as He shows the innermost thoughts of man's mind and at the same time reveals future history and future empires. Chapter three depicts God as the protector of those who believe and trust in Him. God is shown as the King above all kings in chapter four. Chapter five reveals God as the judge who weighs kings and kingdoms. In chapter six God is shown as the Lord of laws and lions.

Chapter seven depicts God as the Ancient of days, the One who will establish His own kingdom which will last forever. Chapter eight reveals that God is the Vindicator of His temple. In chapter nine God is seen as the Restorer of Jerusalem. In chapter ten God is depicted as the Provider of a Savior. Future events and kingdoms are revealed in chapter eleven. And in

chapter twelve God is shown as the One who will raise His faithful from the dead to live in eternal bliss with Him forever.

The Arrival At Babylon

The Successful Siege

The first two verses of the Book of Daniel state when and how the prophet was taken to Babylon. The events in the book began in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah. The king of Babylon successfully besieged Jerusalem. Daniel 1:1-2:

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

The first Babylonian captivity was in the third year of Jehoiakim which was the year 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and took captive some of the people. He also took articles from the temple of God, but he did not at that time destroy Jerusalem. Among the captives that he carried back to Babylon were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah..

Why Did God Allow The Successful Siege?

Why was Nebuchadnezzar able to bring the Judean kingdom under his control? Why did God allow a foreign power to subjugate His people? God's people had fallen away from Him. They no longer worshiped Him according to His will; they worshiped idols and false gods and no longer lived by the Law God gave them at Mt. Sinai. They were merciless as they sacrificed their own children, massacred innocent people, and mistreated the righteous. So God, in accordance with His

covenant, decided to punish His people because they did not do what was right. This was fulfilling the prophecies of Deuteronomy 28 – 30

God sent word to the people through His prophets again and again. But they mocked God's messengers and despised His words until the wrath of the Lord was aroused. So He punished His people (cf. 2 Chronicles 26). And that is what God will do today if people refuse to serve Him the way He commands and submit to His will. Often times the innocent suffer along with the wicked as was the case when God handed His people over to Nebuchadnezzar.

The Captive Nobles

There were four handsome, young men from the royal family among the exiles. Daniel 1:3-6:

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

The young men were intelligent, without physical defect, and well informed. King Nebuchadnezzar realized that these young men had great potential to serve in his kingdom. They were taught the language, customs, laws, and literature of the Babylonians.

Notice how these men were treated: “*The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to*

Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego” (Daniel 1:7). To Daniel, whose name means “God judges,” the chief official gave the name Belteshazzar which means “Baal, the Babylonian god, protects.” To Hananiah, which means “God is great,” he gave the name Shadrach, which means “servant of Sin,” another Babylonian god. To Mishael, which means “like God,” he gave the name Meshach, which means “protected by Sheshach”, another Babylonian god. Then to Azariah, which means “Jehovah is great,” he gave the name Abednego which means “servant of Nebo”, still another Babylonian god.

As a result of exile, these three young men had their names and identities changed. With the new names, they could no longer glorify Jehovah God. Instead, they were given names that are meant to glorified the false gods that were around them. It was not of their own choice, but it happened because they were slaves in another country, and they had no choice but to submit to the Babylonian authorities and masters.

Trial By Food

Daniel’s Purpose and Plea

But they did have a choice in some matters: *“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way”* (Daniel 1:8).

How would Daniel have been defiled by eating the king’s food? There are at least two ways this could have happened. First, Jews were not permitted to eat pork. They were not permitted to eat the meat of many kinds of animals that were unclean as commanded in the Law (cf. Leviticus 11). It is very possible that the king’s meals that were delivered to them contained unclean meat that they could not eat according to Jewish law. Eating the unclean meat would have defiled them. The word “*defile*” means “to make one unclean.” It also means “to cause one’s garments to be stained with sin.” So eating

unclean meat would have defiled Daniel, and he refused to defile himself.

Second, Daniel would have been defiled if the food had been sacrificed to the false gods of Babylon, as was quite common in heathen cultures. The king was considered to be the chief priest of all of the gods. As a result, almost all of the food that came into the king's house was first sacrificed to the pagan gods. For Daniel this would have been a terrible situation. He could not eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol.

Paul wrote that the Israelites who ate sacrifices offered to idols participated in the altar of that idol. This verse shows what a terrible thing it would have been if Daniel had eaten food sacrificed to idols. I Corinthians 10:20–21:

... the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Since sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, it would have been a sin for Daniel to partake, as it is for Christians. A believer cannot violate his conscience by giving allegiance to a false god by eating his food and in that way show that he has fellowship with that god. So Daniel would have defiled himself if he had eaten the unclean meat or food that had been sacrificed to false gods.

Daniel's actions tell a lot about him. Even though his forefathers had sinned in such a way as to cause the Babylonian captivity, Daniel desired to follow God's will. Daniel's godly example proves that a child does not have to follow his parents' evil ways. Since Daniel was from the royal family, his evil relatives were responsible for the captivity brought upon Jerusalem. But Daniel refused to follow in the steps of his forefathers. He devoted himself to his God and refused to violate the laws of his God.

When the royal food and wine were offered, he determined he would not defile himself by transgressing God's law. He asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself by eating the royal food. That is a powerful example of a courageous young man. How many young men stand up for their convictions like that today? How many people are willing to put their jobs at risk in order to stand for what is right and pure? How many people are willing to refuse temptations that would defile their body and soul because of their deep conviction and love for God? That is what Daniel did.

The church needs young men and women, young teenagers like Daniel, who will stand for their convictions and refuse to submit to sexual pressures to defile their bodies. Paul wrote that a Christian's body is the temple of the living God (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16). He also wrote that God's children have been bought with a price. Therefore, they are supposed to honor God with their body (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20). Because Christians do not belong to themselves, they should use their bodies to glorify God. Neither the sexually immoral, nor adulterers, nor prostitutes, nor homosexual will inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

After Joseph was sold by his brothers and taken to Egypt, he was put in charge of Potiphar's household. Joseph was tempted by the wife of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, to commit adultery, but he refused to do so. Joseph said: "... *How can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*" (Genesis 39:9). And even though she enticed him daily and even grabbed him and tried to hold him one time, he fled from her presence because he refused to sin against his God. Even at a young age Joseph had conviction, courage and integrity. Young people today need the same attributes because they are being tempted with drugs, sex, and alcohol which defile the mind. They weaken the mind, destroy the body, and limit the service a person can do for God and for the

world. Even though Daniel and Joseph were both probably teenagers, they had great courage and conviction.

Daniel's Progress, Proposition, and Triumph

The chief official's reticence to grant Daniel's request is understandable. He was responsible to oversee the young captives's physical and mental development so they would become prepared for the roles the king had in mind for them. Evidently these youths held a strategic place in the king's plans, so he wanted them well trained. If the men had been of little consequence to the king, their physical conditions would not have mattered and Ashpenaz would not have risked the loss of his life. As a result of Daniel's conviction, note what happened to him. Daniel 1:9-14:

Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

Notice, that God caused Daniel to find favor and sympathy from the chief official. God can cause relationships with other people to improve if His saints are doing what is right. God will bless a person who puts Him first in his life, purifies himself of defilement, and earnestly tries to do His will. He will cause a

person to get along with those with whom he works, even his supervisor. God will protect His holy people.

At the conclusion of the 10 days, the four who had lived on vegetables appeared healthier than those who had dined on the king's food. Since the four looked better—and not worse than the others, as Ashpenaz had feared—he did not object to the diet Daniel had requested for himself and his friends. So they were allowed to continue on a diet of vegetables. Note the results of the ten day test. Daniel 1:15-16:

At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

God blessed the young men physically. He allowed their bodies to become stronger and healthier than any of the young men who ate the royal food. God will bless the body of a young person who is dedicated to His service. The young person will escape terrible diseases that occur when people indulge in sin. They will escape the deterioration that occurs in the body of a person who gives himself to evil practices. And as a result, they will have a healthier body and a longer life to serve God. Daniel and his companions were blessed as a result of their convictions.

Trial By Wisdom

God's Gifts

God blessed the four young men with knowledge and understanding. These four young men being prepared by Nebuchadnezzar for positions of responsibility in the royal court were actually being prepared by God. For God gave them knowledge and understanding in many realms. Daniel 1:17:

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

God gave these young men another blessing because they remained faithful to Him. Their intelligence and knowledge grew. Their understanding of all kinds of literature, not just the Bible, and their learning in many fields of endeavor was increased.

God can bless Christians today so they can be a better engineer or a better scientist or a better technician. If a person puts God first in his life, God will bless him so he will become more capable, efficient and skillful in his work. A Christian can glorify God in any endeavor no matter his line of work. He can glorify God with whatever talents he has been given. Children of God need to give glory to Him for whatever talents and gifts He has given them: “. . . What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (I Corinthians 4:7). And they need to use those God given gifts to glorify and to please Him. That is what these four young men did. They were capable to begin with, but God increased their potential, and they became even more capable.

The King's Examination

After the three year training period the four young men were presented before the king. Daniel 1:18–19:

At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.

The Brilliant Students

The king found none equal to them so they entered the king's service. Daniel 1:20:

In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

The king found the Jewish boys ten times better than his magicians and enchanters. God blessed the young men with potential, healthy bodies, and endurance. As a result of their faithfulness to God, they served the king of Babylon.

Perhaps the greatest blessing of all was the length of time that Daniel served in Babylon: “*And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus*” (Daniel 1:21). Because God blessed him with a strong body and endurance, Daniel was able to serve until the first year of Cyrus.

605 B.C. was the year King Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Jerusalem. Cyrus, the Persian, conquered the Babylonian world empire in the year 539 B.C. That means that Daniel served 67 years. God can not only give Christians tremendous skill and efficiency in their job, He can keep them employed. God has always blessed believers who put Him first in their lives.

The fact that God gave Daniel the ability to understand and interpret visions and dreams (Dan. 1:17) meant that throughout Nebuchadnezzar’ long reign he depended on Daniel for understanding future events, revealed through dreams and visions.

Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream

Daniel 2:1–49

Introduction

In Daniel chapter one God was shown as the righteous judge of His people. He allowed Judah to go into Babylonian captivity because they had been unfaithful to Him. In chapter two other characteristics of God are given. He is the “Revealer of mysteries” and the “Revealer of future empires.”

The second chapter of Daniel is one of the most remarkable chapters in the entire Bible. It reveals that God can read a person's innermost thoughts; He knows what a person is thinking. He can also predict world events that will occur in the future. He has the ability to name world powers that will come into existence many years before they appear. As chapter two is examined both of these qualities of God will be studied: God's ability to read a person's mind and His ability to predict the future.

Nebuchadnezzar Conceals His Dream

The Troubled Tyrant

The Babylonian king had dreams that troubled his mind: *“In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep”* (Daniel 2:1). The dreams were so bad that the king was unable to sleep so he summoned his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers. Daniel 2:2–3:

So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means."

They were called collectively to exercise their enchantments in order to give the king an interpretation that would placate him. The king challenged the wise men, saying, I want to know what it means. The king told them about his dream, and he asked them what it meant.

The Mystified Magi

The astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, the language of Babylon: "*Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it'*" (Daniel 2:4). Since the book of Daniel was originally written in Aramaic at this point, the Babylonians could have read it in their own language.

But the king would not tell the wise men what he had dreamed. Daniel 2:5–6:

The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."

This was a very serious demand from the king. King Nebuchadnezzar used wisdom because he knew that if he told them the dream, they could make up an interpretation. But if they had to tell him what he dreamed, they would have to read his mind. If they could read his mind, they could tell the interpretation of the dream.

Notice who they were. They were astrologers, sorcerers, enchanters, and magicians, people who guided the Babylonian kings in those days. They were involved in false religion. Thus, there was no basis for what they would predict or interpret. If they had any help, it would certainly be from the devil. The men were inadequate, and they realized it.

Again they asked the king to tell them the dream: "*Once more they replied, 'Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it'*" (Daniel 2:7). The king knew the men were trying to gain time, so he again refused to tell the dream. Daniel 2:8–9:

Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me."

The king warned that there was a penalty if they did not tell the dream and interpret it. The king promised rewards and honor for the wise men' recalling and interpreting the dream. But he put them under a death penalty (they would be cut into pieces) and their houses would be burned to rubble if they proved to be false prognosticators who could not recall the dream.

They attested that the future belongs to the gods, not to men. Interestingly this was an admission that they had deceived the king in their past interpretations, a startling revelation from those held in high esteem in the court. The men finally give an honest answer. Daniel 2:10–11:

The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king,

however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men."

A truthful answer was given by the men when they said that it was too difficult a job for men. Only the gods of heaven could reveal the dream. They admitted that the gods they served could not reveal to them what the king dreamed nor what his dream meant. They were inadequate to the task, and they admitted their own weakness in the matter.

The Doomed Diviners

What was the result of their admission? After the wise men revealed that they were unable to satisfy the king's demands, the king was angry and furious. Daniel 2:12–13:

This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

The king in anger ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. When a decree was issued to put the wise men to death, men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

The Proposition, Prayer, and Revelation

Daniel's Offer

Daniel wisely and tactfully questioned the king's officer about the harsh decree. Daniel 2:14–16:

When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

Daniel was still a teenage during Nebuchadnezzar's second year of reign, 604 B.C. Daniel had only been in Babylon for two years and was still in his training period. That was the reason Daniel was not called to interpret the king's dream. So Daniel asked for time to interpret the dream.

Daniel's Prayer For Help

Notice what Daniel does when the king gives him some time to interpret the dream. Daniel 2:17–18:

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel consulted with his godly friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. And that is what Christians ought to do when they have difficulties. They ought to go to their godly friends, not worldly friends, because godly friends can give righteous advice.

Daniel urged his friends to plead for mercy from God so they would not be killed. Christians ought to learn from Daniel's example and kneel in prayer with friends. God in heaven wants to hear His children's requests and help them. If Christians do not ask, how can they expect to receive (James 4:2)? *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who*

gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Christians need to make their requests known to God: "... *You do not have, because you do not ask God*" (James 4:2).

God's Response To Daniel

Mercy is God's response to a person's need. Daniel recognized his own inability in the circumstances and turned to God in confidence, expecting the Lord to meet his need. God revealed the mystery to Daniel: "*During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision . . .*" (Daniel 2:19).

Daniel's Response To God

Daniel responded appropriately by offering praise to God. He acknowledged that God is a God of wisdom, knowing the end from the beginning, and a God of power, for whatever He determines, He can do. Daniel began and concluded His prayer speaking of God's wisdom and power (v. 23). Daniel 2:19–21:

*... Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said:
"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
wisdom and power are his. He changes times and
seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives
wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the
discerning."*

God gives wisdom to the wise. Why does God need to give wisdom if they are already wise? Solomon wrote: "*let the wise listen and add to their learning . . .*" (Proverbs 1:5). A wise man realizes he is not as wise as he ought to be, and he will be humble enough to keep searching for more wisdom. Christians need to be constantly learning new things about God and always searching for understanding. Daniel praised God because He gave these young men even greater wisdom and

power. God gave them the solution to the problem; He revealed the dream. Daniel 2:22–23:

“He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”

Ready for the Appointment

Receiving from God the knowledge of the dream and its interpretation Daniel went to Arioch, the king's executioner, and informed him that he was ready to interpret the king's dream. Daniel 2:24:

Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, “Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.”

Daniel confidently requested to go before the king so he could interpret the dream.

Daniel Interprets the Dream

The Entrance, the Question, and Honor to Whom Honor Is Due

Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and identified him as one of the exiles from Judah. Daniel 2:25–26:

Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, “I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.” The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), “Are you

able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?"

The king asked Daniel if he was able to tell the dream and interpret it. But Daniel told the king that no person is able to explain the mystery on his own. Daniel 2:27–28:

Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:

All glory and honor was given to God. Daniel did not take the glory or credit for himself, nor did he build himself up arrogantly. He gave honor to God, and that is what God's people need to do. In everything they need to glorify Him and remove pride from their lives. God does not bless a proud man, but the humble receive wisdom and insight.

Daniel Revealed The Dream

Daniel told the king that God was going to reveal the mystery to the king. He asserted at the outset that the king's dream was prophetic, "what will take place in the future," about things to come and what was going to happen. Daniel 2:29–30:

"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind."

God revealed the mystery to Daniel so King Nebuchadnezzar could know the interpretation. Also, the king would know what had gone through his mind. When God gives knowledge, it is not for a person's enjoyment. Knowledge is not to build up a person. The reason God gives knowledge is so it can be shared and so it can help others. As saints learn the wisdom of God, they should not brag about what they have attained. They should use their wisdom humbly to share with others.

The large, enormous, dazzling, awesome statue was described. The king's dream was relatively simple. Daniel reported that the king had seen an enormously large statue. Its size and appearance were awesome. It made the king appear insignificant when he stood before it. Daniel 2:31–35:

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

After Daniel described the dream, the king knew Daniel had spoken the truth. Imagine how aghast the king must have been when he realized that Daniel could read his mind. He probably wondered how Daniel was able to know his thoughts. But Daniel had told the king that the God of heaven revealed the dream of the statue: head made of pure gold, chest and arms

made of silver, belly and thighs made of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. The rock struck the feet of the statue and broke it into pieces. Then the rock became a huge mountain and filled the entire earth.

Daniel Interprets The Dream

Daniel interpreted the dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's interpretation makes it clear that the image revealed the course of Gentile kingdoms which in turn would rule over the land of Palestine and the people of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar, head of the Babylonian Empire, was represented by the head of gold. Daniel 2:36–38:

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

The Babylonian royal empire was one of the greatest empires of all history. They had conquered the Assyrians, the Ludians, and the Egyptians. They had formed a world empire by the seventh century B.C. because Nebuchadnezzar had led the Babylonian army to victory. When his father died in 605 B.C., he became the head of the Babylonian empire.

Daniel told the king he was the head of gold. God had given the king dominion, power, might, and glory. Then Daniel told the king that another world empire would arise, the image of the chest and arms made of silver. *“After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours . . .”* (Daniel 2:39). The second kingdom would be inferior to the Babylonian empire.

Darius, the Mede, would take over the kingdom: *“That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of*

sixty-two” (Daniel 5:30–31). The second kingdom is named when King Darius issued a Medo-Persian decree in Daniel 6:8:

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

Daniel predicted in advance that Cyrus (although not by name) would conquer the Babylonians and establish the Medo-Persian world empire. History confirms these events. Read about this in Olmstead's History of the Persian Empire. Archeological records confirm that Cyrus conquered the Babylonian empire.

Notice that the third kingdom will rule over the whole earth: “. . . Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth” (Daniel 2:39). The kingdom that followed the Medo-Persian empire was represented on the statue by the belly and thighs made of bronze. The meaning of Daniel's later vision of a ram and a goat is revealed. The goat runs against the ram and overcomes the ram. The ram is killed and the goat takes over. Daniel by the power of God predicted the kingdom that succeeded the Medo-Persian empire. Daniel 8:20–21:

The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king.

The ram represents the kings of the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat is the king of Greece. Alexander the Great, founder of the Grecian empire, was the first king. And Greece is named as the third world empire. Three of the great world empires have been studied with Babylon being the first, Medo-Persia the second, and Greece the third. It is interesting that God revealed world history to Daniel even before it happened.

Daniel revealed the meaning of the fourth section of the statue. Daniel 2:40:

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

The fourth world empire that arose was represented by the iron legs with feet of iron and baked clay. From history one can learn that it was the Roman empire. The Roman kingdom succeeded the Greek kingdom and was in power when Jesus was born: “*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world*” (Luke 2:1). It was during that census that Joseph took Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem. As a result the Lord Jesus Christ was born in the city of Bethlehem in the days of Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of the Roman empire.

All four world empires are named in the Bible. And history verifies that the kingdoms were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Daniel correctly predicted world history that occurred over a period of more than 500 years. How well could any person today predict the next 500 years? God knows the future, but man does not. But God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel!

There were not merely four empires; there is a fifth world kingdom. Daniel 41–43:

Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will

be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

Some scholars believe that verse 42 refers to a later phase of the Roman empire, even modern times. But the Roman empire does not exist any more. The scholars distort history because the Roman empire passed away around the third century. In 290 B.C. when the capitol was moved to Constantinople, the Roman empire ceased to exist entirely.

The Roman empire was partly strong and partly brittle. Parts of the Roman empire dominated entirely by Rome were strong. But in other parts of the empire, Rome allowed a national king, a captured king, to reign. That part of the Roman empire was brittle.

In Palestine in the days of Augustus Caesar, when Herod was king, Palestine was a section of the empire where the feet and toes were of baked clay. King Herod was allowed to independently reign, but he had to give allegiance to Rome. Later in Palestinian history King Herod ceased to exist, and he was replaced by a Roman governor, Pilate, who represented the feet and toes of iron.

Then a fifth kingdom arose in the form of a little rock which crushed and broke the image (cf. Daniel 2:40). This kingdom will never be destroyed. Daniel 2:44 tells us that:

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

The fifth kingdom will bring to an end the other four kingdoms, but it will endure forever.

Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that the dream was true and would take place in the future.

This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy” (Daniel 2:45).

The stone that became a huge a mountain and filled the whole earth was a prediction of events that occurred during the Roman empire. Jesus Christ was born in the days of Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor (cf. Luke 2:1,7). Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of God was near: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:15). Jesus warned that the time had come. The time that the prophets, including Daniel, had foretold, came during the time of the Roman empire.

Jesus told His apostles that some of them would not die until they had seen the kingdom. Mark 9:1 records this statement by Jesus: *“And he said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.’”* Jesus meant that the kingdom would be established in the lifetime of the apostles. And indeed it was.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, He gathered His apostles together and told them about His authority: *“ . . . All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”* (Matthew 28:18). Jesus meant that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Since He has all authority in heaven and on earth, that truly makes Him the King.

When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, He became King over everything that exists. Then He ascended to the Father on high to sit at His right hand. Paul verifies this in Ephesians 1:20–21:

. . . when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all

rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

God made Jesus Ruler over the whole universe. And the kingdom was established exactly as God had promised.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave His apostles what is often called the great commission. Matthew 28:19–20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus told His apostles to take the Gospel to the world. Christians who submit to Jesus today must also be willing to expand His kingdom. Christians expand His kingdom by sharing what they have learned with other people each day.

Jesus is the rock that smashed the other kingdoms. He was made the chief cornerstone of His kingdom (cf. Matthew 21:42–44). Peter referred to Jesus as the living Stone (cf. 1 Peter 2:4). Jesus, the living stone, is still ruling over His kingdom 2,000 years after His kingdom began. But the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires have all disappeared. The kingdom of God still resides all over the world today.

Daniel And His Friends Are Promoted

The king was so moved at Daniel's interpretation that he prostrated himself before Daniel and ordered that an offering be made to Daniel, an honor that would normally have been given only to the gods of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar gave honor to God because He revealed the mystery through Daniel. Daniel 2:46–47:

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

The king paid honor to Daniel and believed that Daniel's God was the God of gods and Lord of kings.

Daniel was placed in a high position ruling over the province of Babylon and all its wise men. Daniel 2:48–49:

Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

The king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as administrators over the province of Babylon at Daniel's request. Daniel and his friends were blessed by God because they remained faithful to Him even when they were carried to a foreign country.

Nebuchadnezzar's Image Of Gold

Daniel 3:1–30

Introduction

In chapter one God was shown as the righteous judge. He punished His people by allowing them to be taken into Babylonian captivity. God protected Daniel and his friends during those difficult times.

In chapter two God was shown as the revealer of mysteries and of future events, including future world empires. The last kingdom predicted was that of Jesus. While Jesus was on earth, He predicted that the time was near and that His kingdom would be established during the lifetime of His apostles. Before Jesus left earth, He gave His apostles the commission to take the Gospel to all the world and expand His kingdom to every nation.

The apostle John wrote that Jesus Christ is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (cf. Revelation 1:5). John did not refer to this as a future event. He wrote, “*He is.*” When Jesus ascended to the throne of God, He was above all principalities, powers, might, and dominion. He is even over the angels and every king on the earth. He decides who will be the rulers of the earth.

Jesus has made Christians to be a kingdom. Revelation 1:5–6:

. . . To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

John was writing to the seven churches of Asia. The church, which means “the called out people of God,” is His kingdom. They are the ones who have submitted to His rule. They bow their knees to King Jesus and obey Him. The church is the kingdom and was established 2,000 years ago. That means it has outlasted all the other kingdoms of the world and is the universal kingdom.

The effect of the revelation given to Nebuchadnezzar about his significant role in Gentile history is discerned from his response in the events recorded in chapter 3. Identified as the head of gold (2:38), Nebuchadnezzar then caused an image of gold to be erected!

In this chapter God will be shown as the omnipotent, all powerful protector, even when His people are going through fire. All Christians go through fire at one time or another. They may go through a fire of suffering, tribulation, affliction, or difficulties that can test them. Three young men passed through a fire that tested them and made them as pure as gold.

Nebuchadnezzar Erects A Huge Image

A New Idol—god

The king made an image that was 90 feet high and covered with gold: “*King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon*” (Daniel 3:1). The image showed the immense wealth that Nebuchadnezzar had. The historian Herodotus wrote that the large statue to Marduk, one of the gods of Nebuchadnezzar, was made with over 53,000 pounds of gold. That would be worth about \$350,000,000 today. The Babylonians had immense wealth during that period

of time. As the king conquered nations, he plundered their treasures.

Substantiating Proofs

King Nebuchadnezzar set up the image on the plains of Dura. Interestingly, archaeologists have discovered mounds in that area, including one great mound 20 feet high and 45 feet square. They say it must have been a pedestal for a very large image. That mound is likely the very pedestal of the king's image. Also, archaeologists have discovered a text which Nebuchadnezzar inscribed on a plaque:

Beside my statue as king I wrote an inscription mentioning my name, and I erected it for posterity. May future kings respect this monument, remember the praise of the gods inscribed thereupon; and he respects my royal name who does not abrogate my statutes and does not change my decrees, his throne shall be secure, his life shall last long, his dynasty shall continue.

Because of the inscription that was found, it is probable that the text was on the image mentioned in Daniel 3:1.

Look at The King's Image Chart at the end of this chapter to see the proportions of the statue. Some scholars have said that the measurements, nine feet wide and ninety feet high, would be a grotesque image. If it were on a mound twenty feet high, then the image itself would have been only seventy feet high which is the exact proportion of a man.

The king summoned all of the officials of his empire to celebrate the dedication of his statue. Daniel 3:2-3:

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

governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

All these titles were also found in archeological texts. Manuscripts engraved on stone and cylinders with the official's titles indicate the authenticity of this biblical document.

The herald told the people to fall down and worship the image. Daniel 3:4–5:

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up."

Is King Nebuchadnezzar commanding the people to worship him as a god? This kind of worship was quite common at that time. The king of Egypt considered himself to be the representative of the sun god, and he was called the son of the sun god. He considered himself to be a god and set up worship for himself that other kings would observe in future days. The Assyrian kings, as well, considered themselves to be gods, representatives of their god. And they, too, required people to fall down and worship them. The text does not actually say that the image represented King Nebuchadnezzar. It could have been an image of someone else. But in view of the text that said Nebuchadnezzar made a statue of himself, it is quite reasonable to believe that the statue is probably of the king. Nebuchadnezzar was likely asking all the people to worship him as a god.

Notice what will happen to those who do not worship the statue. Daniel 3:6–7:

“Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. The law would have a devastating effect upon the people who did not obey the decree. To be thrown into a blazing furnace was common punishment during those days. Nebuchadnezzar burned Ahab and Zedekiah, two false prophets, in a fire. They committed adultery with their neighbor's wives, and they spoke in God's name with lying words. So God delivered them to the king of Babylon to be killed by fire (cf. Jeremiah 29:21-24).

Daniel's Friends Refused to Worship The King's Idol

The Character of Daniel's Three Friends

No indication is given of the size of the multitude that assembled on this occasion. But because it included all the kingdom's officials it must have been huge. Some astrologers told King Nebuchadnezzar that there were some Jews who neither served nor worshiped the golden image. The counselors evidently sought to curry favor from the king by contrasting the three Jews' refusal to bow to the image with their own worship of the golden image. Daniel 3:8-12:

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the

sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

The Jews were the same three young men who with Daniel had refused to eat the king's food because they did not want to defile themselves. It was probably unclean food that had been sacrificed to idols, they refused to transgress the law of their God. Their action showed their integrity, sincerity, commitment, and dedication. They loved their God and refused to disobey Him.

What God's Law Teaches

They did not worship this god because that would be in violation of God's will, as well. God had commanded the Israelites not to bow down or worship any image (Exodus 20:4–5). To be true to their God, they could not obey the king's decree. But God expects His people to submit to the governing authorities because those authorities have been established by God (cf. Romans 13:1–7). So believers face a real predicament. Are they supposed to obey the laws of the land or the laws of God? Peter and the other apostles told the Sanhedrin that they must obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 5:29).

Which Law Do Believers Follow?

Ordinarily the man of God should always submit to human ordinances; he should always obey the law. But when that law causes a person to disobey God's law, then he must choose the higher of the two laws, God's law. The three young men had the courage to risk their lives for God's law.

Daniel's Friends Trust Jehovah God

The King's Foolish Rage

How significant this event was to **Nebuchadnezzar** is seen by his response to the astrologers' accusation of the three noncompliant Jews. When he heard that the three refused to bow, he became furious with rage and summoned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel 3:13–15:

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

When the young men were brought before Nebuchadnezzar, he inquired if the charge was true. If they refused to worship the image, he said they would immediately be thrown into the blazing furnace. The king made a mistake when he asked what god would be able to rescue them from his hand? In a way Nebuchadnezzar was defying the God of heaven when he implied that no god could deliver them from the furnace. But the all-powerful God who knows the future, who knows the minds of men, who can punish nations and bring them into captivity, can also deliver people from fire. God is the all-powerful protector of His people, and He can do anything. When Nebuchadnezzar implied that no god could rescue them from the furnace of fire, he made a tremendous mistake, as he was soon to learn.

The Ultimate Test of Faith

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gave the king a bold answer. The three showed absolute confidence in God, stating that their God was greater than Nebuchadnezzar and was able to deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar's judgment in a display of His superior power. Daniel 3:16–18:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

What tremendous faith and courage of these young men had! They said that their God was powerful enough to rescue them from the fire if it was His will. But if it was not His will, they were willing to give their lives because of their convictions. They refused to disobey God's laws by bowing down to worship any god except the God of heaven.

Daniel's Friends Are Protected in the Furnace

Faith Vs. Fire

In spite of the high regard with which Nebuchadnezzar had held these three (1:20), he determined to demonstrate his authority by ordering their immediate execution. This would serve as a lesson to any others who might consider rebelling against his political and religious authority. Nebuchadnezzar was so furious that he ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Daniel 3:19–23:

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

The king commanded some of his strongest soldiers to tie up Daniel's friends and throw them into the blazing furnace. Imagine, the soldiers who threw them into the furnace were killed because the fire was so hot.

Then something remarkable happened to Daniel's friends. As Nebuchadnezzar peered into the furnace, probably through the lower opening, what he saw amazed him. Daniel 3:24–25:

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth figure that looked like the sons of the gods. Later the king referred to the figure as an angel, and perhaps he was an angel. He might even have been the second person of the Godhead, Jesus, because he looked "like a son of the gods." But whether he was an angel or the Son of God, God sent His deliverer to save them from the fire.

Daniel's Friends Are Promoted

The Men Emerge Unsinged

The king summoned the three men from the fire. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the God these three faithfully served (Dan. 3:17) is truly God. Daniel 3:26–27:

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

Notice that the king changed his attitude about Daniel's friends. He called them “*servants of the Most High God.*” The fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their head singed. Their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. What a miracle!

Nebuchadnezzar was impressed! In view of the evidence presented to him, Nebuchadnezzar declared that this was an act of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel 3:28:

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

Nebuchadnezzar was convinced that the God of heaven was more powerful than Isbar, the god of fire. He believed that God

was all-powerful and complete allegiance should be given to Him. The king commended the three young men for defying his orders and being willing to die rather than worship any god except their own God. He praised their God! By defying the king's orders the young men won the respect of the king. He admired their great loyalty to God and began to praise and glorify their God.

That is the same God who will help Christians with their problems, too. The God who calmed the lake during the storm (cf. Matthew 8:23–27) can assist His children during times of tribulations. While Christian may not face the prospect of being thrown into a blazing furnace, they may face troubles and tribulations in this life. They may have financial problems, health problems, or difficulties in relationships.

If God's children will have the same conviction that Daniel's friends had, God can deliver them, also. The three young men refused to worship any God except the living God. Christians will be tempted by Satan, but they must always put God first. Satan tries to get believers to serve other gods. Some people in the world are tempted to worship an idol. He tempts all people to worship the idols of money, power, pleasure, position or beauty.

Jesus wants to be first in the life of every saint. Matthew 10:37–38:

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Christians should not place a person above God; He desires to be first. When I was a missionary in Brazil, I met a young lady named Maria Ditaldo. She worshiped the religion of her father, but when she studied the Scriptures she realized that she was violating God's commands. She decided she was going

to have to change her beliefs, so she went to her father and told him of her decision to become a Christian. The father told Maria that if she made that decision, he would disinherit her and never speak to her again.

Maria greatly loved, respected, and esteemed her father. Her father was a multi-millionaire with an extremely large coffee plantation. Maria would lose a large inheritance if she became a Christian. She prayed, read her Bible, and made the decision to put God above her father. She burned her idols and was baptized into Jesus Christ. Immediately, her father had her name stricken from his will, and he no longer spoke to her.

This young lady later married one of the single missionaries, and they formed a great dynamic team for Jesus. They taught many people the Gospel and planted several churches in various parts of Brazil. God blessed their labors with many converts and with beautiful children, as well.

Years later when her father was near death, he began to reflect upon his earlier decision. After Maria's third child was born, her father called her to tell her he had made a tragic mistake. He said he had not had the benefit of her beautiful family. Maria's father realized that her life was far superior to his life. He was ashamed of what he had done and asked for her forgiveness. He put her back into his will, and the next week he died. Maria gained the fortune she thought she had given up for Jesus, and she found a peaceful life that was more valuable than that material wealth. She had a wonderful relationship with her God that she treasured even more than the relationship with her father. Not only did she gain a new life in Jesus and a promise of eternal life, she got earthly wealth, as well.

Nebuchadnezzar was impressed that Daniel's friends were delivered from the fiery furnace. As a result the king decreed that the God of the three young men was to be held in honor. Daniel 3:29:

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

The king decreed that if anyone said anything against the God of Daniel's friends, that person would be cut into pieces and his house would be destroyed. The king now respected their God.

The Men Are Promoted for Defying the Kings Orders

Instead of being killed or demoted, the young men were promoted: *“Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon”* (Daniel 3:30. God blesses men who stand up for their convictions. He delivers people from their problems.

An example of conviction is a Brazilian convert named Walter Lapa. Walter was asked by his employer to write a false receipt saying that the company had sold some merchandise for less money than the actual selling price so the company would not have to pay tax. Walter was a recent convert, but he had a deep conviction to live for Jesus. He told the boss he would not lie. He said it would violate the laws of the country as well as the laws of his God. He told the boss that he was a Christian and could not write the false receipt. His boss threatened to fire him. Walter then had a choice to make. Would he make his job an idol that he loved more than he loved God? Walter told his boss to fire him because he would not disobey God's laws. He lost his job for following Jesus.

The employer began to reflect upon what he had done, and a few days later he called Walter and asked him to return to work. The employer decided he needed a man of integrity like Walter in his business. He promoted him and put him over the finance department. Because Walter was true to his God and was willing to give up his position and income, God blessed

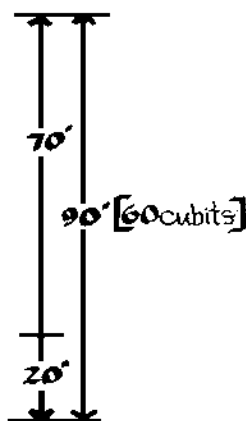
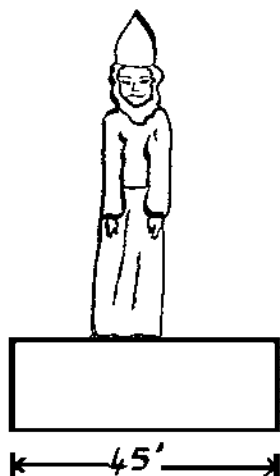
him. When men, like Daniel's friends and Walter, are faithful to God, He blesses them.

Of course, God's blessings do not always occur immediately. The Apostle Paul was delivered from many afflictions, but he lost his life rather than deny Jesus, according to historians. He kept the faith in order to receive the crown of righteousness (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7-8). Paul like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego preferred to die rather than to disobey their Lord. May Christians all over the world have conviction and courage as they serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

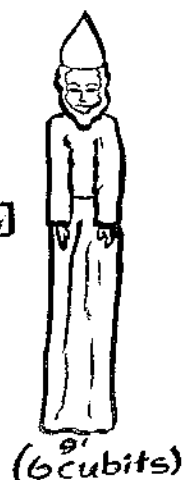
THE KING'S IMAGE

DAN 3:1-7

Either



Or



Nebuchadnezzar's Vision Of A Great Tree

Daniel 4:1–37

Introduction

King Nebuchadnezzar developed a growing appreciation for the God of Daniel. In the second chapter Daniel was summoned to reveal the king's dream. God revealed the dream and the interpretation, and the king was deeply impressed with the God of Daniel. In chapter three Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished by the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire that he made a decree that anyone who spoke evil of the God of the three young men would be cut into pieces. The king recognized that God was a powerful God. In chapter four another event occurred in the life of Nebuchadnezzar that convinced him that the God of Daniel is King of kings and Lord of lords. He came to the realization that God is King above all kings, including himself.

The King's Proclamation

Nebuchadnezzar's Confession

Notice, the fourth chapter contains a letter written by the King. Daniel recorded an official proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar which was circulated throughout his realm. Daniel was led by the Holy Spirit's inspiration to include this official proclamation. Daniel 4:1:

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

It is amazing that an entire chapter in the Bible was written by a Babylonian king.

The king told the world what God had shown him:

“It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me”
(Daniel 4:2).

Nebuchadnezzar gave glory and honor to the God of heaven. Daniel 4:3:

*How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an eternal kingdom;
his dominion endures from generation to
generation.*

Nebuchadnezzar's Vision

For the second time a revelation was given to Nebuchadnezzar through a dream (2:1, 27-29). This dream, like the one years before, terrified the king (cf. 2:1,). Though contented and prosperous, he was afraid. So he sought an interpretation of the dream to allay his fears. Daniel 4:4-7:

*I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace,
contented and prosperous. I had a dream that made
me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and
visions that passed through my mind terrified me. So
I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be
brought before me to interpret the dream for me.
When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and
diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could
not interpret it for me.*

All the wise men of Babylon were brought in to interpret the dream, but none of them could interpret the dream.

Daniel Brought to the King

The king expressed his confidence in Daniel. Unable once again to be helped by his own conjurers, he had to consult one who worshiped Yahweh. Daniel 4:8–9:

Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I said, “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you . . .

Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel as chief of the magicians, not because he was in authority over the wise men but because he was wiser than all of them, capable of understanding and interpreting dreams. The vision is told to Daniel by the king. Daniel 4:9–11:

Here is my dream; interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.

The vision consisted of a huge tree that touched the sky and was visible to the ends of the earth. The tree was beautiful and provided abundant fruit. Daniel 4:12:

Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

A messenger from heaven commanded that the tree be cut down. Daniel 4:13–14:

“In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

The stump and its roots were to remain bound with iron bonds. Daniel 4:15–17:

“ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. ‘Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.’”

This vision was designed to be a part of God's revelation of Himself and His authority over Nebuchadnezzar who in pride had exalted himself above God. Daniel was asked to interpret the dream for the king. Daniel 4:18:

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

Daniel Interprets the Vision

Daniel's Reluctance

Daniel was reluctant to interpret this second dream. The first dream exalted Nebuchadnezzar; he was the head of gold (2:38). But this second dream debased him. Daniel was terrified to tell the king what the dream meant. Daniel 4:19:

Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!"

Daniel desired that the interpretation would apply to the enemies of the king instead of the king himself.

Misuse of Text by Jehovah Witnesses

The Jehovah witnesses use this chapter as a proof text for the origin of their religious sect in 1914 A.D. "*Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him*" (Daniel 4:16). The Jehovah Witnesses teach that the seven times in this text indicate seven years. There is some biblical precedent for this in Revelation 12:14 where 3½ times is later interpreted to mean 3½ years.

The Jehovah Witnesses say the seven years represent the period of time from Nebuchadnezzar becoming king until the time when God set up His kingdom. They interpret that after the seven times, God gave Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to Christ, and he established His kingdom. Daniel 4:17:

"The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of

men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.’”

The Jehovah Witnesses teach that after the seven times God gave Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to Christ to establish His kingdom. As was previously mentioned, they interpret that seven times equals seven years. They use 360 days in a year and multiply them with the seven years to have 2,520 days. Then they change the 2,520 days to years believing that a day corresponds to a year in prophecy. They base this on the event when the twelve spies were sent into the land of Canaan for forty days and returned with a bad report. Then God told them they would wander in the desert for forty years because of their unbelief: *“For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you”* (Numbers 14:34). Then the Jehovah witnesses take the date that Nebuchadnezzar become king (606 B.C.) And add 2, 520 years and come up with the date of A.D. 1914. This is supposedly the date that Jesus Christ established His kingdom.

The Huge Tree

Daniel tactfully gave the good news first! Like the tree, Nebuchadnezzar had become great and strong, and his kingdom had been expanded and consolidated under his rule. His kingdom had become greater than any kingdom up to that time.

Daniel interpreted the dream, so man does not have to depend upon another person's interpretation. Daniel 4:20–22:

“The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air—you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it

reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.”

The tree is King Nebuchadnezzar. It is not God's kingdom as misinterpreted by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Daniel reluctantly told the king that he was the tree.

The Importance Of Cutting Down The Tree

Then came the bad news. The cutting down of the tree—a decree from the Most High—meant that Nebuchadnezzar would be removed from his position of authority in the kingdom. Daniel 4:23:

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

The messenger also said he would be drenched with dew and would live like wild animals until seven times pass by for him.

The decree was directed toward the king: *“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king”* (Daniel 4:24). Daniel interprets the dream for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:25–26:

“You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that

your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules."

Daniel told the king that he was going to lose his kingdom, but it would be restored to him when he acknowledged that Heaven rules. Daniel pleaded with the king to accept his advice and to renounce his sins. Daniel 4:27:

"Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

King Nebuchadnezzar must acknowledge that it is God who determines who the world rulers are. God is the one who gives kingdoms, and He can take them away. When the king recognizes that truth, his kingdom will be restored.

The seven times could represent seven years, seven weeks, or seven months. The word time is a term that could refer to any period of time. The number seven represents completeness. There are seven days in a week. In the book of Revelation there are seven golden lampstands which represent the churches of God (cf. Revelation 1:12). The seven spirits before God's throne represent completeness (cf. Revelation 1:4).

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

The Dream Becomes Reality

Nebuchadnezzar continued in his sinful pride. He did not repent as Daniel had advised him to do (v. 27). The king was controlled by his great egotism. He considered the city of Babylon itself as his personal possession and as a reflection of his power and glory (v. 30). The prophecy was fulfilled because King Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride and arrogance. Daniel 4:28–30:

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

The King Loses Everything

A voice from heaven immediately put into effect the fulfillment of the vision Nebuchadnezzar had seen. Daniel 4:31–32:

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

The only reason that Nebuchadnezzar had might and power was because God gave it to him. Isaiah had prophesied to King Hezekiah that the time would come when everything in the palace would be carried to Babylon along with the king's descendants (Isaiah 39:6–7). God gave Nebuchadnezzar the power to capture Jerusalem in order to punish His people, but Nebuchadnezzar did not recognize that his power came from God. He thought he had built his kingdom by his own ability. The great city of Babylon, that Nebuchadnezzar was so proud of, was the largest, strongest city in the world. The city had two walls that surrounded it. The outer wall was so thick that they had chariot races on top of it. It was 55½ miles in circumference. Inside the city were the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The garden was a beautiful thing to behold and was considered one of the wonders of the world.

All that Nebuchadnezzar accomplished was amazing, but it was done by the power of God. God gave him his kingdom, his wealth, and administrators to help him. But he took all the glory for himself.

God has also given Christians everything they have: “. . . *What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*” (I Corinthians 4:7). Christians can be tempted to sin the same as Nebuchadnezzar. They should not be filled with pride. Jesus said in Matthew 23:12 “. . . *whoever exalts himself will be humbled.*” Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself, and God humbled him.

There are inscriptions in historical texts that have been preserved from Nebuchadnezzar's day. In one historical text Nebuchadnezzar described his might and power: “I went down and built the foundations for these walls down in the regions of the Hadean world below. I have built the walls up so high they reach into heaven.” He bragged about all his great accomplishments. As a result, the king became a wild maniac. As predicted, the king lived like an animal in the field, eating grass like cattle. (Later Daniel added that the king lived with wild donkeys, 5:21.) Daniel 4:33:

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

King Nebuchadnezzar became a madman. He was made lower than human beings. In the king's absence Daniel may have played a major role in preserving the kingdom and possibly in preventing anyone from killing the king. Perhaps, because of his royal position, Nebuchadnezzar was hidden in a

secluded park so his true condition could be hidden from the populace.

Nebuchadnezzar's Restoration

The King Praised God

The king's sanity returned to him when he looked toward heaven. The king who had sought honor and glory for himself now acknowledged that the Most High lives forever. Daniel 4:34–35:

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion;

his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the peoples of the earth

are regarded as nothing.

He does as he pleases

with the powers of heaven

and the peoples of the earth.

No one can hold back his hand

or say to him: "What have you done?"

Nebuchadnezzar recognized that God is the only eternal king. There are no eternal kings on earth; every earthly kingdom will come to an end. The Babylonian empire fell as did the Medo-Persian kingdom. Then the Grecian empire was destroyed, and even the mighty Roman kingdom arose and fell. But who is still on the throne today? God in heaven, the King of kings. His dominion is everlasting; it will never be destroyed. And the King of kings determines which authorities governs today. God is in control of world history, of the future, and of nations and their rulers. Nebuchadnezzar eventually recognized this truth.

The Confession

The king's acknowledgment of God's right to rule (vs. 34-35) brought about the restoration of the king's sanity. King Neuchadnezzar glorified the King of heaven. Daniel 4:36-37:

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

What a powerful lesson this mighty king learned. He realized that everything God does is right and all His ways are just. Nebuchadnezzar now knew that God will humble those who are filled with pride. The king's might, his glory, and all his riches were nothing until God allowed him to have them again. No ruler today is as powerful as Nebuchadnezzar was, but he had to learn to submit to God as should everyone. When a Christian is filled with pride and feels that he does not need God, he too may experience a fall. That fall may be severe unless he learns to humble himself.

All Christians need to recognize that everything they have comes from God. They need to glorify and honor God because their very existence depends upon Him: *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:6). If a person acknowledges God with a thankful heart, He will continue to guide and bless that person.

God is in control of the kings of the world, the primary message of this chapter. He is the King above all kings. John confirms who Jesus is: *"... Jesus Christ ... the ruler of the kings of the earth"* (Revelation 1:5).

Conclusion

After Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, He ascended to the very throne of heaven and sat down at God's right hand to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the one who determines the world rulers. Our presidents and national leaders are determined by Jesus Christ. God expects everyone to submit to governing authorities because He has ordained them. When a person rebels against the authority, he is rebelling against the one God has instituted (cf. Romans 13:1–2). God determines the rulers of Russia, China, the United States of America, every African country, every South American country and every existing country. They are all under His control. If kings will not recognize Jesus Christ as the supreme ruler, God will not bless them.

There is great assurance, comfort, and serenity in knowing that God is in control. Christians do not have to worry even if their nation is conquered by another nation. God is in control. God allowed the Israelites to be taken into captivity to punish them for their sins, and He can allow any sinful nation to suffer when they fail to acknowledge Him as Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn the lesson of humility so he lost his kingdom for a time. God can teach any person or nation the lesson of humility when they become proud, arrogant, and selfish. The king was spending so much money on his works that he neglected the poor. Christians need to do God's will and take care of the poor. If they obey Him, He will raise their nation to greatness and bless it: *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34). Give glory to God, serve Him and pray that national and local leaders will acknowledge and glorify God.

Belshazzar And The Handwriting On The Wall

Daniel 5:1–31

Introduction

Daniel four is one of the most intriguing chapters in the Bible. King Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize that there is a King above all kings, the Lord Jehovah God. He is the one who gave King Nebuchadnezzar the privilege of ruling as king. After spending time eating grass with the animals in the field, God returned the kingship to Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter five a descendent of King Nebuchadnezzar, King Belshazzar, failed to recognize that God is King above all kings. As a result, he not only lost his kingdom but his life as well.

Belshazzar Defiles the Temple Vessels

A Huge Party Is Given

Babylon was being besieged by the Persian army, led by Cyrus, while Belshazzar, inside the city, was giving a great banquet for 1,000 of his nobles. Perhaps the banquet was given to show Belshazzar's contempt for the Persians and to allay his people's fears. Archeologists have excavated a large hall in Babylon 55 feet wide and 165 feet long that had plastered walls. Such a room would have been sufficient to house a gathering of this size. Belshazzar considered his city secure

from assault because of its massive walls. Within the city were supplies that would sustain it for 20 years. Therefore the king felt he had little cause for concern. Daniel 5:1–3:

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

As King Belshazzar was drinking wine with all the his officials, his wives, and his concubines, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He had put the sacred vessels in the treasury of the house of his god in Babylon.

Idolatry Is Rampant

King Belshazzar ordered that the sacred vessels be utilized in a feast that was celebrating and worshipping other gods: “As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone” (Daniel 5:4). The people praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone using the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem. It must have grieved God’s heart to see the vessels being used to worship false gods. He was probably angered in His heart as well.

Who was Belshazzar

Historians for many years denied the existence of Belshazzar. They said that he was a mere fictional character in

the book of Daniel and did not ever exist. The historian Herodotus wrote about the history of the Babylonian and Medo-Persia kingdoms around 400 B.C., but he did not mention Belshazzar. In fact, to the contrary, he wrote that Nabonidus was the king during that period of time. So scholars reached the conclusion that Daniel was historically unreliable. For many centuries people ridiculed the book of Daniel because they thought it was not historically accurate. They believed the wrong king was named in the book of Daniel.

Archaeologists discovered some tablets with inscriptions of King Nabonidus. The Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by Prichard, records Nabonidus' inscriptions. Nabonidus entrusted the camp to his oldest son, his firstborn, while he journeyed with the military forces of Achad, that is Babylon, toward Tenna, in Arabia. King Nabonidus built a palace there, decided to retire, and allowed his son to reign in Babylon. Other inscriptions record the name of his son, Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the name of the son of Nabonidus. And so Daniel was the only accurate historian. He was the only one who knew that Belshazzar was reigning in Babylon at that particular moment in history.

Daniel knew that Nabonidus and Belshazzar were co-reigning kings. When King Belshazzar ordered Daniel to read the writing and interpret the meaning, the king promised to make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom(cf. Daniel 5:16). If the king made Daniel the third ruler, that meant there were already two reigning kings, the father and son.

The author of Daniel was the most observant and knowledgeable historian that has ever written. Daniel knew that Belshazzar was not the only king reigning over Babylon at that time. He knew Nabonidus and Belshazzar were co-reigning even though the father was retired in Arabia. So this proves that Daniel had to have written the book of Daniel during that period of history. He could have only known of the existence of Belshazzar by living at the same time in Babylon because all the documents about Belshazzar were buried and were not discovered until modern times. Since Herodotus and other historians did not record

the existence of Belshazzar, no one could have known about him unless they lived at the same time. This is proof that the book of Daniel is an authentic historical document.

Other Historical Facts from Daniel

Many scholars claim that the book of Daniel was written during the Grecian empire. But he could not have written the book during the Grecian empire because the Greeks had no knowledge of Belshazzar. Therefore, Daniel had to have written the book during the Babylonian empire.

Another interesting fact of history is that at the very time that the feast was occurring Cyrus of Persia was outside Babylon contemplating a way to conquer the city. As previously mentioned, the two walls of Babylon that encircled the city were ninety feet high. It was impossible for Cyrus and his men to get over those walls and into the city. Since the Euphrates River flowed under the city walls and through the middle of Babylon, Cyrus came up with a brilliant idea to go under the walls. They made a canal coming in from the side of the Euphrates River with gates to keep it closed, and they dug several canals. At the right time they opened the canals and all the water of the Euphrates River receded down to the basin. The men then walked underneath the walls of the city and conquered the great city.

Cyrus had an unusual idea, but, of course, it was God who allowed Babylon to be conquered by Cyrus. The Ancient Near Eastern Text edited by James Bennett Pritchard, records that Cyrus diverted the Euphrates River with canals and went under the walls and into the city on the dry river bed while Belshazzar was having a huge feast. Archaeologists have discovered that what Cyrus did is exactly the same as what Daniel wrote.

In Isaiah 44–45 God predicted that Cyrus would conquer the Babylonian world empire and free the Jewish captives. He even calls Cyrus by name. Isaiah wrote in 740 B.C. to 700 B.C., about 160 years before Daniel. The Ancient Near Eastern Text records the story of Cyrus conquering the city of Babylon as Belshazzar was celebrating a great feast with his officials in the banquet room

exactly as the Bible states. So there is a historical confirmation of Daniel's account of the invasion of Babylon.

Belshazzar Sees the Handwriting

A Detailed Eye Witness Account

Because Belshazzar desecrated the holy vessels of God, handwriting appeared on the wall: *"Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote"* (Daniel 5:5). The Bible does not tell whose fingers wrote on the wall, but the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on *"the plaster of the wall."* When the palace was uncovered by archeologists, plaster was found on the walls exactly as Daniel stated. The fingers wrote on the plaster of the wall *"near the lampstand."* Only an eyewitness account would have given these kinds of details.

The effect on the king was graphic: *"His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way"* (Daniel 5:6). As the king watched the hand, his face turned pale. He was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. King Belshazzar was scared!

The king called for his enchanters, astrologers, and diviners and promised to reward whoever would interpret the meaning of this strange phenomenon. Daniel 5:7–9:

The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even

more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.

Whoever could read and tell the meaning of the writing on the wall would be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom, but none of the king's wise men could read the writing, much less tell what it meant. The king became even more terrified.

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting

The Queen's Entrance

The queen came into the banquet hall: *"The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall . . ."* (Daniel 5:10). Who is this queen? Some have thought she was Belshazzar's wife, but she is the queen mother. She was the wife of Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus. Remember, Belshazzar is the second king in Babylon and his wives and concubines were already at the banquet (cf. Daniel 5:2). The queen is probably the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

The queen told the king about Daniel's ability to interpret mysterious events during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Daniel 5:10–12:

. . . "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."

This is an interesting passage because it links King Belshazzar to King Nebuchadnezzar. The queen tells Belshazzar that his father was Nebuchadnezzar. Scholars say that Daniel made another mistake because Nabonidus was his father, not Nebuchadnezzar. The father of Nabonidus was not Nebuchadnezzar. Historical research shows that Nabonidus was not a direct descendent of Nebuchadnezzar. How, then, could his son Belshazzar be a descendent of Nebuchadnezzar? From all indications, Nabonidus married the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar which allowed him to be a legitimate heir to the throne, through his wife. The queen mother knows that her son is the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. It was common terminology in those days to call your grandfather your father.

Daniel Is Summoned

Following the queen's suggestion, Belshazzar had Daniel brought in before him. The king seemingly belittled Daniel, referring to him as one of the exiles from Judah. Daniel 5:13–17:

So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

The king made the same promise to Daniel that he had made to his wise men. If he could interpret the writing, he would be clothed in purple, have a gold chain placed about his neck, and be made the third ruler in the kingdom, which means right after Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

Daniel told the king to keep his gifts or give them to someone else. Daniel 5:17:

Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means."

Daniel agreed to read and interpret the handwriting for the king.

Daniel Reminds King Belshazzar of King Nebuchadnezzar's Greatness

In his reply Daniel summarized God's dealing with Belshazzar's predecessor Nebuchadnezzar. He related lessons that Nebuchadnezzar had learned from God's dealings with him. Daniel told Belshazzar that God gave Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty, greatness, glory, and splendor. Daniel 5:18–20:

"O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory."

Nebuchadnezzar was probably the most powerful king who ever lived. People of every language dreaded and feared him. He put to death those people he wanted to put to death, and he promoted and humbled people. Nebuchadnezzar was humiliated and began to live like an animal. Daniel 5:21:

“He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.”

Belshazzar had not humbled himself even though he knew what had happened to his grandfather: *“But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this”* (Daniel 5:22). Belshazzar grew up in the palace as the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was old enough to remember what had happened to his grandfather. He was old enough to have learned the lesson of humility, but he did not. Instead of acknowledging the supreme God of all gods and acknowledging His eternal kingdom, His divine power and His might, he took the sacred vessels that had been consecrated to God and used them profanely. He desecrated the goblets of God by using them to worship false gods and idols. Belshazzar showed no respect for the God of Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar had done. Daniel 5:23:

“Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But

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

A god of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, or stone cannot see, hear, or understand anything. Belshazzar did not honor the God who held in His hand the king's very life. Belshazzar knew what his predecessor had experienced, and should have learned from it. However, Belshazzar had not done so; in fact he had openly challenged the Lord of heaven (“the King of heaven”), 4:37) by drinking from the goblets taken from the temple in Jerusalem (5:2-3).

The Meaning of the Writing on the Wall

The handwriting had appeared because the king was arrogant and had desecrated the sacred vessels of God: “*Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription*” (Daniel 5:24). What a rebuke to King Belshazzar! Daniel gave the inscription and its meaning. Daniel 5:25:

“This is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN

This is what these words mean:

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

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

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

Interestingly, these words have double, and in some cases, triple meaning. The word “*tekel*” means a shekel. The word “*mene*” indicates fifty shekels. The word “*paris*” means a half-shekel, and the word “*parsin*” is “*paris*” in the plural which means many half-shekels. As nouns these were terms used to refer to money used during that time.

As verbs “*mene*” means to number, “*tekell*” means to weigh, and “*prais*” means to divide.

Daniel told the king that the inscription meant that he had “*been weighed in the balances and found wanting.*” Look at the scale on the Weighed & Wanting Diagram. On one side of the scale is the kingdom of Babylon, and on the other side is the king of Babylon, Belshazzar. The king had been weighed and was found lacking because he did not measure up to the kingdom that God had put him over. He was a half shekel king over a fifty shekel kingdom. Because King Belshazzar did not measure up, God was going to take the kingdom away from him. The kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar’s arrogance, pride, and desecration of the holy things made him unworthy to rule the kingdom.

Oh, what terrible news to the king. He is not only going to lose his kingship. He is going to lose the empire! The Babylonian world empire will come to an end and will be turned over to the Medes and Persians. He not only lost his kingship; but the entire Babylonian world empire came to an end and was given to the Medes and Persians.

Despite the bad new, the king kept his promise and gave Daniel the gifts he had promised. Daniel 5:29:

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

Belshazzar Is Killed

The Kingdom Becomes the Medo-Persian Empire

King Belshazzar was killed that night as Daniel had foretold: “*That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two*” (Daniel 5:30–31). That very night Belshazzar

met his death, Cyrus became king, and Darius took over the kingdom.

How did Belshazzar meet his death? Remember what Cyrus was doing outside the city walls while the Babylonians were having the feast inside? That night Cyrus and his men diverted the Euphrates River, walked under the walls and captured the city. Belshazzar was put to death and Cyrus was established as the king.

Darius Versus Cyrus

Historians write that Cyrus was the general over all the armies. He conquered the city and killed Belshazzar. Did Daniel know Cyrus? Indeed he did. Daniel remained in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar until the first year of Cyrus' reign: "*And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus*" (Daniel 1:21).

Cyrus established his control over the city of Babylon during his first year. Then he left the kingdom under the control of one of his generals, Gubaru. An inscription from Cyrus reads, "I left my subordinate Gubaru in charge of the kingdom of Babylon. Gubaru will rule the province of Babylon, and I will return to my palace in Ecbatana in Persia to reign." The term "Darius" is a name used for royalty. Evidently Gubaru, the Mede, took the name "Darius" as his second name of royalty. He became king of Babylon, but a subservient king to Cyrus who reigned from Persia. Hence, the kingdom became the Medo-Persian empire ruled by a king from each half of the empire (cf. Daniel 6:28).

Darius is a name that was used for royal kings of Persia for many years afterwards. It was a term of royalty like the name Caesar. Julius Caesar was the first Caesar, but all the Roman emperors that followed him called themselves Caesar, as well. The word Caesar is synonymous with king.

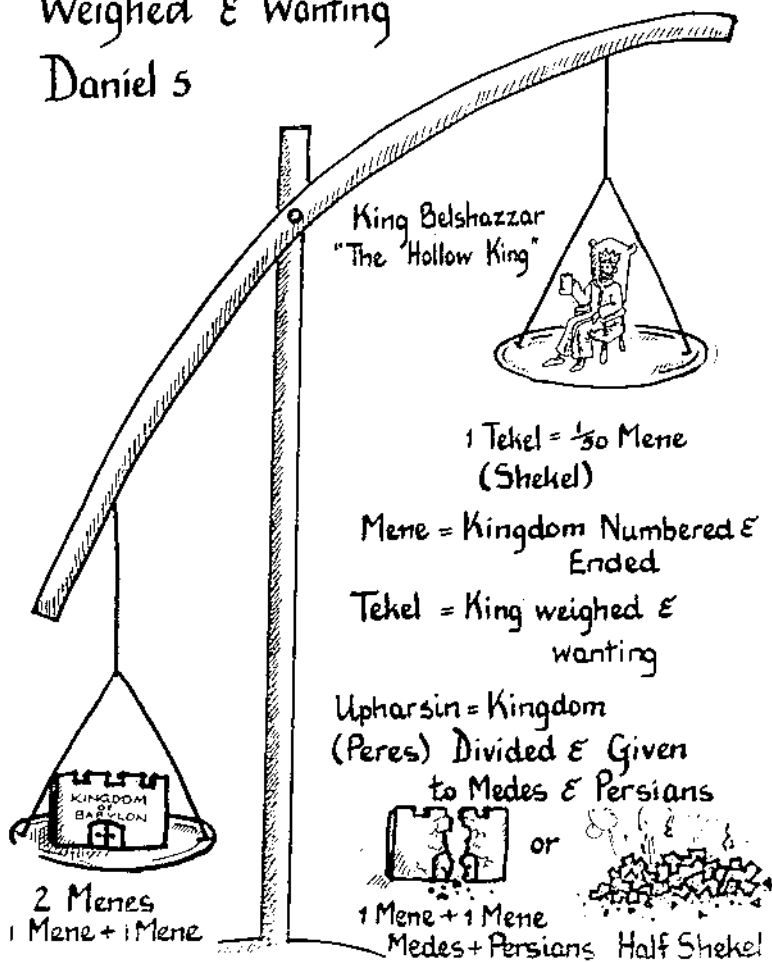
Conclusion

Olmstead wrote in the History of Persia that Gubaru made decrees that became the law of the Medes and the Persians. Interestingly, an example of King Darius issuing a decree is found in Daniel 6:9. Cyrus is also mentioned later in the book (cf. Daniel 10:1). With the historical accounts uncovered by archaeologists, there is confirmation that what Daniel wrote is true, a Mede took over the kingdom of Babylon as the Babylonian world empire came to an end. This Babylonian world empire lasted from 605 B.C. to 539 B.C., a period of about 67 years. In the first year of Darius' reign Daniel read the prophecy of Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years (cf. Daniel 9:2). Then God would punish Babylon through the hands of the Medes and the Persians. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah made similar predictions. They foretold the fall of Babylon because Belshazzar had not learned the lesson of humility from his father Nebuchadnezzar. His pride, arrogance, and lack of repentance brought to an end to the great Babylonian world empire. A kingdom that seemed so powerful became dust at the hands of God. Walls that were so high and thick and impenetrable did not stop Cyrus. He went under the wall by the power and wisdom of God, and the Babylonian royal empire fell.

There is a great lesson to be learned from this chapter. Christians should not put their trust in riches or power or intelligence. They should put their trust in God and give glory to Him. *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 14:11).

Weighed & Wanting

Daniel 5



Darius' Foolish Decree

Daniel 6:1–28

Introduction

A review of the first five chapters of Daniel will give the reader a clearer understanding of chapter six. There was a false concept during Daniel's day that taught if one nation conquered another nation, then the god of the conquering nation was more powerful than the god of the conquered nation. Because of this false concept, many of the Jews may have believed that the Babylonian god was more powerful than Jehovah God. One reason the book of Daniel was written was to show that this belief was false. The reason God allowed the Jews to be taken into captivity was because they were being punished for their sins of idolatry. God was being true to the covenant He had made with them. Jehovah God used the Babylonian empire to punish His own people, but He was still in control. Jehovah God is not only the God of the Jews; He is the God of all people of every nation of the world, even today as then.

In Daniel chapter 1 it is revealed that some of the Jewish captives were protected by God because they put their trust in Him. In Daniel chapter 2 King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In the dream God depicted the future of world empires. The breadth of this dream stretched from the Babylonian empire to the Roman empire and to the kingdom Jesus Christ would establish. Clearly, one can observe that God is in control of all these nations. In Daniel chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar made an image, probably of himself, and commanded everyone to

worship it. Those who refused to worship the image were thrown into a fiery furnace. God protected three courageous, faithful young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, because they put their trust in Him. That event showed that God is more powerful than the god of fire that the Babylonians worshiped. In chapter 4 it is revealed that Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride and thought he was the greatest person in the world. So God humbled him. God made the king eat grass, for awhile, like cattle until he recognized that God is King of kings and Lord of lords. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his former position as king of Babylon. In Daniel chapter 5 King Belshazzar profaned the holy vessels of God. By doing so, he defied God himself. Then the fingers of a human hand wrote on a wall. His kingdom is brought to an end. The Babylonian world empire fell, and the Medes and the Persians began to rule the world.

The Promotion of Daniel

Daniel, Darius, and Cyrus

When the Babylonian world empire was destroyed, the Medo-Persian empire was established with Cyrus as the ruler. The first chapter of Daniel revealed that King Cyrus would one day rule the land where Daniel and other Jews were taken into captivity: “*And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus*” (Daniel 1:21).

The writer of Daniel knew that Cyrus was the primary king of the Medo-Persian empire. Cyrus went to Ecbatana in Persia and reigned as the king over all the nations, but he appointed Darius to rule over the entire area of Babylon according to The History of the Persian Empire by Olmstead. Archaeologists have discovered records that confirm what is written in Daniel is true.

Isaiah predicted the coming of Cyrus in the year 720 B.C., long before Cyrus lived. God even predicted him by name:

“. . . who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please . . .’” (Isaiah 44:28).

God prophesied the coming of Cyrus and knew Cyrus would help rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Isaiah 45:1–2:

This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.

The actual fulfillment is recorded in Ezra 1:1–2: Cyrus, the king of the extensive Persian realm drafted a proclamation that allowed the Israelites to return to their land and rebuild their temple.

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.’”

The historical facts given in the book of Daniel have been confirmed by historical records and cuneiform writing by the Persians and the Babylonians. Daniel will go into more depth regarding this particular subject in chapter nine.

Darius was a man appointed by Cyrus to rule over the Babylonian province. Daniel 6:1–2:

*It pleased **Darius** to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators*

over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.

Since Daniel was capable, efficient, and wise, Darius appointed him as one of the three administrators over the satraps.

Daniel Distinguished Himself

Daniel was an amazing man. He was a young man when he was taken into captivity during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. The Medo-Persians began their reign in Babylon in the year 539 B.C. It is estimated that Daniel was eighty-seven years old when Darius selected him as an administrator. Daniel is a wonderful example of God using an older person. In the New Testament God commands that older, experienced, spiritual men be appointed to oversee the church. Darius recognized Daniel's wisdom and chose him to serve in a high position in government. Olmstead wrote in the History of the Persian Empire that Gobrias, (Darius) who Cyrus left in charge of Babylon, mostly used men who had already been proven in the Babylonian world government. Again there is historical confirmation of the facts given in the book of Daniel.

The king planned to set Daniel over the whole kingdom because he had so distinguished himself. Daniel 6:3:

Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Again Daniel's excellent character was noticed, and the king wanted to set him over the whole kingdom.

Darius Signs a Foolish Decree

Daniel Is Examined

Envy and jealousy are ugly sins and they soon reared their heads in the hearts of the satraps and the other administrators. They formed a plot against Daniel. Daniel 6:4:

At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

As is often true in the political world and the business world, as soon as a man gets to a high position, people around him become jealous. They sometimes hope the person will not succeed because they want to take his place. And that is exactly what happened to Daniel. Daniel had exceeded all the others in his administrative ability, and he was going to rise above all the other administrators. So they tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Oh, to have politicians like Daniel who have no sign of corruption or negligence, but only have efficiency and integrity.

That is the kind of people needed in government, is it not? When politicians compromise their principles and use their position to gain money, the people lose. They lose, too, because God is looking over the affairs of men, and He sees their corruption. Often He exposes them and punishes them. That is what happened to Belshazzar. When Belshazzar became corrupt and greedy, God brought him down. The handwriting on the wall appeared, and he was destroyed that very night.

Because Daniel was righteous they had to find another way to bring charges against him: “*Finally these men said, ‘We will*

never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God'" (Daniel 6:5). Daniel's adversaries decided to trap him in a conflict between the law of the Medes and Persians and the Law of God.

The King Is Coerced into Issuing a Decree

The administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors all agree to convince the king to issue a decree prohibiting anyone from worshipping any god or man other than Darius himself on penalty of death. Daniel 6:6–7:

So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den."

These men knew that Daniel prayed three times every day to his Heavenly Father from his upstairs window which faced toward Jerusalem. It was required under God's law.

They knew if they could find Daniel in violation of a Medo-Persian law, then they would have him trapped. Daniel 6:8–9:

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

Olmstead's History of the Persian Empire confirms that once a Medo-Persian law was written, it could not be changed. The Babylonian world government laws were different. The

Babylonian king could make a law, and then later changed it. But that was not possible with the Medes and the Persians. Once a law was determined, the law had to be obeyed and not even the king himself could change the law. The king had to submit to every law he made. In the United States of America not even the president of the country can violate a law without being punished. Many other countries are the same way.

Daniel's adversaries tricked King Darius into issuing a decree that he later regretted. They appealed to the king's vanity. They probably told the king that they wanted to honor him. They may have said that they wanted to make him the most important person in the whole realm so that no one could pray to any god except to him. They were trying to make King Darius a god. When he signed the decree, he did not realize he was exalting himself above the God of the universe. The edict meant that no one could pray to the God of the universe for the next thirty days. They were supposed to only pray to the king. King Darius made a tremendous mistake when he allowed the men to appeal to his vanity.

The Trap Is Sprung

Daniel continued praying as he had done previously. Daniel 6:10:

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

The law did not cause Daniel to quit praying to God because he knew Jehovah God is above all human law. God's law must have priority over any man-made law. Christians are to submit to their governing authorities because God has established those authorities (cf. Romans 13:1). But there is one exception.

When the law of the land violates or contradicts the law of God, believers must obey God's law rather than man's law.

Peter and the other apostles had a similar choice. When the apostles appeared before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest, he gave them strict orders not to teach about Jesus: "*Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'*" (Acts 5:29). Peter and the other apostles continued to preach Jesus even though the governing authorities told them to stop. As a result Peter was imprisoned and suffered persecution many times. Christians must be like the apostles and love God's law more than they love the laws of man because God is Lord of lords and King of kings. They must show God respect as Daniel did.

Daniel was a devoted man of prayer. He prayed three times a day. Christians are commanded to pray continually (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Solomon said to pray toward Jerusalem if taken to a foreign land (cf. 1 Kings 8:48–49). A number of passages in Psalms encourage the reader to seek the face of the Lord continually.

Daniel was a man of prayer; he trusted God. Daniel's example of prayer should motivate Christians to pray constantly. Christians should talk to their heavenly Father in the morning, before a meal, at bedtime, and throughout the day. Love for God is shown when a person pours out his heart regularly. What would a wife think if her husband never talked to her? She would think he did not love her. In the same way, saints who do not talk with God show a lack of love. Be men and women of prayer, as Daniel was.

Daniel's adversaries went as a group hoping to find Daniel disobeying the king's new edict. "*Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help*" (Daniel 6:11). His prayer may have involved a request for deliverance of both the nation and himself. He knew that according to Jeremiah, the nation's deliverance was near. So

Daniel turned to God in his time of need as he had always done. He asked God for help.

Daniel's Adversaries Report His Actions to the King

Because of their jealousy the men were quick to remind the king of the edict he had enacted, knowing it could not be repealed. Daniel 6:12:

So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

Daniel's adversaries report his actions to the king. Daniel 6:13–15:

Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

Interestingly three kings in the Book of Daniel were distressed (2:1; 3:13; 5:6, 9). The king came to a full realization of what he had done. The men had trapped him into signing a decree that would cause him to have to condemn the best man in his empire, the one he relied upon the most. Darius realized he had

made a terrible mistake by signing the decree, but he could not change it. He made every effort to save Daniel, but he could not find a way; he was powerless.

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Darius had Daniel sent to the den of lions. Daniel 6:16

So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

What the king said is remarkable. His statement shows what an influence Daniel had over the king. Daniel had so lived before Darius that the king knew who Daniel's God was. Perhaps the king had read the previous chapters of Daniel because the text was written in the Aramaic language, the language spoken in Babylon. Daniel had written about the events so future kings could know that the God of heaven was over all the kings of the world. Darius was becoming a believer in God; he realized that Daniel's God could deliver Daniel.

A stone was placed over the mouth of the den, there was no way for Daniel to escape. Daniel 6:17:

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

Apparently clay was used to seal the stone around the edges. Then the king and his nobles, Daniel's adversaries, impressed it with their rings. If anyone opened the den, the seal would be broken and the authorities would know that someone had tampered with the stone and taken Daniel.

That night the king requested no entertainment: *“Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep”* (Daniel 6:18). He did not eat nor sleep because he was deeply disturbed about Daniel.

The Plan Backfires

The King Is Worried

The king hurries to the lion's den as soon as it is daylight. Daniel 6:19–20:

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

The king called to Daniel in an anguish voice asking if he had been saved by his God. Darius knew that Daniel served the living God. Darius made a contrast between the **living** God of Daniel and **dead**, stone-cold gods of the land.

Daniel answered the king with words the king longed to hear. Daniel 6:21–22:

Daniel answered, “O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.”

Daniel told King Darius that God had shut the mouths of the lions. The lions did not hurt Daniel because he was innocent. He had done nothing wrong.

King Darius was overjoyed when Daniel was lifted from the den. Daniel 6:23:

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Daniel was delivered because he trusted his God. First, he trusted by defying the king's order and obeying God rather than man. Sounds like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, doesn't it. Christians should show this same trust and faith by doing what God commands. They should show their belief that God is more powerful and important than man by placing Him first in their life.

Second, Daniel trusted God while in the lion's den. He was probably praying when he was placed with the lions. No wound was found on Daniel. Christians should pray to God, the all powerful creator of the universe, because that is the way to show trust. He is ready to hear and answer prayers: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5). God gives generously. He wants His children to talk to Him; Ask Him for protection. Jesus promised to give to people who seek: *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). God delivered Daniel because Daniel trusted Him, and God's people should do the same today.

Execution of the Conspirators

At the king's command the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in, thrown into the lion's den along with their wives and children. Daniel 6:24:

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

The false accusers along with their wives and children were overpowered by the lions who crushed all their bones. This is terrible punishment, but it is exactly what they had planned for Daniel. The very trap they set for Daniel sprung on them. Solomon wrote that this could happen: “*Whoever digs a pit may fall into it . . .*” (Ecclesiastes 10:8). The writer of Psalms also wrote: “*. . . They dug a pit in my path—but they have fallen into it themselves*” (Psalms 57:6). When the wicked make a trap for the righteous, the wicked fall into the very trap they set for the righteous.

When I was a missionary in Brazil, I exposed an evil man who was trying to rob a million dollars from a group of businessmen in Sao Paulo. That man falsely accused me in court before a judge. The lawyer for the accuser was the son of a State Supreme Court judge so the court listened to him, and I lost in the lower court. In an appeal to the State Supreme Court, I revealed a criminal charge against my accuser, and the man was sentenced to time in jail. The very trap that the evil man had set for me was sprung on him. Because I trusted God and served Him, I was found not guilty of the false charge.

If your enemies are persecuting you, love and pray for them (cf. Matthew 5:44). This is what David did while fleeing his enemies. His enemies were persecuting him, but they were the ones who died. God will deliver the righteous and, ultimately, the wicked will be punished.

The King Issued an Edict Concerning Daniel's God

The most profound thing in this chapter is Darius' statement about Daniel's God. Daniel 6:25–27:

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

King Darius decreed that his people should fear and reverence the God of Daniel. Darius developed faith in the God of Daniel because of Daniel's courage and faithfulness. When Christians live for God, they influence other people to believe, as Darius did.

Because Daniel was faithful, God blessed him: *"So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian"* (Daniel 6:28).

Conclusion

Daniel 6 is one of the best known chapters in all of Scripture. There are several great lessons in this chapter. First, envious and jealous people often retaliate against righteous people. Second, God answers prayers and performs wondrous miracles even when life seems hopelessly impossible. As a result, God is glorified even by rulers of nations, and God's people are vindicated and blessed.

Daniel's Vision Of The Four Beasts

Daniel 7:1–28

Introduction

The first six chapters of the book of Daniel contain information about Daniel's life and the events which affected him personally. There are some prophecies in these chapters, but most of them concern historical events which occurred during his lifetime. Beginning in chapter seven prophetic revelations of future events fill the book. Some of the most remarkable information ever recorded in sacred literature is given in chapter seven. It records the prophecy of future nations and their leaders. It also predicts the establishment of God's eternal kingdom and its relationship to some of the earthly kingdoms.

The Vision of the Four Beasts

The Date of the Vision

The vision recorded by the Prophet Daniel in this chapter was revealed to him in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, 553 B.C., when Belshazzar was made co-regent with Nabonidus. Daniel's dream predated by 14 years his experience in the lion's den which occurred in or soon after 539. When the dream

came Daniel was about 68 years of age, for he was taken captive (at about the age of 16) 52 years earlier in 605 B.C.

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

Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, was appointed a co-regent with Nabonidus in the year 553 B.C. King Nabonidus had only been reigning three years when he made his son co-regent and decided to retire. Around 553 B.C. Daniel had a dream while in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

The Wind on the Sea

Four winds of heaven churned up the great sea in the vision. The word translated “winds” may also be rendered “spirits,” that is, angels. Elsewhere in Scripture this word is used to refer to God’s providential actions in the affairs of men through angels (Jeremiah 23:19; 49:36; 51:1; Zechariah 6:1-6; 7:14; Revelation 7:1-3). Daniel 7:2–3:

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

The second thing Daniel saw in the vision was four great beasts emerging from the agitated sea. As explained to Daniel later in verse 17 the four beasts represented four kingdoms.

The Four Beast Described

Daniel said the first beast was like a lion, but it had the wings of an eagle, a grotesque site. This beast represented Babylon. Daniel 7:4:

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

The second beast in his vision looked like a bear, a ravishing beast and fearful to look upon. This beast represented the Medo-Persian kingdom. Daniel 7:5:

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

Daniel said the third beast looked like a leopard, another strange looking beast. This beast represented the Grecian empire. Daniel 7:6:

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

The fourth beast in Daniel's vision was terrifying, frightening, and very powerful. It was very cruel and vicious and not like the others. This beast represented the Roman empire. Daniel 7:7:

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

What a nightmare the vision must have been for Daniel with all the different animals. While Daniel was thinking about the horns on the fourth beast, a little horn came up among the ten horns. Daniel 7:8:

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

Three of the first horns were uprooted before the little horn. The little horn had eyes like a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. And because of the boastful words of this little horn the whole fourth beast is thrown into the fire and destroyed! What does all of this mean?

The Judgment of the Fourth Beast

The Thrones and the Central Throne

Daniel sees two visions. On one hand he sees a vision of four animals and on the fourth animal ten horns, and then an eleventh horn. The eleventh horn is so boastful that a court in heaven judges that entire animal and throws it into the fire. On the other hand, he sees one like a Son of man coming up to the Ancient of Days, to God himself, and He receives a kingdom and His kingdom lasts forever. Daniel 7:9–10:

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

before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."

The clothing of the Ancient of Days was as white as snow and His hair was also white. His throne was flaming with fire. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The judgement scene begins when the court is seated and the books are opened.

Bragging and Burning of the Beast

Daniel continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. Daniel 7:11:

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

The beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire because of the boastful words of the little horn.

The Lives of the Other Three Beasts

The other three beasts were allowed to live for awhile: *"The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time"* (Daniel 7:12). What a vision Daniel had!

The Messianic King and His Kingdom

The Human Who Rides on the Clouds

One like a Son of man came with the clouds and was led into the presence of the Ancient of Days. Daniel 7:13:

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”

The Reception of the Kingdom

The One like a Son of man was given authority, and all men of every language worshiped him. Daniel 7:14:

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

His dominion is everlasting, and his kingdom will never be destroyed.

Daniel saw two visions. First, he saw a vision of the four beasts. Second, he saw a vision of One like a Son of man coming to the Ancient of Days. What is the meaning of these two visions? We could speculate about their meanings, but an interpretation is given for both visions in the Bible text.

Interpretation Concerning the Fourth Beast

Assurance Given to Daniel

Daniel was troubled and disturbed by the visions: “*I, Daniel, was troubled in my spirit and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me*” (Daniel 7:15). Perhaps the readers are as confused by the visions as Daniel was.

Daniel approached the angelic being and asked what the dream meant: “*I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things*” (Daniel 7:16).

The angelic being begins the interpretation of the dream. This is one of many examples where the Bible interprets itself. Daniel 7:17–18

“The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.”

The angelic being said the four beasts represent four kingdoms that will rise from the earth and then pass away. But the saints of the Most High will receive a kingdom that will last forever. The saints are the holy ones of God, the chosen ones. Man's kingdoms pass away, but God's kingdom will last forever. The main idea of chapter seven is that the kingdoms of men will be destroyed, but God's kingdom will last forever.

Specific Questions Concerning the Fourth Beast

Daniel wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the other beasts. Daniel 7:19–20:

“Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

Daniel did not understand his own dream. He needed help to comprehend it so God sent an angel to interpret the dream. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a huge

statue which represented four kingdoms (cf. Daniel 2). The four kingdoms in chapter two are the same four kingdoms in this chapter. One chapter helps interpret the other chapter. These four kingdoms are the same. The head of gold represented the Babylonian empire. The second kingdom was the Medo-Persian empire. And the third kingdom was the Grecian empire. The fourth kingdom, according to history and the New Testament, was the Roman empire.

Daniel's dream occurred during the Babylonian world empire, the first year of Belshazzar in 553 B.C. A lion with eagle's wings was the symbol used to represent the Babylonian empire. Archaeologists have unearthed Babylonian statues of lions with eagle's wings. In a similar way the United States of America uses an eagle to represent the nation.

The second beast was a bear (cf. Daniel 7:5). Some people believe this represents the Russian bear, but Russia did not come into existence until hundreds of years after the fall of the Babylonian empire. The bear represents the Medo-Persian empire. One of the sides of the bear was lifted up higher than the other side. That meant the Persian part of the Medo-Persian empire was superior to the Mede part. Cyrus of Persia was the superior ruler. There are three ribs in the bear's mouth. The ribs probably represent the three nations conquered to establish the Medo-Persian empire. Cyrus defeated Lydia in Asia Minor which is modern day Turkey and Babylonia. Then his son Cambyses conquered Egypt.

The next empire, the Grecian empire, is represented by the leopard with four heads and four wings on his back (cf. Daniel 7:6). The leopard is the swiftest of all animals, but this one travels even faster with the wings on his back. The four heads are interpreted in Daniel 8 when Daniel sees a ram destroyed by the goat. The ram represents the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat represents the Grecian empire. The goat's horn is broken and four horns come up in its place. Those are the four divisions of the Grecian empire after the death of Alexander.

The wings on the leopard's back represent Alexander the Great, who led the armies of Greeks to victory over the Medo-Persians. He conquered the world more rapidly than anyone had ever done. So the first three animals are the Babylonian world empire, the Medo-Persian empire, and the Grecian empire.

Daniel 2 indicates that the Grecian empire was succeeded by the Roman empire. Remember, Daniel wanted to know about the fourth beast. This beast was most terrifying with iron teeth and bronze claws. The beast crushed and devoured its victims and trampled whatever was left. The description of the fourth beast fits the Roman empire.

Daniel wanted to know about the ten horns on the beast's head and about the other horn that appeared. Daniel 7:21–22.

“As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”

The horn was fighting God's people and defeating them until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High. The time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Specific Answers Concerning the Fourth Beast

An angelic explanation of the beast is given so there is no need for guessing. Daniel 7:23–24:

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king

will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.’”

The angel told Daniel that the four beasts were four kingdoms. The fourth beast was a fourth kingdom and has already been identified as the Roman empire. The ten horns each represent a different king. Obviously, these kings appeared in the Roman empire and were Roman emperors. After their reigns, another king, an eleventh king, arose who was different from the earlier ones. He was another Roman emperor who subdued three other kings.

The angelic being told Daniel that the Roman emperor would speak against the Most High and oppress the saints. Daniel 7:25:

“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.”

This Roman emperor would blaspheme God, speaking against Him. The saints are the people of God. The Roman empire persecuted God's people.

The angel said that the eleventh king would try to change the set times and the laws. There will be a period of time that God's people will be delivered into his hands, and he will persecute them.

The king will persecute God's people only for a while, it will not last forever. The day will come when his kingdom will be taken from him, and later the empire will be destroyed. Daniel 7:26–28:

“But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms

under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

Remember what happened to the fourth beast after the judgment scene. It was thrown into the fire (cf. Daniel 7:11). That prophecy came to pass when the Roman empire was destroyed.

Historical Account of the Caesars

The Roman kings can be identified precisely in the book, The Lives of the Twelve Caesars by Suetonius, a man who lived during the Roman empire. He lists the first eleven Roman kings. Julius Caesar was one of three men in control of Rome in the beginning, but the empire was not established until his adopted son Augustus became ruler. It was during the time of Augustus that the Roman empire came into existence at about 27 B.C. This first Roman emperor is mentioned in the Bible: *"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world"* (Luke 2:1). Jesus Christ was born during the days of the first Roman emperor.

The second emperor Tiberius Caesar began his reign in 14 A.D. at the death of Augustus. The second emperor is also named in the Bible: *"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene"* (Luke 3:1). John the Baptist and Jesus began to preach in the days of Tiberius.

Caligula became the third Roman emperor in 37 A.D. He was a madman and thought he was a god. He did not reign too long; he was killed in 41 A.D.

The fourth emperor, Claudius, reigned from 41–54 A.D. He is also mentioned in the Bible. Acts 11:27–28:

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

He persecuted the Jews and many of them were expelled from Rome during his reign.

The despicable Nero, the fifth Roman emperor, came to power in the year 54 A.D. Nero was a horrible emperor. He burned the city of Rome and blamed Christians. Christians were persecuted under Nero's reign. According to tradition, he had Peter crucified upside down on a cross and probably beheaded Paul. He is thought to be the emperor who exiled John to the Isle of Patmos. Rome almost fell when he died. There was a civil war, and four Roman generals tried to take over in succession.

The sixth emperor was Galba, one of the generals. He came to power in 68 A.D. and only reigned about seven months.

Otho came to power in the year 69 A.D. and only reigned about three months. He also had been a Roman general.

The eighth emperor, Vitellius, was also a Roman general. He only reigned about nine months.

The fourth Roman general, Vespasian, was the ninth emperor. Under his reign stability was established, and he kept the Roman empire from falling. He had two sons, Titus and Domitian, who succeeded him.

The tenth emperor was Titus. While a general, he helped destroy Jerusalem.

The eleventh Roman emperor was Domitian. In Daniel's dream there were ten horns on the terrifying and powerful

beast. The ten horns represented ten kings. Then a little horn appeared among the ten horns. The eleventh horn represented Domitian, the eleventh Roman emperor. This imposing horn uprooted three of the horns. During civil war Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were all subdued.

Suetonius wrote that Domitian was a fairly good king, but in his later years he became a madman. He changed the months of September and October to his own names Germanicus and Domitian. After his death the calendar was changed back. He believed he was god and made everyone address him as god. He put statues of himself throughout the empire and made men worship them once a year. Men who did not worship him were killed. Christians were slaughtered by the thousands throughout the Roman empire because they refused to worship Domitian. Nero started the persecutions, but under Domitian's rule the Roman empire purposed to annihilate Christianity. There is also evidence that Domitian even killed his own brother Titus so he could become king. Domitian's own wife killed him, and his body was burned. Significant facts about Domitian fit the description given of the eleventh horn.

Conclusion

In the court room scene of verse 26, judgment was brought against the beast. God judged Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar, and He continues to judge all nations. Jesus Christ is now at His right hand. After His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus ascended in the clouds (cf. Acts 1:9) into the very throne room of God. He sits at God's right hand and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords: "*... the ruler of the kings of the earth ...*" (Revelation 1:5).

It is written that in the days of the fourth world empire God will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, His kingdom (cf. Daniel 2:44). And He did. Jesus rules today, and His kingdom will last forever. The Father on high determined that the beast (the Roman empire) would be destroyed.

Domitian lost his kingdom, his body was burned, and the entire Roman empire fell, but the church still exists. Jesus Christ is on the throne and His kingdom endures. When Jesus returns, He will take His church, Christians, to heaven to be with Him for eternity. His church will never end! People who put their trust in Christ will enter His kingdom and live forever. People who remain outside of His kingdom will be destroyed with the kingdoms of the earth.

What a powerful message is given in the book of Daniel! God has such great power. He can predict history before it even occurs. He predicted the eleven Roman emperors, including the eleventh one, who called himself a god and persecuted God's people. Only God can write history before it occurs! There are copies of the book of Daniel that are dated about 200 B.C. This book was written before the recorded events happened. These predictions fulfilled in Roman history prove that the Bible truly is the Word of God!

Daniel's Vision Of The Ram And Goat

Daniel 8:1–27

Introduction

In the seventh chapter of Daniel God predicted in detail the future emperors of the Roman empire. This prophecy stretches from the first Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar to the eleventh emperor, Domitian. This is an amazing prophecy that writes history before it occurs. A similar prophecy concerning the Grecian empire is found in chapter eight.

The Date of the Vision

Daniel had another vision during King Belshazzar's reign: *"In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me"* (Daniel 8:1). The second vision was about two years later than his vision of chapter seven. The date would have been about 551 B.C. when Daniel had this vision.

The Recipient of the Vision

Daniel wrote about seeing himself in the second vision: *"In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal"* (Daniel 8:2). He was in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai Canal. A century later the Persian king Xerxes built a magnificent palace there, which was where the events recorded in the Book of Esther took place (Esther 1:2). And

Nehemiah was King Artaxerxes' cupbearer in the Susa palace (Nehemiah 1:1, 2:1).

The Two-Horned Ram

In the vision Daniel saw a ram with two long horns, one horn was longer than the other and grew up later. Daniel 8:3–4:

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

The ram charged toward the west, the east, and the south, and no animal could stand against him. His charge was irresistible; none could escape his onslaught. Doing as he wished, the ram dominated all the territory against which he moved and became great.

The Single-Horned He-Goat

Suddenly a goat furiously attached the two-horned ram. His speed was so great that his feet did not touch the ground. The goat, determined to destroy the two-horned ram, went at him in great rage and broke the ram's two horns. Daniel 8:5–8:

As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was

powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

The ram was powerless to stand against the goat. But at the height of the goat's power his large horn was broken off and four horns grew up.

Another Horn Grew out of One of the Horns

In the vision Daniel saw another horn grow out of one of the horns: "*Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land*" (Daniel 8:9).

The horn grew until it reached heaven. Daniel 8:10–12:

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

It persecuted the saints, took away the daily sacrifice, and brought low the sanctuary. The sacrilege was great. This part of the vision anticipated the rise of a ruler in the Greek Empire who subjugated the people and land of Israel, desecrated her temple, interrupted her worship, and demanded for himself the authority and worship that belongs to God. Then Daniel heard two holy ones speak. Daniel 8:13–14:

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

The first holy one asked how long it would take for the vision to be fulfilled. The second holy one said the sanctuary would be reconsecrated in 2,300 evenings and mornings. In time the sanctuary would be rededicated.

Daniel did not understand the meaning of the vision. Again he needed angelic help. He needed a messenger of God to tell him what this vision meant.

Proof Text for Seventh Day Adventists

Before God's interpretation is studied, a man-given interpretation will be presented. This passage is the proof text for the origin of the Seventh Day Adventists church. They claim that the verses give the date for the beginning of the Seventh Day Adventists, 1843. How did they arrive at that date? They take the 2,300 evenings and mornings, or 2,300 days, and turn them into 2,300 years. They claim that the 2,300 years began when the vision in Daniel 9 began. They believe the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 began in the year 457 B.C. They figure 2,300 years from 457 B.C. is 1843 A.D. (Subtract 457 from 2,300 to get 1843.)

A man named William Miller began to preach that Jesus Christ was coming back that year, 1843 A.D. He said that 2300 years after 457 B.C. the Christ would return. He told everyone to prepare for Christ's return. Many Americans believed him. They sold their possessions, including their houses, and went into the hills to wait for the coming of Christ. 1843 passed and

the Christ did not arrive. William Miller said he must have made a mistake by one year. So his faithful followers waited for another year and Jesus still did not return. He was proved to be a false prophet.

One of the members of his faithful followers, Mary Ellen White claimed she had a vision that Jesus had returned, but he was invisibly. She said Jesus returned by going into another room in heaven and cleansed the holy place in heaven. At that time He began a period of investigative judgment, and He has the books all open. They are looking into the books and are judging each person individually. At the end of time Jesus will visibly appear again, according to Mary Ellen White. That is the Seventh Day Adventists' interpretation. Continue reading to view God's interpretation.

The Vision Interpreted

Daniel Meets the Interpreter

Daniel was trying to understand the vision when one who looked like a man told Gabriel to tell the meaning of the vision. Daniel 8:15–16:

While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

Gabriel is the angel of God who announced the births of John (cf. Luke 1:11) and Jesus (cf. Luke 1:26). These verses show that angels of God continue to live throughout all time. Gabriel talked to Daniel in 551 B.C. and talked to Zechariah and Mary about the coming of John the Baptizer and Jesus Christ. Time will be the same way in heaven. Five hundred fifty one years in

heaven will not seem very long for Christians. They will continue to serve God forever and forever.

Daniel was terrified and fell prostrate. Daniel 8:17:

As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."

Some people believe that "*the time of the end*" means the end of the world, but that is not necessarily true. It can refer to the end of any period of time. The expression "*the time of the end*" can refer to the end of an empire or certain people. It depends upon the context in which it appears. Continue to read to understand the context of Gabriel's statement.

Daniel was in a deep sleep with his face to the ground while Gabriel was speaking to him. Daniel 8:18–19:

While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end."

The angel of God revealed the meaning of the two-horned ram: "*The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia*" (Daniel 8:20). Daniel was living during the Babylonian world empire. The Medo-Persian empire followed the Babylonian empire. Gabriel told Daniel that the ram he saw in his dream represented the Medo-Persian empire founded by Cyrus.

Gabriel revealed the meaning of the shaggy goat: "*The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king*" (Daniel 8:21). Alexander the Great founded the Grecian empire and was the first king.

In Daniel's vision he saw that one horn was broken off the goat, and in its place four horns grew up. The angel told Daniel that the four horns represent four kingdoms that will emerge from the Grecian Empire: *"The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power"* (Daniel 8:22). In the year 331 or 330 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persian empire. In about 336 B.C. he died in a drunken bout. He apparently died of alcoholism. His empire did not go to his son. Five of his generals killed all of his children and took over the kingdom. Two of the kings fought each other until one of them conquered the other one. Ultimately, the four remaining generals divided up the Grecian empire into four divisions. General Cassander took Macedonia and Greece. General Lysimachus took Thrace and Cappadocia. General Ptolemy took Egypt. And General Seleucus took Syria and Babylon. Four kingdoms emerged, but not with the power of Alexander the Great's empire because of the division. Daniel's vision fits history perfectly.

This is not man's interpretation of Daniel's vision. It is God's interpretation given through Gabriel. Students of the Bible do not have to guess about the meaning of Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat. since these horns come out of a goat and the goat is the Grecian empire, then these kingdoms or divisions have to come out of the Grecian empire. The vision could not be about modern days. It could not be about 1843 A.D. as the Seventh Day Adventists claim. The vision is about the year 331 B.C. when Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persians and six years later when his kingdom was divided among his four generals.

Identity and Deeds of the Little Horn

Gabriel told Daniel that a stern-faced king would arise. *"In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will*

arise" (Daniel 8:23). "*Their reign*" refers to the reign of four kings who divided the Grecian empire. "*In the latter part of their reign*" alludes to a later king during the Grecian empire. The angel said a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, would arise when rebels become completely wicked

The angel of God continued to describe the stern-faced king. Daniel 8:24–25:

"He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power."

The angel said this king would become very strong, cause astounding devastation, and succeed in whatever he did. The evil king would destroy mighty men and holy people. He further stated that the king will take a stand against the Prince of princes, but he would be destroyed.

The angel gives more information about the vision of the 2,300 days: "*The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future*" (Daniel 8:26). Remember the 2300 evenings and mornings, he said, that has been given? The vision was true, but Daniel was told to seal up the vision because it concerned the distant future. And indeed it would be the distant future because Daniel had the vision in 551 B.C. The time of the fulfillment of the vision was 331 B.C., about 220 years later.

Daniel was so appalled by the vision that he was ill for several days. Daniel 8:27:

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

Daniel could not understand the vision.

The Historical Identity of the Little Horn

Who was the little horn that came out of one of the four horns of the goat? It has to have come out of one of the four divisions of the Grecian empire. Some people say this little horn is the same little horn from Daniel 7:7. Remember, the little horn from chapter seven came out of the fourth beast, the Roman empire. The Grecian empire was the third beast. These two horns are not the same. The little horn of Daniel 7 came out of the fourth beast, the Roman Empire. The little horn in Daniel 8 came out of the goat, which is the Grecian Empire. The little horn was from one of the four division of the Grecian empire which followed the reign of Alexander the Great.

What king in the Grecian empire fit the description of this little horn? Antiochus IV Epiphanes did. He reigned from about 175 B.C. until about 163 B.C. The book of I Maccabees appears with other apocrypha books in the Catholic Bible, but not in most other versions of the Bible. The writer was not a prophet so I Maccabees is not an inspired book. When Jerome translated the Bible into Latin in about 400 A.D., he refused to translate I Maccabees because it did not exist in the Hebrew translation. Even though the Jews never accepted this book as inspired, they considered it as reliable history. The writer of I Maccabees did not claim to be a prophet. In fact, he denied there were any prophets in his day. However, the Maccabean material is considered to be historically reliable. In fact, it will reveal the identity of the little horn of the shaggy goat.

Seleucus was one of the generals in the army of Alexander the Great. He conquered the northern region of Syria following Alexander's death. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was one of the successors to the Seleucid empire. A record of Antiochus IV Epiphanes is given in The First Book of the Maccabees. He became king in the 137th year of the Seleucid empire. Since the empire began in 312 B.C., the 137th year would be 175 B.C. I Maccabees 1:10:

And there came out of them a wicked root, Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king, who had been an hostage at Rome, and he reigned in the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was called a wicked root by the Maccabees.

Wicked men appeared in Israel and persuaded many Israelites to make an alliance with the Gentiles. I Maccabees 1:11:

In those days, went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow.

So the Israelites quit circumcising their children; they adopted the laws of the Gentiles and violated God's law. The disobedience of the Jews led to the arrival of the little horn. He was raised up by God because of the transgression of the Jews.

When the kingdom seemed secure, Antiochus proposed to become king of Egypt so he could rule over both kingdoms. I Maccabees 1:16–19:

Now when the kingdom was established before Antiochus, he thought to reign over Egypt, that he might have the dominion of two realms. Wherefore he entered into Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots, and elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy, and made war against Ptolemy king of Egypt: but Ptolemy was afraid of him, and fled; and many were wounded to death. Thus they got the strong cities in the land of Egypt, and he took the spoils thereof.

Antiochus defeated Egypt in the 143rd year of the Grecian kingdom, about 170 B.C. or 169 B.C. He returned to Jerusalem with a strong force and insolently invaded the sanctuary and took away all the precious thing in the temple. I Maccabees 1:20–23:

And after Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude. And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, and the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials, and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crowns, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels; also he took the hidden treasures which he found.

After Antiochus desecrated the temple, shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance, he returned to his homeland: “And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly” (I Maccabees 1:24). He was defying God. This was the beginning

of the the 2300 days of persecution of God's people before the temple was reconstructed.

Two years later Antiochus came back to Jerusalem, set up an idol to Jupiter, and worshiped Jupiter in the temple of God. What a desecration of the temple! Later the king sent his official, and he shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary (cf. I Maccabees 1:37). Anybody who kept the law of God was killed. Other atrocities occurred. He told a woman with four sons to renounce God or be thrown into a boiling pot of water. They refused to renounce God, so he had their bodies cut into pieces and thrown into the pot (cf. II Maccabees). Can you imagine such a terrible person?

God had predicted the events because He knew that when the events occurred His people might think that their God had abandoned Israel. The Israelites might think that He was not powerful enough to deliver them from this terrible person and God had given up on them. No, God had not given up on them; He knew what was going to happen. In fact, God sent this terrible person to punish the evildoers and to put the righteous to the test to see how much they loved Him. These events were part of God's plan.

Never give up on God. During times of persecution remember that God is with believers who continue to trust Him. That is the message of this vision. God predicted the persecution, but He said it would not last forever. It would only last 2300 days, and then the temple would be reconstructed. The Hebrew word for "*reconstructed*" means justified or vindicated.

How would the temple be vindicated? First, the temple would be cleansed. Second, they would begin sacrificing in the temple again according to the law. Third, the man that desecrated the temple would be put to death. Did all of those things happen? Indeed they did.

Some leaders of the Jews, called the Maccabeans, rose up and began to lead the Jews in a rebellion against Antiochus and

his forces. The Maccabeans eventually defeated the forces of Antiochus and threw them out of the city. The Jews cleansed the temple and began sacrificing again. Antiochus retired to Persia and ultimately died.

Gabriel had told Daniel that the wicked, stern-faced king would cause astounding devastation and destroy many people. He would be destroyed, but not by human power (cf. Daniel 8: 24–25). He was destroyed by God through a sickness.

The death of Antiochus is recorded in I Maccabees: “So king Antiochus died there in the hundred forty and ninth year” (I Maccabees 6:16). He began the persecution in Jerusalem in the 143rd year of the Seleucid empire. He died in the 149th year. That is six years plus a number of months. God had foretold that it would take 2300 days for the temple to be restored. And 2300 days is six and one-third years. It is amazing that God can foresee events years before they occur. Man cannot accurately make that kind of a prediction. This was the fulfillment of the prophetic vision given to Daniel in the year 551 B.C. This additional evidence supports the inspiration of the Bible.

Conclusion

Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived in the first century, wrote that after Alexander the Great conquered the world, he was ushered into the temple by the High Priest of the Jews. They found a copy of the book of Daniel and read in the eighth chapter the prediction that the Grecian empire would conquer the Medo-Persian empire. When Alexander the Great saw that passage, he declared the Jews to be a holy people. No one was to harm them. That is the reason Alexander the Great did not destroy Jerusalem when he conquered the world. He was convinced that the God of Israel was the God who had chosen him to conquer the world. He was the God who predicted in Daniel that Alexander the Great would become a world leader.

Antiochus Epiphanes arose. He persecuted God's people, but he was thrown down. The 2300 days came to an end and

the Jews began worshiping God once again in their temple as they had formerly done. That should convince believers today to remain with God in difficult times, even during times of persecution, because ultimately God will be triumphant. And Christians will also be triumphant if they trust Him.

Daniel's Vision Of The Seventy Weeks

**Daniel 9:1–27; Isaiah 44:24–28; 45:1, 13;
Ezra 1:1–5; Jeremiah 25:11–12; 12:10**

Introduction

In Daniel 9 another remarkable prophecy is found. In chapter seven a detailed prediction of the Roman empire was revealed. In chapter eight a detailed prophecy of the Grecian empire is found, including the 2300 day persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In chapter nine Daniel is given additional predictions about the Roman empire. It was now the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede. This was 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been exiled. Some of the events revealed will rock the world in historical importance.

The chapter is to be dated approximately 538 B.C., in the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes, a Mede by descent, who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom. This is the same Darius that we found in the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6, the one who threw Daniel into the lion's den and then did everything he could to try to save him from it. It was at this time that Cyrus decreed that the Israelites could go home and rebuild their city and temple (cf. Daniel 9:1–2; Isaiah 44:24–28, 45:13; Ezra 1:1–11).

The seventy year captivity was placed on the nation of Israel because of its wickedness. Knowing that the time of

captivity is drawing to a close, Daniel begs for the liberation of the nation. Chapter nine covers Daniel's prayer and the vision of the "seventy sevens."

Daniel and the Prophecy of Jeremiah

The Discovery of Daniel

This chapter begins in the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes: *"In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom"* (Daniel 9:1). Darius was made king of the captured Babylonian empire by Cyrus about 539 or 538 B.C. Darius was the king who threw Daniel into the lion's den.

Jeremiah's Prophecy Concerning the Babylonian Empire

Daniel read and understood the prophecy of Jeremiah. Daniel 9:2:

—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

Daniel was referring to Jeremiah 25 and 29. Daniel read the Lord's prophecy to prosper His people: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* (Jeremiah 29:11). Because of a specific prophecy by Jeremiah, Daniel knew the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years. Jeremiah 29:10:

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

God said the king of Babylon would be punished. Jeremiah 25:12:

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

Israel's Exile of Seventy Years Was near Completion

The Babylonian world empire began when they conquered the Assyrians in 609 B.C. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 605 B.C. The Babylonians reigned from 609 B.C. to 539 B.C., seventy years. Seventy years. That is how long God gave them for their empire. Jeremiah made a correct prediction almost a hundred years before the event occurred. Daniel read the book of Jeremiah and understood that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. Now is the time that God is to allow the people to go back! It was the first year of Darius as well as the first year of Cyrus. In the first year of Cyrus the king made a decree that the Jews could go back to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Ezra 1:1:

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

There are historical references of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return home. A metal cylinder was discovered buried in the earth with a message from Cyrus around the entire cylinder. The message on the cylinder stated that Cyrus let all the nations go home and rebuild their lands and cities. Not only did Cyrus let the Jews go home, but he released all the nations that the

Babylonians had captured. So the Jews, along with other nations, returned home under the decree of Cyrus. God allowed His people to return home when they confessed and repented of their sins.

Daniel's Prayer for Restoration

Fasting, Sack Cloth and Ashes: Indication of Sorrow for Sin

When Daniel read Jeremiah he decided he needed to turn to God in prayer: *"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes"* (Daniel 9:3).

Daniel's Confession of Sins—his Own and the Nations

Daniel begins his prayer with an acknowledgment of God's loving kindness. Daniel 9:4

I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands"

Daniel included himself in his confession of the sins, iniquities, and rebellion of the people of God. Daniel 9:5–6:

We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel was a good man, but he was not a perfect man. He lived a righteousness life, but he had imperfections. There was probably not a better man in all the land, but Daniel had sins to confess, as does everyone: *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). The Apostle John wrote that men are sinful and need to confess their sins. 1 John 1:8-9:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Notice, Daniel contrasts God's righteousness with the Jew's shamefulness. Daniel 9:7-8:

“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O Lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.”

God's compassion is contrasted with the Jew's guilt. God's discipline did not mean that He had withheld mercy (v. 18) and forgiveness from His people, but it meant that He, being righteous, must punish people's rebellion and disobedience (v. 10). Daniel 9:9-10:

“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.”

Daniel's beautiful prayer is an example of how Christians ought to pray and confess their sins.

The Consequences of Their Sins

Daniel recognized that the reason the Jews were in Babylonian captivity was because they had sinned against God. Daniel 9:11:

“All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.”

Daniel told God that the punishment was just according to the covenant promise. God was only doing what He promised He would do if the people turned away from Him (Deuteronomy 29 – 31).

Daniel realized that nothing like the captivity had ever happened to Jerusalem before. Daniel 9:12:

“You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.”

Daniel admitted that they had not sought the favor of the Lord and turned from sin. Daniel 9:13–14:

“Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the Lord our

God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him."

Daniel stated that God keeps His covenant and is righteous in everything He does.

Daniel praised God's might and again admitted their sins. Daniel 9:15:

"Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong."

He recognized that the reason they were in Babylon, the reason they were in captivity, is that they had sinned against God. He goes on and talks about how God is only just in doing what He said He would do if they turned away from God.

Daniel's Intercession for the City and the People

Daniel pleads with God to have mercy on His people and His city. Daniel 9:16

"O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us."

Daniel confessed that the sins of the people had brought contempt upon Jerusalem and God's people.

Daniel earnestly asked God to hear his prayers and look with favor on the dismal holy place: *"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary"* (Daniel 9:17).

Interestingly Daniel did not specify what God should do; he only asked that God “look” on the sanctuary and “see” the city, both in desolation for many years. Daniel ends his prayer with a beautiful statement. Daniel 9:18–19:

“Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

Daniel did not make the request because of their righteousness or because they deserved it. He made the request on the basis of God's mercy. Christians are saved by God's grace and mercy when they trust and obey Him, realizing they are sinners: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9). Christians cannot boast about their salvation because of anything they have done.

The hypocritical Pharisees of the first century exalted themselves because they thought they were better than everyone else, but they were not. Jesus condemned them for their self-righteous attitude (cf. Matthew 23:25).

Because of God's grace and mercy, Daniel realized the people would return to their land and rebuild God's temple. What a humble confession Daniel made!

God's Answer to Daniel's Prayer

While Daniel was praying, Gabriel appeared. Daniel's prayer included confession of his sin and the sin of his people, and his request that God restore Jerusalem (God's **holy hill**). The answer to Daniel's prayer was not delayed. For he was interrupted by the appearance of Gabriel. Daniel 9:20–21:

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill—while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

Gabriel is the angel who told Daniel the meaning of the ram and goat vision (cf. Daniel 8:16). Gabriel also appeared to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and to Mary (cf. Luke 1:19, 26). Gabriel came to Daniel in answer to his prayer. God answered Daniel's prayer, and He listens to believers today. He can send an angel to answer their prayers.

Though Daniel did not refer to it in his prayer, he was evidently concerned about God's program for Israel from that point on. Gabriel's purpose was to give insight and understanding to Daniel. Daniel 9:22–23:

He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision"

Is that not something? As soon as Daniel began to pray, an answer was given. God knows what people are praying even before they pray. The minute Daniel began to pray an answer was given to him. He was asking for forgiveness. He was praying that the captives might return home to rebuild the city and the temple. And an answer was given to him immediately, a decree to let the people return home. The vision was to reveal the answer and the circumstances concerning their return to the land.

Daniel and the Seventy Weeks

Seventy Weeks Decreed upon the People

There has been a great deal of religious thought concerning these verses, when they began and when they end. Daniel 9:24–27:

“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

The best interpretation of the passage is found by examining the context. Daniel was praying that the seventy years of Babylon captivity would come to an end as God had promised. But that promise was conditional on the repentance of the people. They would need to confess their sins and admit that they were in captivity because of their sins. Daniel confessed

the sins of the people and as soon as Daniel began to pray an answer was given. Cyrus made a decree to let the people return home. Probably this vision occurred just before Cyrus gave the decree because the angel said the answer was given to Daniel when he prayed. Perhaps Cyrus was getting the proclamation ready to let the Jews go back to Jerusalem and rebuild their city.

Some people think the “*seventy sevens*” are 70 days. Other people believe it is 70 weeks of days, which would be 490 days. The King James Version reads seventy weeks. Some people turn the 490 days into 490 years. This is possible. It was seventy years of desolation that Babylon was to exert over other nations until they fell. Seventy years in which the Babylonian world empire existed, and they were seventy literal years. But this does not say years. We do not have the right to say it.

The Bible does not say what the “*seventy sevens*” are. The number “70” is a figurative expression in the Bible. “Seven times seven” means “completely” in Matthew 18:21–22:

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. (ASV)

In the context of Daniel the “*seventy sevens*” means the entire period of time in order for all of this to take place. The “*seventy sevens*” are divided into three periods of time—seven sevens, sixty-two sevens, and one seven.

The First Seven Weeks

Each of the time periods will be examined to find out if it has been fulfilled in history. The first time period mentioned is

“*seven sevens*,” and if it were literal that would be forty-nine years. In this first period of time Jerusalem would be rebuilt. When Cyrus gave the decree to return home, Zerubbabel and Ezra and later Nehemiah all returned to Jerusalem. They rebuilt the city, even the moat around it. They finished rebuilding the temple later, about 520 B.C. Nehemiah returned and built the walls around that city in the year 465 B.C. During the time of the Persian kings the first seven weeks are fulfilled. The city of Jerusalem was rebuilt, the temple was restored, the walls around the city were rebuilt, and even the moat was put into place, exactly as the Bible predicted.

The Sixty-two Sevens

The second time period mentioned, “*sixty-two sevens*,” was a longer period of time. If it were literal, it would have been about 460 years. This time period continued until the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is the One who the prophets of old foretold would be the Savior of the world. He is the One who they said would die on the cross for their sins. He is the one who would establish an everlasting kingdom that would never be destroyed. This is another prediction of Jesus.

But something dreadful will happen to the Anointed One: “*After the sixty-two ‘sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing . . .*” (Daniel 9:26). Did that happen in history? Yes, it did. Jesus brought His message of the new covenant to the people, but they crucified Him on a cross. The people rejected Him. The best man who ever lived in all of history was treated like a common criminal. The Jewish people, who were awaiting a Savior, should have accepted Jesus, but instead they killed Him. Again a Bible prediction occurred. The Messiah finally arrived, and He was “*cut off*.”

The Last (Seventieth) Week

If Jesus was to be cut off after the sixty-two sevens time period, that will be the seventieth week. In the last week of the time period the Messiah will be cut off.

As a result of the Messiah being cut off by the Jewish people, what will happen? Daniel 9:26:

... The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

Gabriel revealed to Daniel that Jerusalem would be destroyed again. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. For seventy years it had been desolate. Daniel prayed that God would allow the people to return home to reconstruct the city and the temple. God answered Daniel's prayer. History shows that Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt. But as a result of the Jews rejecting the Messiah, God allowed their city to be destroyed again. In A.D. 70 the armies of the Roman General Titus, the son of Vespasian, destroyed the city of Jerusalem. He completely obliterated the sanctuary, the temple. Not one stone was left upon another. He burned the city to the ground and took the Jewish people captive. This event was predicted in detail in Daniel 9:26.

As Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple, so the Romans destroyed it a second time. The first time it was destroyed because the people had gone into idolatry. The second time it was destroyed because the people rejected their Messiah. They rejected the Christ, the Son of God. It is on the wings of the abominable act of killing Jesus Christ that Jerusalem was destroyed again.

Nineteen hundred (1900) years have passed since the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and still there is

no temple in Jerusalem for the Jews. In the place on the mountain where the temple stood, there is a Muslim mosque. The Jews can no longer offer sacrifices to their God. They can no longer worship according to the law. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, God established a new covenant with the people. (cf. Hebrews 9:15). Jeremiah predicted that this would occur (cf. Jeremiah 32:31–33). The writer of Hebrews quoted Jeremiah. Hebrews 8:8–10:

But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord . . . I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

The writer of Hebrews wrote that the new covenant did not come into existence until Christ died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (cf. Hebrews 9:15). At Christ's death the first covenant ended and the new covenant began.

Consequently, the Jewish nation was cut off as God's people, and the city of Jerusalem was cut off as the place of worship. Jesus predicted that a time would come when people would worship the Father places other than Jerusalem and in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:24). Christians all over the world now worship God in spirit and in truth. They do not have to go to Jerusalem to worship Him; they can worship wherever they are.

Objectives to Be Realized by the End of the 70 Weeks

Gabriel gave Daniel a remarkable prediction of the coming of the Messiah, His rejection by the Jews, and second destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. There are many people who think that the passage has not been fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled in the future. There are other scholars who think that it was fulfilled in the Grecian period by Antiochus Epiphanes. But remember that when Antiochus Epiphanes came, he did not destroy the temple nor the city of Jerusalem. He only profaned the temple. People are still waiting for someone to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and then destroy it again. But it has already been restored and destroyed. Everything in this passage that has been spoken of has been fulfilled.

Gabriel concludes the explanation to Daniel of his vision.
Daniel 9:27

“He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Notice what was to happen during the seventieth weeks: *“he will set up an abomination that causes desolation.”* The greatest abominable act of all history was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The angry mob cried out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate tried to free Jesus, but he was pressured by the mob and he submitted to their request, committing the worst crime of history. They crucified the Son of God, the only pure man who ever lived (cf. Matthew 27:22–50). That act finished the transgressions of the Jews. The Jews went into captivity because of transgressions, and their transgressions were finished when they crucified the Messiah on the cross. Jesus put

an end to sin when He died on the cross. He gave His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world: "*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). Jesus' death put an end to sin: "*. . . But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself*" (Hebrews 9:26). Jesus Christ with one sacrifice made atonement for the sins of the world: "*. . . because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy*" (Hebrews 10:14).

The word translated "*atonement*" is sometimes translated "*propitiation*" and means forgiveness. Atonement also means to cover up sin so that it cannot be seen any longer. It is only in Jesus that sins are forgiven, that they are atoned for. His atoning blood sacrificed on the cross covered sin forever and brought everlasting righteousness to God's faithful.

Jesus Christ is the King of Righteous. He alone lived a righteous life, a perfect life. It was His eternal righteousness that brought eternal salvation to the people who are in Jesus. They were made to be righteous, even as He is righteousness, and has provided eternal life to all who believe in His name. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of God on high, He entered into the Holy of Holies. He paved the way so that faithful believers can go to heaven someday.

Gabriel said the vision and prophecy would be sealed up. Remember what it meant to seal up a prophecy (cf. Daniel 8). The prophecy was to be sealed up because its fulfillment was still a long way off. Jesus revealed the future when he referred to this prophecy of Daniel. Matthew 24:15–16:

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

Jesus revealed the prophecy because Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. Jesus told when the desolation would occur: "*When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near*" (Luke 21:20). When the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, they represented the Romans who crucified Jesus in that abominable act. Indeed, Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. What a remarkable prophecy is given in Daniel 9. God truly can predict the future before it occurs. He foretold the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem long before the events occurred. That should cause people to turn to the Messiah with faith and serve Him all the days of their life.

Revealing Of The Messiah

Daniel 10:1–21

Introduction

In Daniel 9 a prediction of the future of Jerusalem was given. Jerusalem would be restored, rebuilt. The temple would be re-erected within that city, the Messiah would come and be rejected by the people, and then the city would be destroyed again. In Daniel 10 a vision is given of the Messiah before He became flesh — a Messiah who was at work before the beginning of creation.

John wrote that Jesus was the Word and was with God in the beginning. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning”* (John 1:1–2). Jesus existed even before the world began. He was co-existing with the Father, and together they created the world and everything that is in it. Daniel reveals the Messiah who came to the Jewish people and was rejected by them. As a result of their rejection of the Messiah, their city and sanctuary were destroyed.

Daniel’s Disturbing Vision

The Message and Daniel’s Reaction

Daniel had another vision in the third year of King Cyrus. The final vision given to Daniel came in the third year of the reign of Cyrus which was 536 B.C. Exiles had returned from Babylon and had begun rebuilding the temple. (Perhaps Daniel

had not returned with the exiles because of his age.) Israel's captivity had ended. Jerusalem was being re-occupied, and the nation seemed to be at peace. Daniel 10:1:

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

The third year of Cyrus' reign would place the date somewhere between 537 and 536 B.C. The vision was true and about a great war. Some scholars translate this verse as "a great conflict" or "a great struggle."

Daniel's Reaction to the Message

The message of a great war or conflict deeply disturbed Daniel's soul. During this time of mourning he abstained from choice foods and apparently waited on God in prayer concerning his people's destiny. Daniel 10:2-3:

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

Daniel fasted for three weeks. So disturbed was his soul over the vision of a war that he could not even eat for three weeks. He did not put lotions on his body. He only ate bread and water. What caused him to be so disturbed? It was the message, and its interpretation. Fasting is not often found in the Bible. When it is found, it is usually associated with deep distress, sorrow, or suffering over some calamity. The Ninevites fasted when Jonah told them they would be destroyed in forty days. That

was disturbing news to them, so they repented in sackcloth and fasted before God (cf. Jonah 3:7–9).

Christians ought to fast when something very important or very serious is about to happen. In times past the Pharisees adopted a certain time to fast each week. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a sinner and the other a Pharisee, the Pharisee said: *“I fast twice a week . . .”* (Luke 18:12). Fasting had become a ritual in his life. It was not associated with any great calamity or important event that was about to happen. He merely did it because it was a religious habit. That attitude takes the significance from what God intended fasting to be.

The disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus a question about fasting, or actually about not fasting. Matthew 9:14–15:

Then John's disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.”

Jesus indicated that fasting has an important purpose; it is usually associated with mourning and grief. Consequently, that is the reason Daniel was fasting. It was not a regular ritual he performed. Daniel fasted because of the disturbing message he had received. By fasting Christians show how important an approaching event is.

Jesus told His disciples not to appear obvious when they fasted. In Matthew 6:16–18 He will tell them:

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head

and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Christians should follow Jesus' instructions and Daniel's example when they fast.

Daniel's Second Disturbing Vision

The Appearance of the Celestial Figure

Daniel made known why he was fasting and where he was when the message came to him: "*On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris*" (Daniel 10:4). The Tigris River separated Medo-Persia from Babylon; this great river was the boundary between the two countries.

Daniel described the celestial figure in Daniel 10:5–6:

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

What an awesome image he saw! A man dressed in linen, white linen no doubt. A fine gold belt was around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, and his face was like lightning. Imagine, his eyes were like flaming torches.

A similar vision is found in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was prophesying at the same time Daniel was seeing the vision. Ezekiel was in the rural area of Babylon while Daniel was in the urban area, in the city of Babylon, and Jeremiah was

prophesying in the city of Jerusalem before it was destroyed. Three great prophets of God: Jeremiah in Jerusalem; Ezekiel in the rural area of Babylon; and Daniel in the city of Babylon. Ezekiel received a similar vision to Daniel's vision recorded in Ezekiel 1:26–28:

Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Ezekiel saw the same awesome figure that Daniel saw. Who was the figure? The Apostle John had a vision of the same person, apparently in Revelation 1:13–16:

. . .and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

The person John saw sounds like the person that Ezekiel saw and the person that Daniel saw. But who did John see? His identity is revealed in Revelation 1:17–18:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

The One who died and is now alive is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Apparently, that is who Ezekiel saw and who Daniel saw. Ezekiel and Daniel saw Jesus before He was glorified. Jesus prayed to the Father just before His death and said: *"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began"* (John 17:5). When Jesus went back to heaven, He went to receive the same glorified body that He had before the world was created. He existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and together they had created the entire universe.

The Connection Between Chapters Nine and Ten

It appears Daniel was seeing an image of Jesus before He became flesh. The Messiah would one day appear in the flesh to the Jews and be rejected by them. There is a close connection between Daniel 9 and Daniel 10. In chapter nine the Messiah is announced, and in chapter ten He is revealed.

Daniel alone was privileged to see the vision. Daniel 10:7:

I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.

Daniel's companions on the Tigris River did not see the vision, but they knew something had happened. They sensed something and fled.

Daniel's companions evidently saw the brilliance of the light without seeing the visitor and they fled to hide from its

shining. Daniel was left alone as he fixed his eyes on the vision. Daniel 10:8–9:

So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

I sometimes have preaching students who look that way in class. They appear to go to sleep, and that is what Daniel did before the heavenly creature. I do not know how he could have gone to sleep, but he did, and it showed his humanity.

The Mission of the Celestial Being

A Message of Assurance and Comfort

A hand touched Daniel, and a voice spoke to him to reveal the meaning of the vision. Daniel 10:10–11:

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

Daniel was highly esteemed by God. A man who devotes himself to God, always prays, and fasts when he is deeply disturbed, is esteemed by God. While Daniel was fasting and no doubt praying, he wanted to understand the meaning of the vision. He needed hope, consolation, and encouragement so God sent a Comforter to him. God sent the Celestial Being, the One thought to be Jesus before He became flesh. Daniel had the

honor of having the Messiah come into his presence to comfort him.

God loves every one of His creatures. He even knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. He has all the hairs of a person's head numbered (cf. Matthew 19:29–30). He loves everybody so much that He sent this person to become flesh and to die for sinners. But for someone who loves and obeys Him, He esteems and respects them.

The Celestial Being told Daniel not to be afraid. He tells him in Daniel 10:12 to not be fearful and that his prayer was heard and being answered.

Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

Daniel set his mind to gain understanding and to humble himself. The Celestial Being came in response to Daniel's prayers. He had been praying and fasting for three weeks, and the first day Daniel began to pray and fast his words were heard and being responded to.

A Message of Revelation

The Celestial Being started to come, but he was detained. We are told why in Daniel 10:13:

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted Him twenty-one days, which is three weeks. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help Him. The king of Persia was not likely a human prince but an angelic prince from Satan who was assigned to the nation of Persia and sought to resist God's purposes. This verse indicates that angelic struggles underlie the affairs of national and world events. Satan tried to thwart God's prophetic revelations of the future of world empires and to resist God's purpose to send the gospel to the whole world. Christians are in a struggle with such angelic powers of Satan (cf. Ephesians 6:10–12; 2 Corinthians 11:14).

The Celestial Being told Daniel about the angelic struggle. Jude wrote about the archangel Michael (cf. Jude 9). Michael was sent to bury Moses' body so the Israelites would not know where he was buried, but he was resisted by Satan who claimed Moses' body on the basis of Moses' sin.

The word archangel means "prince of the angels, chief or ruler of the angels." There is probably more than one archangel. God has armies of angels. Humans do not know everything about heaven. God has angels that do other works and services like bringing messages to people.

Michael was the prince of Daniel. ". . . but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him)" (Daniel 10:21 – 11:1). God has angels who serve nations of people and individuals. Jesus told about the angels for children: "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). I imagine every single person has an angel.

When the angel helped Peter escape from prison, he went to the home of Mary the mother of John Mark where the church was praying for him. Rhoda told the people that

Peter was at the door, but they said “ . . . *It must be his angel*” (Acts 12:15). Peter had an angel, children have angels, and Daniel had an angel who looked after him and his people. Michael, the archangel, has other angels under him. In Daniel 7 there was a vision of the Ancient of Days sitting on his throne with his holy angels: “*Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated and the books were opened*” (Daniel 7:10). Ten thousands time ten thousands is ten million angels who are before the throne of God. The angels execute the will of God, carry messages for Him, and do services on His behalf.

Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus who both died. The soul of Lazarus was carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham, but the rich man’s soul was carried to hell (cf. Luke 16:22–23). When a person dies their body is buried, but their souls continues to live. Angels conduct their souls where they need to be. Many people are dying every second. It would take thousands of angels working unceasingly to carry the souls of the dead to the places where they need to go.

From Daniel 10 readers can learn that angels are at work behind the scenes of the happenings on earth. In other words, when political events occur on earth, there are angelic powers working behind the scenes trying to frustrate those happening. Satan and his angels knew that God predicted that the Medo-Persian power would conquer the Babylonian power. They knew that God predicted that the Grecian power would conquer the Medo-Persian power. Satan and his angels tried to frustrate the plans of God. They tried to make prophecy fail so that God’s will would not be done.

There are angelic powers working behind the scenes today. We do not know how often a battle is decided not by men on earth, but by God in heaven. During World War II when

America was fighting Germany and Japan, the decisive factor was sometimes the weather. Cloudy skies could cause victory because the enemy would be unable to spot troops or planes. God could determine whether a cloud cover existed. God can take people who have inferior forces and defeat a country with superior forces. Satan wanted Hitler to win the war. Satan wanted Hitler to exterminate the Jews and to oppress all nations of the world. But God gave the Allied forces the strength and the wisdom to win the war. God is in control of history, and He is in control of government today.

Who Is the Prince of Persia?

When Daniel started praying and fasting, the Celestial Being heard his prayers from the first day, but he did not come because the prince of Persia was resisting him. The prince of Persia was not a king on earth. He is a spiritual being like Michael. He was working behind the scenes, trying to defeat the purposes of God. When Haman tried to destroy all the Jews in Xerxes' Persian kingdom, God thwarted his plans. There were angelic powers working behind the scenes through Mordecai and Esther (cf. Esther 3–10).

The Celestial Being came to explain to Daniel what would happen to the Jews in the future. *“Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come”* (Daniel 10:14).

There are angelic struggles in the lives of Christians. Ephesians 6:12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Christians are in a fight against Satan and all of his angels, and they are more powerful than Christians are. But Jesus and the Father are more powerful than Satan and all his

angels. If Christians rely on the power of God, His word, and prayer, they can conquer the devil's temptations. The devil is trying to make every believer his slave. Only through the power of Jesus can a person overcome the evil one: "*I can do everything through him (Christ) who gives me strength*" (Philippians 4:13). Christians cannot remain faithful by human power. They can remain faithful only by divine power because the Holy Spirit dwells within them. Jesus Christ stands ready to assist, comfort, and strengthen Christians as He helped Daniel. It is marvelous to know that saints are not alone in their fight against sin.

Daniel's Response and Encouragement

The one who looked like a man touched Daniel's lips, and he began to speak. Daniel 10:15–17:

While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe."

Daniel was overcome with anguish because of the vision. He felt helpless. His strength was gone, and he could hardly breathe. Daniel was deeply concerned about what was going to happen to his people, and he felt inadequate for the situation.

Again Daniel is touched and given strength. Daniel 10:18–19:

Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. "Do not be afraid, O man highly

esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”

Daniel was blessed with words of esteem, peace, courage, and strength. Jesus knows how humans feel because He became flesh and was tempted in all points, yet without sin. He understands pressures and physical sufferings. He faced spiritual anguish on the cross when He was pierced not only in His body but in His soul. Jesus cares. He has promised rest for the soul. Matthew 11:28–29:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

The same Jesus who comforted Daniel promises comfort and strength today. He is an intercessor at the right hand of the Father (cf. Romans 8:34). He ever lives to make intercession for Christians. The Holy Spirit has been sent by Jesus to comfort believers during tribulation. Jesus who comforted Daniel will comfort Christians if they trust, pray, confide, and lean upon Him.

The Celestial Being told Daniel the purpose of His coming in the last verses of chapter ten. Daniel 10:20–21:

So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. And in the first year of Darius

the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)”

The Messenger’s General Introduction and Explanation of the Visions of Chapters 11 and 12

The Messenger revealed that He will return to fight against the prince of Persia. Daniel was writing in the third year of Cyrus, in 536 B.C. Persia reigned over the Jews for 200 more years. The Messenger predicted that His struggle, after Persia, will be with the prince of Greece. The prince of Greece came 200–300 years later. Time is nothing to Him. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day (cf. 2 Peter 3:8). The Messenger was working behind the scenes to bring about His plans. He let Daniel know that the prince of Greece would conquer the Medo-Persians.

The Messenger will announce what is inscribed in the “writing of truth.” Is this God’s book on earth or in heaven?

Only Michael the archangel will stand with the Celestial Messenger in the struggle against the nations on behalf of the Jewish nation because Michael is “your prince.” He is Daniel’s prince and the prince of the Jewish nation (cf. Daniel 12:1).

Conclusion

This scripture was revealed to give evidence to future generations so they can believe that God’s word is true. It has to be divine because it predicts future events that man can not predict. Man’s mind cannot tell what the future will bring. Only God can, and that should give assurance to Bible students as they study another vision in chapter 11. The prediction of a multitude of historical events that came to pass, should make one realize that the Celestial Being who comforted Daniel, will comfort anyone who puts his trust in Him. Trust God as Daniel did.

Future History Predicted

Daniel 11:1–20

Introduction

In chapter ten Daniel had a vision that disturbed him so much that he prayed and fasted for three weeks. Finally a celestial figure, which was identified as the Son of God before He became flesh, came to Daniel. In chapter 11 He told Daniel what the conflict was. Pay close attention because some very detailed history will be given in this chapter. The detailed history was predicted hundreds of years before it occurred. Remember, it was the year 536 B.C., and the detailed information will continue from that year until the Messiah came.

First Revelation of Future Events

History of the Persian Empire Reviewed and Foretold

The Celestial Figure reminded Daniel what had happened in the past: “*And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him*” (Daniel 11:1). This occurred in the third year of Cyrus which was also the third year of Darius. The Celestial Being wanted Daniel to know He was with Darius when he came to power, when he appointed Daniel as one of the three supervisors over the Babylonian area of the Medo-Persian empire. God put Daniel in that political position.

God, before He became flesh, was working on behalf of Daniel and the Jewish people. No Christian gets a promotion or a position of authority without God granting it. So they need to give God the glory.

Daniel was given a description of future Persian kings. Daniel 11:2:

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

Cyrus reigned from 539 to 530 B.C. He authorized the Jews to return to Palestine in 536 B.C. His son Cambyses took over at his death in 530 B.C., and he reigned until 522 B.C. He was the first of the four kings that the Celestial Figure told Daniel would appear.

The second king was Smerdis. He was really a pseudo Smerdis. He claimed to be the brother of Cambyses Smerdis, but he was not. His name was Wamata. He began to reign in 522 B.C., but he did not even reign a year.

Then came the third king, Darius the First, the Persian. Do not confuse this Darius with Darius the Mede. Darius the Mede reigned over Babylon, but Darius the First was a Persian who reigned over the entire Persian empire. He was in power when the temple in Jerusalem was reconstructed by Zerubbabel. Darius the First reigned from 520 B.C. to 486 B.C.

The fourth king after Cyrus was Xerxes, sometimes called Ahasuerus. He was the husband of Esther, according to the book of Esther. Xerxes saved the Jews from extinction when Haman planned to exterminate them. Esther made a plea on their behalf, and as a result the Jews were saved (cf. Esther 3:3–8:13). Xerxes, the fourth king after Cyrus and the husband

of Esther, was far richer than all the other kings. When he gained power by his wealth, he stirred up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. In 480 B.C., in the battle of Salamis, Xerxes fought against the Greeks and was defeated. Alexander the Great later used Xerxes' war as justification for his own attack against Persia when he set out to conquer the world.

History Of The Grecian Empire Foretold

Daniel was told about a mighty king who would rule with great power. Daniel 11:3–4. :

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

The mighty king was Alexander the Great of Greece, not another Persian king. The Celestial Being was only giving information about the main kings. Notice how these verses fit the Grecian empire. Ordinarily when a king dies the kingship goes to his son, but the Celestial Being predicted that when the Grecian king died his kingdom would not go to his son. It would be given to others. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided into four divisions. As Daniel 8 predicted and history confirms, Alexander died at age 33, and his kingdom was divided among his four generals. They killed his son, preventing him from succeeding to the throne in place of his father, exactly as predicted by this scripture 210 years before the events occurred.

History Of The Southern And Northern Divisions Of Grecian Empire Foretold

Being at this point in the Grecian empire, it appears that in the following verses the Celestial Being predicted the division of the Grecian empire. Remember, some scholars say the king of the South is the United States and the king of the North is Russia. They try to make the verse apply to modern times. When they do this, they are taking the scripture entirely out of historical context.

When Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided among his four generals. The king of the South ruled the southern division of the Grecian empire. Daniel 11:5:

"The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power."

The southern division was Egypt according to Daniel 11:8. Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, got control of Egypt. In 312 B.C. Seleucus established his capital in Syria and became known as the king of the North. Remember, Alexander the Great originally had five generals. Antigens, one of the generals, defeated Seleucus, and took over Syria, Babylon, and Persia. Seleucus fled to Egypt, and Ptolemy made Seleucus one of his generals. Ptolemy invaded and defeated Antigens with Seleucus at the command of his armies. As a reward, Ptolemy of Egypt gave Seleucus the empires of Babylon, Palestine, and Syria. Seleucus got a kingdom that was larger than Ptolemy's kingdom. It is very unusual for the commander of an army to get a bigger kingdom than his king. Yet, the Celestial Being told Daniel in detail what would happen in the future.

More historical details were accurately predicted by the Celestial Being, who was identified as Jesus Christ before He became flesh. Daniel 11:6-8:

“After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her. One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone.”

After some years the kingdoms of the north and south became allies. Seleucus and Ptolemy became friends, as did their two sons. An alliance was formed by marriage between the two families. Ptolemy gave his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus, the son of Seleucus. Ptolemy thought the marriage would seal their friendship because his daughter would be sitting on the throne, but that is not what happened. Berenice was poisoned by Antiochus' first wife, Laodice, and the alliance fell apart. Ptolemy II, the brother of Berenice, invaded the north carrying off their gods and treasures. During this battle, Ptolemy II killed Laodice thus avenging the death of his sister Berenice. Finally, Ptolemy returned to Egypt for a time of peace.

Even today there is conflict between Egypt, Israel, and Syria. It has been going on for centuries. History repeats itself as people fight against people.

There are two reasons why the Celestial Being gave this kind of historical detail. First, this type of historical detail would greatly concern the people of Israel because they lived between Egypt and Syria. Every time Egypt went north to Syria

they crossed through Israel. And every time Syria went south to Egypt, they crossed through Israel. One time Israel was under the control of Egypt, and another time they were under the control of Syria. Daniel was concerned about his people because they were not going to have independence. They would no longer be a nation of prestige. Instead, Israel would be a political pawn in the hands of the king of Egypt or in the king of Syria.

The second reason this kind of historical detail was given was so the Israelites would know that even though they would not have independence, God knew what was going to happen and was still in control. A person should not lose their faith in God merely because their nation is not important. No one should have the idea that God is not concerned about them because their nation is not important. God loves people of all nations. If a Christian loves God, they are important to Him. God wanted the Israelites to understand that they needed to stay faithful to God no matter which country ruled them. Daniel was a captive in another nation, and he was still important to God. Daniel's nation did not have freedom, but God loved Daniel and took care of him. God saves people on an individual basis, not on a national basis. The historical detail would give future Jews reasons to believe in their God because only God can write history before it occurs. Whatever God says about the future will come to pass.

There were battles, son against son, Syria against Egypt, and Egypt against Syria. Daniel 11:9–10 tells us:

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

Seleucus II, the son of Antiochus II and Laodice, made an effort to invade Egypt in 240 B.C., but he was defeated. Later, Seleucus III and his sons assembled a great force and began warring against Egypt. All this information is in a book called Between the Testaments by Pfeiffer. A detailed description of the history of these nations is given in the book. Pfeiffer describes all the battles that occurred in the time period between the Testaments. The Old Testament canon ended with Malachi around 400 B.C. From 400 B.C. until the time of Christ there were no more Old Testament prophets. All the predicted history given in Daniel occurred during the time period between the Testaments. So, the Bible was not silent about this period of time. The predictions of this time period is given in detail exactly as it later occurred.

The Celestial Being continued to tell Daniel the predictions about the kings of Syria and the kings of Egypt in Daniel 11:11–13:

“Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant. For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped.”

Lack of space and time do not allow a detailed explanation of these scriptures. You may read an outlined discussion of the historical events contained in these scriptures in the Study Guide that accompanies this course.

The Celestial Being told Daniel that his own people, the Israelites, would rise against the king of the South: *“In those*

times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success” (Daniel 11:14). Many men, including violent men of Israel, would join in the war against the king of Egypt. The fact that they were Jews does not mean they were faithful people of God. The Israelites were in the middle of the armies of Syria and the armies of Egypt. The violent men of Israel would try to fulfill the vision, but without success.

Daniel was told that a fortified city would be captured by the king of the North in Daniel 11:15–16:

Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand. The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it.

The king of the North gained control of the “*Beautiful Land*” which referred to Palestine. The “*Beautiful Land*” was Daniel’s homeland, the nation of Israel. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist, and the invader will do as he pleases because they were not able to stand against him.

The Celestial Being predicted that the king of the North would make an alliance with the king of the South. Daniel 11:17:

“He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him.”

The king of Syria would come with the might of his entire kingdom to make the alliance with the king of Egypt. Earlier it was prophesied that the king of the South would give his daughter to the king of the North. Now it is prophesied that the king of the North would give his daughter in marriage to the king of the South. Antiochus, the king of Syria, planned to capture Egypt through his daughter, Cleopatra. This is not the same Cleopatra of Roman times. Antiochus, the king of Syria, proposed peace to Egypt and sealed his apparently good intentions by giving his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage to Ptolemy V in 198 B.C. He hoped that through his daughter he could control Egypt. Cleopatra consistently sided with her husband on every issue. She did not help her father. Instead, Cleopatra gave her father-in-law, the king of Egypt, information that helped him foil all the plans of her father, the king of Syria.

A person can have great plans, made with ingenuity and creativity, but it is God who determines whether they succeed or not: “. . . *‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’*” (James 4:15). If a plan is not according to God’s will, it will not happen. Remember that lesson, and do not commit the same mistake that these kings made by depending upon their strength and their own wisdom to accomplish their plans. Commit your plans to the Lord: “*In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps*” (Proverbs 16:9). God is the one who determines the success or failure of a person’s plans.

The Celestial Being predicted a section of history which became very important to the Jews. Daniel 11:20–24:

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

Seleucus IV, son of Antiochus III, and brother of Antiochus IV, began ruling at his father's death. He ruled from 187–175 B.C. Seleucus IV began to tax Israel heavily to regain some of the money lost to Rome.

His successor was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the little horn of Daniel 8. He was a contemptible person who was not given the honor of royalty. The rest of chapter eleven deals with the life of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Much attention is given to this man because this was one of the most difficult periods of Jewish history. 2300 days, or 6½ years, of difficulty, anguish, and agony of the soul occurred when the temple was desecrated and children were killed because they had been circumcised. People were thrown into fire because they believed in God. Scripture was destroyed. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a terribly wicked and cruel man.

All preceding kings have been shown in succession up to this man in order to point out that when Antiochus IV Epiphanes came, the Israelites were not to give up on God during the time of tribulation. They were not supposed to think that his god was stronger than their God because he was persecuting them. A lot of people think that when they are suffering, God has left them. They believe they are suffering because God is punishing them.

Sometimes it is true that God punishes because of sin, but that is not always true. Think of Job. He suffered so much. Job lost his family, his wealth and his health. His friends asked him what he did wrong. They told him that he was suffering because of his sins. But Job was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He suffered because God allowed Satan to test him. Satan told God that Job would surely curse Him if he removed the blessings. Satan believed that Job only served God because of his wealth and great family. God allowed Satan to test Job, and Job did not forsake God. Stay true and loyal to God like Job did. Rely on Him, and He will

strengthen and protect you during tribulation. An eternal reward awaits those who remain faithful even during difficult times.

Daniel was told the king of the North would wage war against the king of the South. Daniel 11:25:

“With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him.”

The king of Syria conquered and plundered the king of Egypt. Confirmation of this is given in the book of Maccabees: “Now when the kingdom was established before Antiochus, he thought to reign over Egypt, that he might have the dominion of two realms” (I Maccabees 1:16). Antiochus invaded Egypt with a strong force. With chariots, elephants, and a large army he made war on Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Ptolemy had a powerful army, but he was frightened and fled, leaving many casualties. The fortified cities in the land of Egypt were captured, and Antiochus plundered the land of Egypt.” II Maccabees indicates that Antiochus invaded Egypt two different times.

Conclusion

After Antiochus IV Epiphanes invaded Egypt, on the way home, he entered Israel, ransacked the temple, destroyed many people of the city, and left them in misery. And that began the persecution of the Jews. This event was studied in Daniel 8 and is repeated in Daniel 11. In the next chapter of this book, the rest of Daniel chapter 11 will be studied and Daniel 12 will be completed. In Daniel 11 the problem is given, and in Daniel 12 the solution is found.

Conclusion Of The Visions Of Daniel

Daniel 11:21-12:13

Introduction

In the previous chapter the historical detail was absolutely amazing. Imagine God writing history in such detail hundreds of years before it occurred! Almost the entire time period between the Testaments was penned in sacred scripture before it occurred. Only God can do that. That should give believers more confidence that this book is from God.

There are also some very important lessons being learned as men arise to persecute God's people. Through hundreds of years, evil and wicked have continued the battle Satan has waged against the purposes of God. This is one of the most intense efforts the devil waged against the people of God and His purpose to bring into the world His Christ, promised in Genesis 3:15. Antiochus Epiphanes, mentioned in chapter eight, is presented in greater detail in chapter 11. It is amazing how much more detail is given in chapter 11 than in chapter eight. Unfortunately, only highlights of this man will be studied. In the last chapter the prediction of Antiochus IV Epiphanes' invasion of Egypt, and his invasion of the temple in Jerusalem is given. He will kill many of the people and then continue to his own country.

The Persecution Of Antiochus IV Epiphanes

His Failed Invasion Against Egypt

The second invasion of Egypt would not be like the first one according to the Celestial Being: *“At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before”* (Daniel 11:29). There is nothing about the second invasion in I Maccabees or II Maccabees, or in any other historical accounts of his battles.

Daniel was told that the first time Antiochus IV Epiphanes would conquer all of Egypt and would ransack all of the fortified cities, but the second time the Roman army would meet him there and turn him back. Daniel 11:30:

“Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant.”

Rome would begin to show its might and power. On the way back he again would go through Israel. He would go into the temple and set up an idol to Jupiter, the god of the Romans. That is interesting, is it not? He would worship the god of the Romans. Perhaps he thought their god was stronger than his god.

The final desecration of the temple was predicted: *“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation”* (Daniel 11:31). Do not confuse this *“abomination that causes desolation”* with the one in chapter nine which occurred during the Roman era. The Roman abomination was after the death of Christ when the temple was completely destroyed.

When the abomination of desolation predicted in chapter 11 occurred, the daily sacrifices were stopped. The temple was desecrated, but it was not destroyed. Antiochus Epiphanes reigned from 175 to 163 B.C., about 12 years. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. So the two abominations should not be confused.

The context of Daniel 11 is during the Grecian empire, during the time of the descendants of Alexander the Great. Antiochus Epiphanes is one of the successors to the Seleucid empire in Syria. He is the king of the North.

First Maccabees 1:54 confirms what Antiochus Epiphanes did:

On the fifteenth day of the month Chislev, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side.

That event occurred in 167 B.C. They sacrificed on the idol altar which was erected over the altar of God. Women who had their children circumcised were put to death in keeping with the decree. Their babies were hung from their necks. The families who had circumcised them were also killed (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:59-61). This was revealed previously in chapter eight. Second Maccabees 6:1-2 reveals that the king set up an idol to Jupiter, the god of the Romans.

Daniel was told that the people who knew God would resist the king: *“With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant but the people who know their God will firmly resist him”* (Daniel 11:32). The terrible fulfillment of this verse is given in 1 Maccabees 1:62-64:

Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing.

Wherefore they chose rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant; so then they died. And there was very great wrath upon Israel.

The people who knew their God would firmly resist unto death. Many people would die during the terrible persecution because of their faithfulness. Daniel 11:33-35:

“Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.”

In the process they would be refined, purified, and made spotless. When a man's love is so great for his God that he is willing to die for Him, indeed that purifies his faith. What more faith could a man have than to lay down his life for his God? In the process these men were showing the kind of courage, integrity, commitment, and sacrificial spirit that true people of God should manifest in every age. Someday the readers of this book may face a similar situation. It will be the ultimate test, and those who pass the test will be refined and purified for eternity.

Summation of the Life of Antiochus

The Arrogance of Antiochus

The Celestial Being continues to describe King Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Daniel 11:36:

“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.”

Interestingly, most commentaries state that Daniel 11:1–35 refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, but they say that verse 36 refers to the end of the world. They jump from the Grecian empire to the end of the world. The context indicates that it is the same king of the previous verses. The description of the king appears to be the arrogant Antiochus. Daniel was told that the king would exalt and magnify himself above every god, and he would say unheard of things against the God of gods. Antiochus certainly did magnify himself against God when he went into the temple of God and desecrated it.

The king would show no regard for the gods of his fathers Daniel 11:37-39:

“He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.”

Remember, Antiochus entered the temple and set up the abomination that causes desolation by dedicating the altar to Jupiter. Jupiter was not one of the gods of his fathers. It was a

Roman god, a god unknown to his fathers. These verses also allude to Antiochus Epiphanes.

Victories of Antiochus

Daniel was told that Antiochus would defeat the Egyptians. Daniel 11:40:

“At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood”

The context has not changed; it is still during the Grecian empire. The verses do not refer to the end of the world.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes died. Remember, his death was predicted: *“He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him”* (Daniel 11:45). Chapter eight stated that when Antiochus got the news that the Maccabees had driven out his forces from Jerusalem, he retired to the eastern provinces and died.

Tribulation and Triumph Of Israel

Temporary Triumph over the Tribulation by Antiochus

Daniel was told that God would send angelic help to assist the Jewish people. Daniel 12:1:

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—

everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.”

“At that time” refers to the time of the terrible persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. Michael the great prince who protected Daniel’s people will appear again. He is the angel who came to assist the Celestial Figure in Daniel 10. That Celestial Figure was identified as Jesus in his pre-incarnate state. Michael will be sent to help during a time of distress. Angels are always working, unknowingly, to help God’s people. Although the Jews would suffer horribly at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes, angels would come to help them. Everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered from the persecution. It will not last forever. Ultimately, believers will succeed.

The Maccabean family, with poor weapons and very few people, attacked the Syrian army and conquered them. Michael the archangel helped so they won and were delivered from the terrible persecution.

Eternal Triumph over the Tribulation

Some people will survive the tribulation, but others will die during the tribulation. Daniel 12:2-3:

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

Those women who died because they had circumcised their children and those sons who were killed because they had refused to deny their God, will be raised from the ground. They

will participate in the resurrection of the righteous, and they will be raised to glory. They will shine like the stars in heaven, forever and forever.

Two promises are given. One to those who are alive and one to those who are dead. A believer should not think that their promises will not be fulfilled because they die in such a terrible persecution. To die during a persecution does not mean the person was not righteous. Those who gave their lives for their faith will be the first to rise from the dead to eternal glory. The resurrection is not just for the righteous. The resurrection is also for the wicked. The resurrection is to everlasting life for some, while for others it is to shame and everlasting contempt. One of the favorite passages of those who believed in the resurrection are these verses found in Daniel 12.

Paul told Felix that he believed everything written in the Law and the Prophets. He believed that there would be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked: *“and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked”* (Acts 24:15). The Law and the Prophets taught that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Jesus also taught about the resurrection of the dead in John 5:28-29:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

Jesus taught that when He returns, the dead in Christ will rise to live, but those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. Every person can choose to live with God forever, or he can be banished from Him forever. It is a choice each person makes.

When persecutions arise, when pressures come, when temptations confront, every one will choose to serve God and suffer for Him or deny God in order to escape the suffering. The faithful ones will one day be raised to eternal life.

The Angelic Interpretation of the Entire Vision

Daniel was told to seal the words of the scroll: *“But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge”* (Daniel 12:4). Daniel was told the same thing in Daniel 8:16 because the fulfillment would occur in the distant future. He was predicting the Grecian empire which would occur hundreds of years after Daniels’ life. But man’s resurrection will occur even later: *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). A person enters into a timeless state once he dies. The next thing he will know, it is judgment day. Time is only counted in the flesh. When a person enters into a spirit state, he will quit aging: *“ . . . With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day”* (2 Peter 3:8). It will happen that quickly.

Daniel received a vision about the time when all these things would come to pass. Daniel 12:5-7:

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

people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

The phrase three and a half times occurs again. Remember, in Daniel 7:25 it was used concerning Domitian's persecution. The meaning of three and a half times will now be given. Three and a half is one half of a seven. Seven is a complete number. Three and a half times means incompleteness, a broken period of persecution. In Revelation 12:14 the dragon persecutes the women for three and a half times. It means that about half the time people of God are persecuted and half the time they are not. Half the time they suffer and half the time they do not. That is the way life is. There are good times, and there are bad times. During difficult times, do not give up. The bad times will not last forever. People who hold on to God will be victorious in the end. Those who do not hold to the hand of God during times of suffering will ultimately be destroyed. Remain faithful to God and be victorious during times of persecution and tribulation. Never forsake God!

Daniel was unable to understand the meaning of the vision. Daniel 12:8-10:

I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?” He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”

The same message is given again. The godly people will continue to suffer persecution, difficulties, and problems. The wicked will continue to be wicked, ignorant, and

misunderstanding. The righteous will be purged, purified, and refined. Endure to the end in order to be saved: “. . . *Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10).

The following verses are two of the most difficult passages in the Bible. Daniel 12:11-12:

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

Writers of commentaries have had great difficulty understanding these verses. Neither the thought content nor the number of days fits the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The abomination that causes desolation in Matthew 24:15, which refers to the sign before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, cannot be the same as Daniel 12:11–12 because in these verses the abomination appears after the abolishing of the daily sacrifices. The abomination in Matthew 24:15 had to occur before the abolishing of the daily sacrifices in order to allow the Christians to escape before the destruction of Jerusalem began. Neither the 1290 days nor 1335 days will fit into any time period of the destruction in A.D. 70. Also, there was no special blessing 45 days after the Jerusalem temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

I believe Daniel 12:11-12 is a continuation of the vision of chapter 11. Notice the expression, “*From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up.*” It was mentioned earlier in this vision: “*His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation*” (Daniel 11:31).

Both the thought content and the number of days fit perfectly into the 2300 days of Antiochus Epiphanes. The temple was first desecrated in 169 B.C. by carrying off the furniture of the temple (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:20-28), but the daily sacrifice did not cease at this time. The 1290 days begin not with the desecration of the temple, but with the abolishing of the daily sacrifice. This did not occur until two years later in 167 B.C. (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:29- 40). This began the period of the 1290 and 1335 days. The abomination that caused desolation, sacrifice to Zeus (cf. 2 Maccabees 6:1- 2) was not set up until many days after the daily sacrifice was abolished. 1 Maccabees 1:37-50 shows that for many days the temple lay desolate with no one sacrificing any thing in the temple. Then 245 days later the abomination was set up (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:54) and the sacrifice was made 10 days later (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:59) The period of the abolishing of the sacrifices and the setting up of the abomination would last 1290 days (cf. Daniel 12:11). The abomination that causes desolation was removed 1290 days after the daily sacrifice ceased. Then 45 days later (the end of the 1335 days) the daily sacrifices began again, and the blessing of worshiping God according to Old Testament truth was re-instituted. During the 45 days the temple was cleansed and the furniture was rebuilt and placed in the temple. The daily sacrifice began once again, exactly three years after the abomination was worshiped and three years and 10 days after it was set up in the temple. Thus ended the 1335 days. 2245 days later Antiochus died, ending the 2300 days. See the chart at the end of the chapter: The 1290 & 1335 Days of Daniel 12:11-12.

Thus, the 2300 days of persecution of God's people by Antiochus, the abolishing of the daily sacrifice, and the setting up of the abomination that causes desolation lasted 1290 days. 45 days later the blessing of renewed worship to Jehovah

began, ending the 1355 days. The time and the ideas all fit perfectly the historical record of 1 Maccabees.

Daniel will die before these events occur: *“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance”* (Daniel 12:13). Daniel will rise to receive his allotted inheritance at the same time as those who died in the tribulation receive their inheritance, at the resurrection. Another promise of the resurrection is given. Bible people have always believed in the resurrection. Joseph of Egypt wanted his bones carried back to Canaan land to be buried, because he knew that one day his body would be raised from the dead (cf. Genesis 50:25).

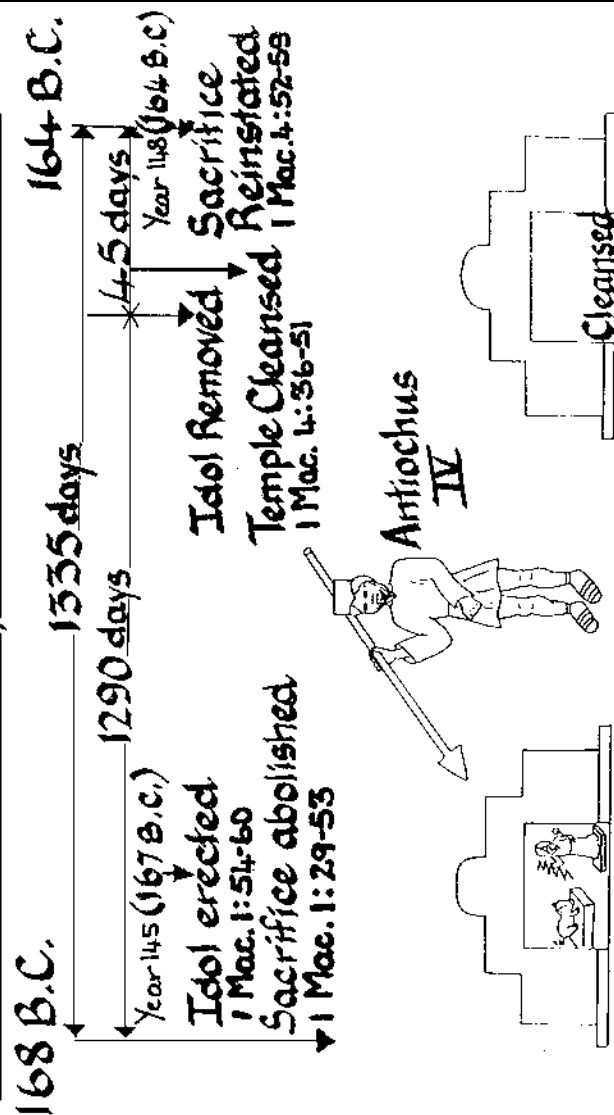
A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. His soul is saved when he gives himself to Christ and his sins are forgiven. But his body is not saved until the resurrection. And on that day his body will be raised from the grave and transformed into a beautiful, glorious body (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). That was the hope of Daniel and the people who faithfully endured the tribulation of Antiochus Epiphanes, and that should be the hope of all Christians.

Periods of tribulation eventually end so be faithful to God, even if it means death. Either way God's children will be blessed at the resurrection: *“ . . . Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . for their deeds will follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). God's holy people will be refined and made stronger if they endure persecution. They will rest from their labors and later be raised to eternal life.

Paul wrote that he had two choices for his life. *“I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body”* (Philippians 1:23-24). It would be better for Paul to die and go to glory. But, if he lives, it is better for other people because he can share his faith with them. So whether you live or die, share the faith and give glory to God.

I hope that during the study of Daniel each reader's faith has increased. For the book of Daniel is indeed God's divine word. The book of Daniel could only come from God because He alone can write history before it occurs. I hope that through this study each reader has seen men of God who had deep confidence and trust in God and were willing to serve Him. May each reader of this book glorify and serve God forever. Never forget the eternal reward awaiting those who are faithful to the end. Live for God as Daniel lived for Him.

The 1290 & 1335 days of Daniel 12: 11-12



Desecration of Temple

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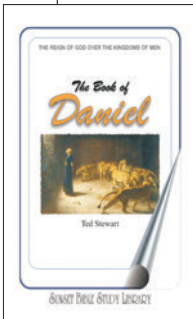
Ted Stewart



Ted Stewart grew up in the Central church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas. He attended Abilene Christian College (now University) where he received his Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Bible. Ted served as a missionary in Sao Paulo, Brazil for thirteen years before returning to the States to preach and teach Bible at Abilene Christian University. In 1976 he became an instructor in the Sunset International Bible Institute.

Ted and Dot have four children. For many years they operated the Sunset Bookstore in Lubbock. He has recently written a book on the chronology of Egyptian history entitled ***Solving the Exodus Mystery***. He has traveled to Turkey to see the site of Noah's Ark and often lectured on the veracity of the site.

Until his retirement he also lectured on Christian apologetics at many churches, presenting the case for the reliability of the Bible and the existence of God.



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