

# INTRODUCTION AND DANIEL

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## I. Introduction

### *A. Date and Author*

1. The book of Daniel is an account of events involving a Jew from Jerusalem named Daniel. The events that are specifically dated in the book run from 605 B.C. down to 536 B.C. Having just studied Lamentations, which focused on the suffering attendant to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C., I thought it would be timely to explore Daniel's experience as a Jew in exile in Babylonia.

2. The first half of the book appears to have been written by an unidentified author *about* Daniel, as indicated by the numerous third-person references to Daniel. The second half of the book, however, includes much that was written and spoken by Daniel himself, words in first person. So it seems that the inspired writer of the book incorporated into his composition material directly from Daniel.

3. The book was written no earlier than 536 B.C., since 10:1 reports a vision from that date. Daniel 1:21 reports that Daniel served Babylonian kings until the

first year of the Persian king Cyrus, which would be 539 or 538 B.C., so it is made clear from the beginning that the book was not composed until at least the latter part of the sixth century.

4. Scholars disagree over how long after 536 B.C. the book was composed. Whenever it was written, it is the word of God and reports events and prophecies given to Daniel in the sixth century. I am with those scholars who think the book probably was written in the late sixth century B.C. not long after the last reported events occurred and prophecies were given.

## ***B. Language and Structure***

1. The first six chapters of Daniel are relatively straightforward stories of faith under pressure. The final six chapters, however, are bewildering apocalyptic visions. Tremper Longman remarks: "The simple division between chapters 6 and 7 masks a radical shift in genre and complexity. While children resonate with the lessons of Daniel 1-6, seasoned Bible scholars scratch their heads over Daniel 7-12 with the move from simple stories to obscure apocalyptic visions."<sup>1</sup>

2. Daniel is written in two different languages. Daniel 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13 are written in Hebrew whereas 2:4b–7:28 is written in Aramaic. So there are six chapters in Aramaic that are sandwiched between chapters in Hebrew.

a. Aramaic was the native language of the people from the southern region of Babylonia known as Chaldea, the region from which Nebuchadnezzar's father came. (Note that Chaldeans is commonly used in Scripture for the people of Babylonia generally.) It was becoming the *lingua franca* of the Near East and was used throughout the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. However, the older language of the region, Akkadian, which had a very complex writing system, was still in use. Hebrew, of course, was the language of the Israelites.

b. Many have speculated on the matter, but it remains unclear why two languages are used. Edward Young's explanation is perhaps as good as any:

All in all, the solution that seems to be most free from difficulty is that Aramaic, being the language of the world is used in those portions of the book which outline the future history of the worldly empires and their relation to the people of God, and Hebrew is used in those portions which interpret for the Hebrews the meaning of the visions of the world empires. The present writer is fully aware of the difficulties which are entailed in this position, and hence, has no desire to be dogmatic upon the point.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Young, *Daniel*, Geneva Commentary (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 22.

3. One interesting aspect is how the Aramaic (chapters 2-7) overlaps and thus ties together the narrative (chapters 1-6) and vision (chapters 7-12) sections of the book. In addition, the Aramaic section seems to have a chiasmic structure which sheds light on the meaning of the vision in chapter 7. As Joyce Baldwin outlines the Aramaic chapters:<sup>3</sup>

- A. Four empires and God's coming kingdom (ch. 2)
- B. Trial by fire and God's deliverance (ch. 3)
- C. A king warned, chastised, and delivered (ch. 4)
- C'. A king warned, defiant, and deposed (ch. 5)
- B'. Trial in the lions' den and God's deliverance (ch. 6)
- A'. Four empires and God's everlasting kingdom (ch. 7)

4. The narratives in chapters 1-6 are in chronological order and the visions in chapters 7-12 are in chronological order, but the chronology of the visions overlaps that of the narratives. More specifically, the visions of chapters 7 and 8 occur before the events narrated in chapters 5 and 6. This chronological interlocking of the narrative and vision sections is perhaps better appreciated visually.

Ch.1 Ch.2 Ch.3 Ch.4 Ch.7 Ch.8 Ch.5 Ch.6 Ch.9 Ch.10 Ch.11 Ch.12<sup>4</sup>

### *C. Greek Additions to Daniel*

1. I just want to mention that the ancient Greek translations of Daniel, what is called the Old Greek (probably from the late second century B.C.) and the translation attributed to Theodotion (perhaps from the early first century A.D.), contain three major additions that are not found in the Masoretic Text, the Hebrew/Aramaic manuscripts of the book. These additions are known as (1) the story of Susanna, (2) the account of Bel and the Serpent, and (3) the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men. The account of Susanna is found in different places in the Old Greek and Theodotion versions; Bel and the Serpent concludes the book in both the Old Greek and Theodotion versions; and the Prayer of Azariah is inserted after 3:23 in both versions.

2. It seems clear these stories are in fact additions to the book and not part of the original text, and the Jewish tradition has never considered them as part of the biblical canon. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches, however, treat these additions as part of the canon and include them in what is called the Apocrypha.

### *D. Historical Background*

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<sup>3</sup> See Longman, 19 (fn. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2008), 2.

1. We discussed much of the relevant historical background as part of the introduction to the study of Lamentations last quarter. You recall that after King Solomon's death in 931 B.C. the united kingdom of Israel divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. All the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel were bad, and Israel was judged by God through the conquest by the Assyrians that was completed in 722/721 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah had more than its share of evil rulers and wicked conduct. God repeatedly warned Judah of the judgment he would bring if they did not repent, but they for the most part chose to ignore him.

2. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign (around 640 B.C.), and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem (2 Ki. 22:1). He was a good king (2 Ki. 22:2), and it was during his eighteenth year that the high priest, Hilkiah, reported finding in the temple the Book of the Law, which likely refers specifically to the book of Deuteronomy. Apparently it had been removed from its place next to the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26) during the long reign of the evil king Manasseh and forgotten. Josiah embarked on a program of religious reform, but it was insufficient to stave off God's judgment.

3. After Josiah was killed at Megiddo in 609 B.C., his son Shallum (known as Jehoahaz) reigned for three months. Pharaoh Neco replaced Jehoahaz with another of Josiah's sons, one named Eliakim, and gave him the throne name Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim reigned from 609-598 B.C.

4. Daniel 1:1 refers to an assault on Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar "in the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah."

a. Jehoiakim's third year was from 606-605 B.C., and the reported siege fits events of 605 B.C. when the then Crown Prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish and pursued the Egyptian troops into central Syria to finish them off. The Babylonian Chronicle says that at that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered "all Hatti-land," which included Judah. Soon thereafter word reached him that his father Nabopolassar had died, and in September 605 he arrived in Babylon to claim the throne.<sup>5</sup>

b. It was during this time that Daniel and some other youths were taken to Babylon, perhaps in early 604. Jehoiakim remained for the time being on the throne of Judah but now as a Babylonian vassal.

c. Jeremiah 25:1 equates the fourth year of Jehoiakim rather than his third year with Nebuchadnezzar's first year. That seeming discrepancy evaporates if Jeremiah is using the nonaccession-year system for counting the years of a king's reign. Under that system, if a king began his reign in the middle of the year, that year still was counted as the first year of his reign. Under the accession-year system that was current in Babylon under the Babylonian and Persian kings, the first year of a king's reign was his first full year.

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<sup>5</sup> See Steinmann, 80-83.

5. Jehoiakim eventually rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki. 24:1), which led to a massive invasion in 598/597 B.C. Jehoiakim died probably in 598/597 and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (2 Ki. 24:6; also spelled Jehoiakin).

6. Jehoiachin reigned for only three months. He surrendered to the Babylonians without a fight in order to avoid complete annihilation of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin, the royal family, and a large portion of the Judean elite, including the prophet Ezekiel, were led into exile (2 Ki. 24:14), and more treasures from the temple and royal palace were carried off. Jehoiachin fared relatively well in Babylon. He was freed after 37 years of captivity when Evil-merodach succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylonia (2 Ki. 25:27-30) and enjoyed the favor of the king.

7. After taking Jehoiachin captive in 598/597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar installed Josiah's son (Jehoiachin's uncle) Mattaniah as a puppet king in Jerusalem and gave him the throne name Zedekiah. After a number of years, Zedekiah foolishly initiated a rebellion against the Babylonians, which resulted in a furious retaliation. This culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 587/86, following an eighteen-month siege of the city (2 Kings 24:17 - 25:26).

### *E. The Man Daniel*

1. Daniel 1:6 identifies Daniel as one of the youths taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to be trained for service in the king's palace. He was probably in his early teens when taken. According to Dan. 1:3-4, he was from the royal family or the nobility, had a good appearance, and was intelligent and well educated. He was from the cream of the Israelite crop.

2. The prophet Ezekiel, who was himself taken into Babylonian captivity some seven years after Daniel, speaks of a Daniel who was known for his righteousness, wisdom, and ability to unravel secrets (Ezek. 14:14, 20, 28:3). Even though Ezekiel spells Daniel slightly differently, the description seems clearly to fit the picture of Daniel in the book that bears his name. The dated prophecies of Ezekiel fall between 593 and 571 B.C., so apparently Daniel was highly esteemed by the Jews from early in his life.

## II. The Book of Daniel

### *A. Chapter 1*

1. In chapter 1, Daniel and three other youths from the tribe of Judah, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's chief official ("eunuch" could be literal or may simply refer to a court official) Ashpenaz

pursuant to Nebuchadnezzar's order. All of these boys were the cream of the Israelite crop.

2. It is noted in v. 2 that the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. This was the first of three deportations to Babylon (605/604, 598/597, 587/586). God was beginning to punish Judah, but by doing it incrementally he gave them every possible chance to repent. As we know, they would not, which led to the catastrophe of 587/586 that is mourned in the book of Lamentations.

3. Daniel and his companions were brought to Babylon to be prepared to serve in the king's palace. As vv. 4-5 indicate, this involved their being educated for three years in the language and literature of the Chaldeans, after which time their suitability to serve would be assessed by the king. If Chaldeans is here used broadly, their training would include learning Akkadian.

4. The king assigned to them a daily portion of the food *he ate and drank*, which in his eyes was only the very best. So he naturally assumed, as v. 10 suggests, that it would be most beneficial for the health and conditioning of his prospective servants.

5. Each of the four men was given a Babylonian name: Daniel was called Belteshazzar, Hananiah was called Shadrach, Mishael was called Meshach, and Azariah was called Abednego. This renaming was no doubt designed to help bring them into Babylonian culture by weakening their identification with Judah and God. Their Jewish names all were related in some way to God.

6. Verse 8 says that Daniel resolved that he would not *defile himself* with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. He was concerned about consuming something that the Mosaic law forbid being consumed.

a. The O.T. prohibited Israelites from eating certain kinds of meat (Leviticus 11, 20:25; Deut. 14:3-21) and any meat not slaughtered in such a way as to drain the blood (Lev. 17:10-16, 19:26; Deut. 12:15-25). To avoid the risk of doing so, and also the risk of consuming meat that had been offered to an idol, Daniel chose not to eat any of the meat from the king's table.

b. He presumably refused the wine out of fear that it too may have been tainted by idolatry. It seems that also would be a risk with whatever vegetables he was provided, but perhaps Daniel knew something about their source that removed that concern.

c. Daniel 10:2-3 implies that Daniel had no problem eating meat or drinking wine later in his life, but the source of that food is not specified. This was after Cyrus had decreed that the Israelites could return home, so it is reasonable to think a supply of clearly non-defiling meat and wine was available to Daniel.

7. Daniel asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself, but the chief refused to grant the request because he feared he would be killed if Daniel's

condition suffered and it became known that he had allowed Daniel not to eat what the king had provided. The statement in v. 9 that God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of eunuchs refers to the fact that the chief eunuch did not perceive Daniel's request as an act of defiance or rebellion, which would have brought punishment.

8. In vv. 11-16 Daniel approaches a lesser official, the steward that the chief of eunuchs had assigned to them, with a new plan. Rather than a permanent change, this time he asks only for a ten-day trial to be judged by the steward at the end of the period. The steward agrees to the test, and Daniel and his three companions are given vegetables to eat and water to drink. At the end of only ten days they are more healthy looking than all the other youths who ate the king's food, so the steward continued taking away the king's food and wine and giving them vegetables during the time of their training. The implication is that God rewarded the faithfulness of these young men.

9. God grants the four Jewish youths learning, skill in all literature, and wisdom and grants Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams. The entire group of candidates was taken before Nebuchadnezzar and interviewed by him. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah stood out above all the others and were chosen to serve the king. Verse 20 is probably a general statement that over their years of service they proved themselves to be "ten times" better in matters of wisdom and understanding than all the advisors, the magicians and enchanter, that were in his kingdom. This is born out by what follows.

10. Verse 21 notes that Daniel served in the court of the Babylonian kings for as long as there was a Babylonian king to serve, that is, until the first year of the Persian king Cyrus (539/538 B.C.). If Daniel was fourteen when he was taken into captivity in 605 or early 604 B.C., he would have been in his early eighties when he retired from royal service.

## *B. Chapter 2*

1. In 603/602 B.C., when Daniel is still a teenager, Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream.<sup>6</sup> He summoned all his advisors who were thought to have insight into such

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding the seeming chronological discrepancy between chapters 1 and 2, Steinmann writes (pp. 111-112):

Critical scholars often point to the date notice at the beginning of chapter 2 as an inaccuracy in Daniel and a sign that the author was confused over the sequence of the historical events. That confusion allegedly created another contradiction between chapters 1 and 2. The second year of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1), they argue, would occur before the end of the three-year period (1:5) prescribed before the young Judean men would complete their training (1:18). Their promotion to positions of prominence in Babylon (2:48-49) would then come before their interview with Nebuchadnezzar, which completed their training (1:18-19).

However, there is no conflict here. Nebuchadnezzar's second regnal year is actually the third year in the Daniel narratives. The Babylonian system of reckoning the years of a king's reign did not count his first partial (accession) year. Nebuchadnezzar's accession year lasted from 1 Elul 605 BC to the end of Adar 604 BC (September 7, 605 - April 1, 604). His first (full) regnal year was from 1 Nisan 604 to the end of Adar 603 (April 2, 604 - March 21, 603). His second regnal year lasted from 1 Nisan 603 to the end of Adar 602

matters – magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans, the last being used in a specialized and derived sense meaning some kind of a diviner (omen-reader) and possibly encompassing the other kinds of diviners – in the hope they could interpret the dream for him.

2. The Chaldeans said they would tell the king the interpretation of the dream after he described the dream to them, but Nebuchadnezzar was having none of that. He told them that they were either going to tell him both the dream and its interpretation or they were going to be torn to pieces and have their homes destroyed. If they were able to tell both the dream and its interpretation, they would be richly rewarded.

3. They again asked the king to tell them the dream, but he told them their fate was sealed if they did not do as he commanded. He was sufficiently bothered by the dream that he wanted to ensure that he received its real meaning, and to make sure of that he was requiring them to demonstrate their insight by discerning something regarding which he could gauge their accuracy: the content of his dream. As he says in v. 9, "tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation."

4. The Chaldeans protested that no one on earth could do that and that no king had ever demanded such a thing from any diviner. That was something only "the gods" could show to the king.

5. That was not the response the king wanted. He no doubt felt this proved that they had been frauds all along, and he ordered that all the wise men be killed. When

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(March 22, 603 - April 9, 602). Since it was normal for people in the ancient Near East to count partial years when reckoning time spans, the Judeans would have been in training during part of Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, his entire first year, and part of his second year, making three years according to Hebrew count, fulfilling the "three years" in 1:5. Thus the notice that the events of chapter 2 took place in Nebuchadnezzar's second year (2:1) implies that it was shortly after Daniel and his companions had completed their training (1:18).

Therefore, chapter 2 immediately illustrates the statement in 1:20 that Daniel was superior in every way to Nebuchadnezzar's other wise men.

Thus the time notices in Daniel 1 and 2 imply this sequence of events:

**Nebuchadnezzar's Accession Year, Which Was the First Year of Training for the Judean Captives**

- Sometime between June 605 and January 604, Jerusalem capitulates to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1:1-2). (Nebuchadnezzar assumes the throne in September 605.)
- In February 604, captives from the Judean nobility (1:3) are taken to Babylon.
- Sometime between February 604 and April 1, 604, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael begin their training (1:3-7). This is year 1 of that training.

**Nebuchadnezzar's First Year, Which Was the Second Year of Training for the Judean Captives**

- From April 2, 604, to March 21, 603, Nebuchadnezzar's first regnal year, the Judeans are in training to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's court (1:8-17). This is year 2 of their training.

**Nebuchadnezzar's Second Year, Which Was the Third Year of Training for the Judean Captives**

- Sometime between March 22, 603, and fall 603, during Nebuchadnezzar's second regnal year, the Judeans complete their training (1:18-19, fulfilling 1:5). This is year 3 of their training.
- Also during his second regnal year, in fall 603 or winter 603-602, Nebuchadnezzar dreams the dream recorded in Daniel 2; God reveals the dream and its interpretation to Daniel; and the Judeans are promoted (2:48-49).

Arioch, the captain of the king's guard who had been assigned to carry out the executions, came to kill Daniel and his companions, Daniel replied to him with prudence and discretion. Arioch told Daniel what was behind the king's edict, and Daniel went in and asked the king, probably through a senior official, to give him time to interpret the dream for him. Unlike the Chaldeans, he did not protest the king's requirement; rather, he simply sought an extension of time in which to meet it. This served as a stay of execution.

6. At the time Daniel made the request, he had no idea what the king had dreamed. He only knew that the situation was desperate and that God knows all things and can reveal to people what he chooses. He went home, informed his three companions of the situation, and urged them to seek God's mercy that he might reveal the mystery, the content and meaning of the dream, so that they could be spared.

7. The mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision that night, and Daniel praised God for his mercy in vv. 20-23. He then immediately went to Arioch, who then brought him before Nebuchadnezzar announcing that he had found among the Judean exiles a man who would interpret the dream.

8. The king confirmed what Daniel presumably knew – that he would have to provide both the dream and its interpretation – by asking whether he was able to do that. Daniel told him that no wise man, enchanter, magician, or astrologer could do what the king demanded but that the God who is in heaven could reveal to the king what will be in the future (v. 28). He tells Nebuchadnezzar that God made known to him, Nebuchadnezzar, what is to come and that the interpretation was revealed by God to him, Daniel, not because of his superior wisdom but in order that the king might know the interpretation.

9. In vv. 31-35 Daniel tells the content of the king's dream. The king saw a great, bright, and frightening image or statue in the form of a human. Its head was gold, its chest and arms were silver, its stomach and thighs were bronze, and its legs were iron with clay mixed into the iron of the feet. A stone was cut out by no human hand, which points to divine activity, and struck the image on its feet of iron and clay smashing them to pieces. Then the entire image was broken into chaff or dust and blown away by the wind so that there was nothing left of it, and the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

10. In vv. 36-45 Daniel gives the king the interpretation. The image is a series of kingdoms, a series beginning with the Babylonian kingdom represented by its great king Nebuchadnezzar. In the days of the fourth kingdom in the series, the eternal kingdom of God will come, a kingdom that will never be conquered (shall never be left to another people), and its coming will mean the end *of all these kingdoms* (v. 44).

a. The identification of these four kingdoms has been a controversial matter since the rise of modern biblical criticism a few hundred years ago, but the traditional Christian understanding, which I think is correct, is that they are: the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire. These are the successive gentile empires that exercised political control over Israel.

b. The Babylonian Empire is expressly identified as the first kingdom (v.38), and the Roman Empire is the fourth because the New Testament makes clear that Christ ushered in the kingdom of God in the days of the Roman Empire (e.g., Mat. 12:28; Lk. 11:20, 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:5b-6).

c. Though these four kingdoms are said to come after one another, and do so historically, in the vision they coexist as part of the one statue. In other words, the successive kingdoms are together the representation of something larger, something symbolized by the one statue. I believe they are the symbol of human kingdoms generally, worldly political governance that stands in contrast to the kingdom of God.

d. In the days of the kings of the fourth kingdom (v. 44), the days of the Roman Empire, God will establish his eternal kingdom which will bring to an end "all these kingdoms," meaning all human kingdoms, all worldly political governing powers as symbolized by the statue made up of succeeding expressions of that governing power.

e. The kingdom that Christ inaugurated in the first century A.D. will culminate at his return in the perfect, all-encompassing reality of love and fellowship in the immediate presence of God. The Messianic kingdom that comes as a small stone that strikes the feet of the statue ultimately will result in a great and all-encompassing reality. In the words of v. 35, it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

f. It is in this sense that the kingdom of God that Christ inaugurated spelled the end of all worldly kingdoms. The end has begun, has broken into the present age, and we await only its final expression. Jesus made this point in a number of parables: the growing seed in Mk. 4:26-29; the mustard seed in Mat. 13:31-32, Mk. 4:30-32, Lk. 13:18-19; the leaven in Mat. 13:33, Lk. 13:20-21; and the wheat and the weeds in Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43. To quote just one scholar regarding Paul's perspective on the matter, Michael Bird states in *Introducing Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 114, 116:

Fundamental to Paul's theology is that the future age (the eschaton) has already broken in and has been *inaugurated* through the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God. . . .

The coming of Jesus has inaugurated a new era of redemptive history and God's new age has been launched upon the world, something like a covert operation seizing key nodes along the rear echelons of an opposing force. Those people who confess faith in the Messiah and experience the transforming power of the Spirit of God are living billboards in our global metropolis advertising God's activity in the world and pointing to things soon to come. At the same time, the old age continues, death and evil are realities that need to be confronted and endured, but their power has been broken in principle and even in practice. What is more, the day is coming when God will finally do away with them and the old age will be no more. On that day God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28).

g. The fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, is portrayed as an ethnically divided kingdom, one in which the various groups of people mix, engage in social and economic intercourse, but do not unify, as iron and clay do not combine when mixed.

(1) In the literal (and unusual) words of v. 43, "mixed they will be among the seed of man." Though some understand the phrase to refer to marriage alliances, and even translate it as referring to marriage, it need not refer to that (see Steinmann, 155). NIV and TNIV translate the clause: so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united; NET translates it: so people will be mixed with one another without adhering to one another.

(2) I suspect the Roman Empire is singled out for mention with regard to mixing of people without unifying because the mixing was enhanced by the Roman system of roads and protection of the seas but, more importantly, because the social tension within the empire was exploited by God in the ushering in of his kingdom. In the dream, the stone strikes amid the division or social tension represented by the clay feet. At the risk of over-reading this, the division within the Roman Empire was part of what motivated Pilate to crucify Christ. He wanted to pacify the rebellious Jews. So in that sense, the lack of cohesion within the empire was used by God in the bringing of his kingdom.

11. Verses 46-47 report that Nebuchadnezzar was blown away. He fell on his face and paid homage to Daniel and commanded that incense be offered up to him. Perhaps Daniel raised an objection that is not recorded. If not, presumably Daniel was satisfied that Nebuchadnezzar's intent was, as v. 47 indicates, to honor God by honoring him. The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

12. In vv. 48-49 Daniel is given high honors, many great gifts, and is made ruler over the whole *province of Babylon*, meaning the particular province or political subdivision in which the capital was located. He would, of course, be subject to the king. He also was made chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon, which seems logical given his success as an interpreter of dreams. Daniel also secures a promotion for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were given positions as administrators in country districts of the province. Daniel, however, remained at the king's court.

### C. Chapter 3

1. Chapter 3 contains no chronological indicator for its events. For various reasons, Andrew Steinmann (p. 167) speculates that the events occurred around 594/593 B.C. In vv. 1-7 Nebuchadnezzar sets up a huge golden (gold-plated) statue, probably of one of the Babylonian gods (Bel, Marduk, or Nebo/Nabu), in what was called the Plain of Dura in the province of Babylon and summons his advisors and various administrators and officials to worship it, probably as a demonstration of their loyalty to him as their king. The

strange dimensions – almost 90 feet high but only about 9 feet wide – indicate it either had a pedestal or was some kind of narrow monument on which the image was sculpted.

2. In light of his acknowledgment in 2:47, you wonder why Nebuchadnezzar is forcing these officials to worship the idol he has built. Of course, polytheists could worship many gods, and this one probably was closely associated with Babylonia. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar concluded that when needing to reinforce political loyalty it was unwise to exalt a "foreign" god.

3. They all gathered for the dedication of the image, and the herald proclaimed the king's command that they all fall down and worship the image when the music sounded. Whoever did not do so would immediately be thrown into a fiery furnace. So when the music sounded, this varied group of people fell down and worshiped the golden image.

4. In vv. 8-12 certain "Chaldeans" go to Nebuchadnezzar and accuse the Jews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of not heeding the king's authority, not serving the king's gods, and not bowing down to the golden image as the king had commanded. Daniel was not present at the dedication, probably because those serving in the royal court in Babylon were not required to attend. They were under the direct supervision of the king and apparently were presumed, at least at that time, to have unquestioned loyalty to him.

a. I am sure that many of those present thought this was a crazy decision by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These foreigners had status within the kingdom; they were high-level administrators. Nebuchadnezzar had honored them with positions of authority and now they were defying him publicly by refusing to worship a Babylonian god.

b. Can't you just imagine the advice they were receiving from their pagan friends. I am sure they were being told in a hundred different ways that the prudent thing to do was to obey Nebuchadnezzar's command.

c. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have made excuses for bowing before that idol.

(1) We're not really worshipping it; we're just bowing and offering praise with no heart behind it. After all, we know there is only one God.

(2) If Jews are labeled rebels or enemies of Babylon, it will make it harder to persuade Babylonians to worship the true and living God.

(3) Surely the Lord would not want us to be killed. He is the author of life. Besides, we can do more good for God alive than dead, especially given our positions of power.

(4) The command against idolatry wasn't intended to cover a situation like this. I don't think the Lord meant we had to refrain from idolatry to the point of suffering. He meant we should refrain from it when it was reasonable to do so. After all, reason is a gift from the Lord.

d. Today we don't tend to bow down to statues, but there are all kinds of idols that vie for our devotion. Money, power, status, fame, respect, happiness, ease, comfort, pleasure, and tranquility all compete for our allegiance. We live among a people who worship these things, who make them the focus of their lives, and it is easy to let one or more of them slip onto the throne of our lives.

5. We read in vv. 13-15 that the king was furious. He calls before him Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and tells them they will either worship the image when the music sounds or they will immediately be cast into a fiery furnace. He says in v. 15b, "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Though he earlier, in 2:47, praised Daniel's God, he now apparently thinks the "God of gods," "the Lord of kings," is no match for his determination to kill them if they do not comply.

a. Can you imagine being called to choose between obeying God and being burned to death? If your child faced a gunman who commanded her to curse the Lord Jesus or die, what would you prefer that he or she do? Would you think your child had acted foolishly if he or she accepted death for the sake of the Lord?

b. Our culture certainly would say so. You may recall that in August 2006 two journalists from Fox News, Steve Centanni and Olaf Wiig, were kidnapped in Gaza. They were forced at gunpoint to profess their conversion to Islam and were filmed reading from the Koran in Arab robes as evidence of their conversion. When they were released on August 27, the fact they had been coerced into denying the Christian faith was thoroughly trivialized. The opening line of the *NY Times* story stated happily, "Two journalists kidnapped in Gaza were released *unharm*ed today after being forced at gunpoint to say on a videotape that they had converted to Islam."

c. Christians throughout history have faced death for the sake of Christ. You're familiar with the persecution and suffering reflected in the N.T. Let me read to you a section from Eusebius, a Christian theologian and historian who completed his book *Church History* after Constantine became emperor in A.D. 325. In the section I am going to read, he is speaking of the persecution in a region of Egypt that took place under the Roman Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303-304, that period known as "the Great Persecution." READ Eusebius (Penguin edition, 337-338).

d. Fortunately, in this society we are unlikely to be placed in a life and death situation over our faith, but there still are times when we have to choose between obeying the Lord and avoiding some suffering or hardship short of death. Obedience is not always an easy road; sometimes it is quite costly.

(1) Paul understood this. In Phil. 1:20 he says, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

(2) Heb. 10:32-34 – But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,<sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.<sup>34</sup> For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

(3) Jn. 21:18-19 – Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."<sup>19</sup> (**This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.**) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

(4) You see, obeying the Lord when it costs to do so is testimony to his greatness. It says that he is worthy of being obeyed despite the cost. If we are only willing to obey the Lord when it is easy, when it does not hurt, we're saying to the world that Christ is not worth the pain that causes us not to obey him.

(5) Husbands, is it hard to love your wife as Christ loves the church? Wives, is it hard to love, respect, and submit to your husband? Is it hard to honor the commitment you made to your spouse before God and witnesses that you would never leave him or her – til death do you part? Is it hard to serve your boss as though serving the Lord? Is it hard always to tell the truth and to keep your word? Kids, is it hard to obey your parents? Is it hard not to be "cool" in a culture that defines as "cool" what is ungodly? Is it hard to forgive those who have mistreated you? Is it hard to love the unlovable, to love your enemies, and not to attack those who attack you? *Difficulty in obeying is not grounds for disobeying; rather, it is an opportunity to glorify the Lord.*

(6) I remember some years ago when brother John was working at a company called ConSyGen. He was offered a job by Motorola doing just what he wanted to get into (Oracle programming) and for \$10,000 more per year than he was making. They told him he needed to start in a week, and John said he could not do that because he had told ConSyGen he would give them two weeks notice. Well, Motorola hired someone else, but to add insult to injury, ConSyGen laid John off three days later.

6. In vv. 16-17 the three young men tell the great king that if God chooses to do so, he is able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. And then they add in v. 17b, "and he *will deliver us* out of your hand, O king." That apparently been revealed to them, perhaps when the king directly defied God in v. 15.

7. Verse 18 is very important. I like the way the TNIV renders it: But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

a. For them, the question of God's supremacy was closed no matter how he chose to act in this particular instance. Even if God chose not to spare them from the furnace, they would not serve the king's gods nor worship the golden image, because God alone is God!

b. We need to remember that when God does not act the way we would like him to act. You remember Mat. 11:1-6, where John the Baptist, after languishing in prison, began to have second thoughts about whether Jesus was really the Messiah. He sent his disciples to ask him if he was in fact the Promised One. Jesus told them to report back to John that he was fulfilling the OT signs of the Messiah, and then in v. 6 he said, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." He was saying that one is blessed who does not lose faith in him when he does not conform to their expectations.

8. In vv. 19-22 we read that their response enraged Nebuchadnezzar. He ordered the furnace to be made as hot as humanly possible (seven times probably being symbolic for that) and commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be tied up and thrown into it, which was done. They had the fire roaring so much that the flame wound up killing those who threw the Jews into the furnace. Perhaps it caught their clothing on fire which resulted in fatal burns.

9. In vv. 23-25 the king's mind is blown as he sees four men, not three, walking around unharmed in the fire! He says the fourth looks like "a son of the gods," which being he refers to in v. 28 as an angel having been sent by God to deliver those he had condemned.

10. The king calls Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the furnace, and when they emerged everyone saw that they were completely unharmed. They did not even have the smell of fire on them!

11. Nebuchadnezzar then praised the God of Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego and issued a decree that their God was not to be spoken against on pain of death. He also promoted the three within the province of Babylon.

12. Faithfulness is the path of blessing. The rest of the story about brother John is that he wound up getting a job as an Oracle programmer, making more than the Motorola job and working with a group of people he really liked. That job launched him into the position he has now enjoyed for over a decade. The Lord vindicated his faithfulness.

a. I am not saying the Lord will always grant such rewards in this life. You may suffer for your faith and even be killed, but there is a blessing beyond comprehension in store for the faithful of God.

b. Rev. 21:1-5 – Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

#### *D. Chapter 4*

1. The events of chapter 4 are likewise undated, but a reasonable case can be made that they occurred during 573-569 B.C. (see Steinmann, 207-208). Verses 1-3 indicate that Nebuchadnezzar is writing to the people of his kingdom to tell them the signs and wonders the Most High God had done for him. Some of this language may have been influenced by Daniel as one who was involved in the reported situation and had the king's favor.

2. Verses 4-18 are the king's account of another frightening dream. He called in the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers, but none of them could interpret it. Perhaps they had learned their lesson about trying to hoodwink the king, but it may be that, given the meaning of the dream, none of them had the courage to interpret it. The king says that when Daniel came in he, the king, told him the dream, as he had told the others, the content of which he reports in vv. 10-17.

a. There was this huge, strong tree that reached into the heavens and had beautiful leaves and such abundant fruit that it provided food for all. It provided shade for the beasts of the field and homes for the birds.

b. An angel shouted a command to chop down the tree, cut off its branches, strip off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. The beasts were to flee from under it and the birds from its branches. The stump, however, was to be left, bound with a metal band.

c. The angel then declared that an unidentified person was to become for seven periods of time (not necessarily years) like one of the beasts of the field in terms of his mind and his lifestyle. This was to be done so that people may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and grants that rule to whom he will.

d. In v. 18 the king expresses his confidence in Daniel's ability to interpret the dream.

3. In verses 19-26 the author of the book reports Daniel's giving of the interpretation.

a. When Daniel understood the dream, he was alarmed, so much so that Nebuchadnezzar told him not to be. Daniel told the king that he was the great tree and that the dream meant he was going to be reduced to an animal-like state for seven periods of time, long enough to come to know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

b. The leaving of the tree stump was an indication that the kingdom would be restored to Nebuchadnezzar after he came to realize that rulership is in God's hands.

4. In v. 27 Daniel urges the king to repent in the hope that God would have mercy and lengthen his prosperity, meaning forego the discipline indicated by the dream. But the king apparently did not heed Daniel's advice, as suggested by the next verse which declares simply, "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar."

5. Verses 28-33 report that a year later, when the king was strolling on the roof of the royal palace, he asked rhetorically, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" Right as he was uttering such a prideful sentiment it was announced from heaven that the dream would be fulfilled, and it was immediately. The great king lost his mind. He was living outside, eating grass like an ox, and his hair and fingernails grew long.

6. Verses 34-37 resume the king's first-person words. At the end of the seven periods of time, the king lifted his eyes to heaven, meaning he humbled himself before the God of heaven, and his reason was restored to him. As a result, he praised God – again with words perhaps shaped by Daniel. The king resumed the glory of his kingship, but now with a new appreciation of the King of kings. He says at the end of v. 37, "and those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

## *E. Chapter 5*

1. The setting of chapter 5 is a feast thrown by the Babylonian king Belshazzar. We can date this feast to October 539 B.C. because the impression is given that little time elapsed between the handwriting on the wall at the feast and Daniel's interpretation of that handwriting in 5:26-28. Daniel 5:30 specifies that on the very night of Daniel's interpretation Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom was conquered. We know from other sources that the Persians marched into Babylon on October 12, 539 B.C.

2. King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. His son Amel-marduk ruled until he was assassinated in 560 B.C. Amel-marduk was succeeded by his brother-in-law Neriglissar, who ruled until 556. Neriglissar was succeeded by his son Labashi-marduk, who reigned only a few months in 556 before he was deposed in a coup that brought Nabonidus to the throne. Nabonidus ruled from 556-539 B.C., and his son Belshazzar was coregent with him from 553 or 550 until 539.

a. Until the 1860s, the existence of Belshazzar was known only from the book of Daniel and works dependent on Daniel. Many nineteenth-century critical scholars considered Daniel 5 to be a fictional account about a fictional king. However, in the 1860s Babylonian sources were discovered that named Belshazzar as the son of Nabonidus and indicated that he had been made coregent over Babylon.

b. The repeated references in chapter 5 to Nebuchadnezzar as the "father" of Belshazzar are not meant literally. They may simply mean that Nebuchadnezzar was the predecessor king of Babylonia whose prideful spirit and disrespect for God Belshazzar shared, as indicated in the event recounted in chapter 5. It is possible that Belshazzar was a physical descendant of Nebuchadnezzar in that his father, Nabonidus, may have married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to legitimate his claim to the throne. In that case, "father" would mean grandfather.

3. Verses 1-4 report that Belshazzar commanded that the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem that God had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to seize (see 1:2) be brought to the banquet and used as common wine glasses from which they drank in praise of pagan gods. This is reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's putting those vessels in the treasury of his god, as though they had been captured by the power of that god rather than by the permission of the one true God. It also is reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's general pride in relation to God.

4. In vv. 5-9 we are told that immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote a message on the plaster of the wall. This scared the king to death, and he shouted for the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. He declared that whoever could read the writing and reveal its meaning would be clothed in purple, given a gold chain, and made the third ruler in the kingdom (behind him and his father). None of them could do either, which alarmed the king even further.

5. In vv. 10-15 the queen tells Belshazzar about Daniel, a man whose wisdom and insight into mysteries was proven in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. She is confident that he will be able to give the king the interpretation and suggests that he summon him.

6. In vv. 13-28 Daniel is brought before Belshazzar and offered the same reward as the others had been. Daniel told the king that he could keep his rewards but that he would make known the interpretation.

a. He begins by reminding Belshazzar that God had granted Nebuchadnezzar a mighty kingship but took it from him when he became puffed up in his heart. He was humbled by being reduced to an animal-like state until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

b. He tells Belshazzar that despite knowing this he did not humble his heart but rather lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven. He dishonored the God of

heaven, who holds his life in his hand, by using his sacred vessels as common drinking cups at a feast in praise of idols.

c. The message on the wall was from God. It meant that Belshazzar's kingdom was being ended, given to the Medes and Persians, because of his failings.

7. In vv. 29-31 Belshazzar has Daniel clothed in purple, gives him a gold chain, and issues a proclamation that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. But in keeping with Daniel's interpretation, the Babylonian kingdom came to an end that very night. Belshazzar was killed, and someone called "Darius the Mede" received (from God) the kingdom around the age of 62.

a. The identity of Darius the Mede is controversial. There is no historical record outside of Daniel of anyone named Darius gaining rule over the Babylonian Empire in the wake of Babylon's fall in 539 B.C. (This Darius is not to be confused with the Persian king of that name who ruled from 522-486 B.C. and who is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.) With a number of commentators (Baldwin, Lucas, Miller, Steinmann), I think Darius the Mede is most likely an alternate way of referring to Cyrus the Great. That is not as strange as it may sound.

b. Cyrus was a Persian on his father's side and a Mede on his mother's side. Cyrus's father, Cambyses I (600-559 B.C.), was a Persian ruler but a vassal of the Medes. Cambyses married a daughter of the Median king Astyages. Their son Cyrus became ruler of Persia in 559 B.C. and deposed his Median grandfather, Astyages, in 550 B.C. Cyrus united the Medes and Persians in his dual heritage and eventually became the ruler of the combined kingdoms of the Medes and Persians.

c. The fact Darius the Mede is called "son of Ahasuerus" in Dan. 9:1 does not mean he is not Cyrus. "Ahasuerus" could be a Hebrew rendition of the Median name of Cyrus's grandfather, Astyages, or could be a royal title bestowed on one of Cyrus's ancestors (Steinmann, 294).

d. Multiple names or titles for rulers were not uncommon, and both Cyrus and Darius seem to be titles (see Miller, 175). The fact he was ruler of both Persian and Median territories enhances the likelihood that alternate titles would be used.

e. The powers and prerogatives exercised by Darius in Daniel 6 and the statement in 9:1 that he was made (by God) king over the realm of the Chaldeans fit Cyrus well, and Cyrus would have turned sixty-two in 539 B.C., the year Babylon fell. If one understands the conjunction in Daniel 6:28 as epexegetical rather than connective, which is a common usage, the verse identifies rather than distinguishes Darius and Cyrus: So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, *that is*, the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

f. The Jewish scholars who translated the LXX in the third-century B.C (and the later Greek version of Theodotion) seem to have understood that Darius the

Mede and Cyrus were the same person. They put Cyrus in the place of Darius the Mede in Dan. 11:1, presumably because Cyrus was at that time the better known name.

g. The author may have used the name Darius to emphasize the king's Median ancestry in keeping with prophecies that the Medes would play a part in the destruction of Babylon (Isa. 13:17, 21:2; Jer. 51:11, 28). By equating Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede in 6:28, the writer is giving the fulfillment of Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting in 5:28 that Babylon would fall to "the Medes and the Persians" (see also Isa. 21:2 – Elam [Persians] and Media).

## *F. Chapter 6*

1. Darius (Cyrus) appoints 120 governors (called satraps) over various provinces of his kingdom and places a panel of three men, one of whom was Daniel, over these governors to supervise their activity. Daniel stood out from all the governors and the other two supervisors to such an extent that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom, meaning to grant him authority by himself over all the governors.

2. This apparently became known, and the other two supervisors conspired with the governors to prevent this from happening by finding some fault with how Daniel performed his official duties. They were unable to find anything wrong with Daniel in that regard, so they decided they would use Daniel's well known commitment to God to create a problem.

3. These supervisors and governors all went to the king and said that they and various other officials were all agreed that the king needed to sign into effect an irrevocable law that anyone who petitions anyone other than the king, whether god or man, for the next thirty days should be thrown into the lions' den.

a. This request may have been tied to the fact the Babylonian king Nabonidus (Belshazzar's father and coregent) had brought into Babylon the images of the gods from the surrounding cities in the hope that they would help protect the city. After Babylon fell, Cyrus ordered the idols to be returned to their temples.

b. It may be that the absence of the idols from the local temples made people feel that they could not properly petition their local patron god. Daniel's opponents may have suggested that it would be popular with the newly conquered people if the king suspended all petitioning of gods, whether directly by priests or indirectly through priests, during the thirty days it took for the idols to be returned. During that time, all petitions should be directed to the king making him in essence the sole priest. That not only would feed his ego; it would do so under the guise of political wisdom.

4. Daniel knows of the king's decree, but he is convinced that it would be serving Darius rather than God if he were to cease praying to God as he had been doing, meaning three times a day facing toward Jerusalem. Longman remarks (p. 161):

He is not flaunting his rebellion in the face of the king's orders; it is business as usual. Indeed, the description of his prayer is a statement that he is neither flaunting nor hiding his religious practice. After all, he is praying in an upper room, and with the windows open. He is not on public display, but neither is he hiding from determined spies.

5. Daniel's opponents had agreed to check on Daniel, expecting him to find him praying as they knew he did, which is indeed what they found. They then went to Darius and recommitted him to the law he had signed without first telling him about Daniel. After he declared that the decree stands fast, they told him that Daniel ignores his decree and makes his petition three times a day.

6. The king was distressed and tried to figure out a way to ignore the decree, but Daniel's opponents reminded him that under the law of the Medes and Persians no law signed into effect by the king could be changed. So they basically are holding the king's feet to the fire by appealing to a law that the people apparently considered higher than the king, a law that would cost the king popular support if he violated it. Darius reluctantly went along with their pressure, but he apparently did not appreciate being politically strong-armed, as indicated by what he did to those men in the end.

7. When the king had Daniel cast into the lions' den, he said, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" Indeed, the king felt so strongly about Daniel that he fasted during the night Daniel spent with the lions. At the break of day, the king raced to the lions' den hoping that somehow Daniel's God had spared him. He called out to Daniel asking if God had delivered him.

8. Daniel announced that God had sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths and that he was unharmed. He said God did this because he was blameless, meaning faithful, before him. He then added that he likewise was blameless before the king in the sense he had done the king no harm; he simply had lived faithfully to God.

9. The king was delighted, and after Daniel was hauled from the lions' den, he ordered that his accusers, along with their wives and children, be thrown into that very place. The lions were so hungry that they immediately overpowered these people and devoured them completely. This highlights the miraculous intervention of God in rescuing Daniel.

10. King Darius then issued a letter to his subjects, as Nebuchadnezzar had done before him, commanding them to fear the God of Daniel because Daniel's God is the living God whose kingdom shall never end. He says that God delivers and rescues and works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, one example being his deliverance of Daniel from the power of the lions.

11. Verse 28 notes that Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius, meaning the reign of Cyrus. We are not told that he was appointed to the position for which he was

originally being considered (v. 3b). It is possible that Darius reconsidered for some reason and that Daniel prospered in other ways.

## G. Chapter 7

1. Daniel received dream visions in the first year of king Belshazzar, who began his co-regency with his father Nabonidus in 553 or 550 B.C. So this is before the events of chapters 5 and 6 and about fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2.

2. In his visions, Daniel saw the four winds of heaven whipping up the sea, and out of the sea came four different kinds of beasts. These beasts are said in v. 17 to represent four earthly *kings*, but as v. 23 elaborates, the beasts represent the four earthly *kingdoms* ruled by those kings. Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 also involved four kingdoms, and recall that in the chiasmic structure of the Aramaic section (2:4b-7:28) chapter 7 corresponds to chapter 2.

3. What Daniel saw was different symbolic depictions of the same four kingdoms that were symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, namely the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. They are portrayed in a way that emphasizes their beastly, fearsome, and destructive natures.

a. The first beast is a creature like a lion with eagles' wings. This is widely recognized as a reference to Babylonia. The winged-lion was a familiar image in Babylonian art and obviously represents a swift and powerful predator. Nebuchadnezzar is compared to a lion in Jer. 4:7 and 50:17, and the Babylonian king, nation, and armies are compared to eagles in a number of places in Scripture (Jer. 4:13, 48:40, 49:22; Ezek. 17:3; Hab. 1:8; and Lam. 4:19).

(1) As Daniel was looking its wings were plucked off, which suggests a lessening of its capability. This occurred under Nabonidus and Belshazzar and even before.

(2) The beast also was made to stand upright and given a man's mind. This is a reversal of what was done to Nebuchadnezzar; he had a man's mind taken from him and was reduced to an animal-like state. This may symbolize the nation's weakening, a reduction in its ferocity, which is inherent in becoming more like a human and less like wild animal.

b. The second beast was like a bear. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs between its teeth. It was told, "Arise, devour much flesh." This is a reference to the Medo-Persian Empire.

(1) Bears are often associated in Scripture with lions as fierce and dangerous predators. This is confirmed by the three ribs between its teeth.

(2) The fact one side of the beast was higher than the other probably is a reference to the asymmetry in the Medo-Persian Empire, the fact God granted dominance to the Persian side of that alliance. Just as the larger of two horns in 8:3 represents Persian dominance in the Medo-Persian Empire, so the higher side of the bear represents Persian dominance.

(3) The statement "Arise, devour much flesh" refers to God's authorization of Medo-Persian success. Though no empire arises apart from his active will or permission, Scripture specifically identifies the Persian king Cyrus as God's chosen instrument (Isa. 44:28, 45:1).

c. The third beast was like a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back and four heads. Daniel notes that dominion was given to it, again pointing to the sovereignty of God. This is a reference to the Grecian Empire.

(1) Leopards are known as swift animals (Hab. 1:8), and one with four wings would be especially speedy. Alexander the Great conquered a huge amount of territory with unprecedented speed. He established a vast Grecian empire in only ten years (334-324 B.C.).

(2) The beast's four heads may symbolize its mobility, its ability to move quickly in any direction. This would point to the vastness of the kingdom. Possibly the four heads symbolize the four Greek generals who assumed control of separate parts of the empire upon Alexander's death.

d. The fourth beast is not likened to any known animal. It is described as terrifying, dreadful, and exceedingly strong. The same word "strong" was applied to the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:40, 42). This beast has iron teeth, which is reminiscent of the iron of the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and it breaks things in pieces just as the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was said to do (same word). These verbal links associate the fourth beast with Nebuchadnezzar's fourth kingdom, which is the Roman Empire.

(1) The fourth beast is said repeatedly (vv. 7, 19, and 23) to be different from all the rest. I believe it is different not only in the degree of its might and self-willed destructiveness (suggested by v. 7) but also because it is the only one of the kingdoms that coexists with the opposing kingdom of God. As indicated in chapter 2, the chapter that corresponds with chapter 7 in the chiasmic structure of the Aramaic section, the kingdom of God arrived in the days of the kings of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire.

(a) All prior earthly kingdoms operated in a different spiritual environment, in a world in which the eternal kingdom of God had not yet been inaugurated, had not yet invaded the present. The Roman Empire, on the other hand, asserted its power, sought its worldly ends, in the presence of and in conflict with the divine kingdom.

(b) Whereas the fourth beast most immediately represents the historical Roman Empire, I think that through that representation it serves as a type, as a general representation of earthly kingdoms operating in contrast to and conflict with the inaugurated kingdom of God, the kingdom that ultimately spells the end of all such worldly rule. The Roman Empire is the last kingdom depicted because, as the first one that coexists with God's kingdom, it typifies all worldly rule in opposition to God's kingdom. In other words, the fourth beast is the Roman Empire, but on another level it is all earthly kingdoms that share Rome's prideful sense of sovereignty in the face of the divine kingdom's presence. Such earthly kingdoms are the Roman Empire in a figurative sense; they are latter-day manifestations of that empire's nature and spirit.

(2) The fourth beast has ten horns, which we are told (v. 24) represent ten kings that shall arise out of the fourth kingdom.

(a) The number "ten" is often used to express completeness,<sup>7</sup> perhaps stemming from the fact ten is the full number of our fingers. The number seems to be used symbolically in 1:20 ("ten times better" meaning completely or thoroughly better). So the ten kings probably represent the full but unspecified number of kings that will "arise out of" the Roman Empire prior to the coming of the little horn, the final, distinctive king. It is a way of indicating that the timing of the little horn's arrival is determined by God.

(b) Rulers or kings would qualify as "arising out of" the literal, historical Roman Empire if they arose from within that empire itself or arose from kingdoms or nations spawned by the fall of that empire. They would qualify as "arising out of" the figurative sense of the Roman Empire if they arose from within a nation or kingdom that shared Rome's prideful sense of sovereignty in the face of the divine kingdom's presence. That leaves the door open for rulers today to qualify.

(c) So from the historical Roman Empire until the coming of the little horn, the final, distinctive king, there will be a complete but unspecified number of rulers. Those rulers will arise from the Roman Empire in its literal and figurative senses. They will arise from the *literal* Roman Empire either directly during the days of that empire or indirectly from kingdoms or nations spawned by the fall of that empire. They will arise from the *figurative* Roman Empire in that they will arise from kingdoms or nations that express the nature of the literal empire vis-à-vis God's kingdom.

e. When the full number of predecessors has arisen from the Roman Empire, a final, distinctive king will arise from that empire (he arises *after* them – v. 24). In other words, his coming is subject to God's timing; he will not arise before God permits him to do so.

(1) This little horn is said in v. 24 to be different from the other rulers that arose out of the fourth beast. It is depicted in v. 8 with eyes and a mouth

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Marvin H. Pope, "Number, Numbering, Numbers," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. G. A. Buttrick; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:565-66.

speaking great things. The eyes may symbolize his superior awareness or intelligence, and the "great things" he speaks are identified in v. 25 as attacks on God. He declares open war on the Almighty. His arrogance is evident in his intent "to change the times and the law" (v. 25). As 2:21 indicates, only God changes "the times and seasons," meaning only he controls the course of history. The "law" refers to God's will and directives, which no man has authority to change.

(2) Verse 20 says the little horn appeared greater than its companions, and we are told in several verses (vv. 8, 20, 24) that he puts down a number of other kings, the number three perhaps being symbolic, that also arose out of the fourth beast. This is indicative of his power, superiority, or aggressiveness. He makes war on the saints and prevails over them for a limited period of time (v. 21, 25).

(3) Daniel is told in v. 23 that the fourth kingdom shall devour the whole earth, trample it down, and break it to pieces. I think this refers to the latter-day expression of the fourth kingdom in the rule of the little horn. It will be a worldwide, violent, and anti-Christian empire. (If not, then it is a hyperbolic reference to the relative power and wanton destructiveness of the literal Roman Empire.)

(4) The fourth beast, the Roman Empire, as it is manifested in the God-opposing reign of the little horn, is destroyed completely at the final judgment when the heavenly books are opened (vv. 10-11, 21-22, 26). There will be no more incarnations of it. The earthly kingdoms that preceded the coming of God's kingdom, the first three beasts of the vision, had earlier had their dominion taken away. The statement in v. 12 that their "lives" were prolonged for a season and a time (a predetermined time) is simply a way of indicating that they were relatively less culpable than the fourth beast that acted in the face of the divine kingdom.

(5) This judgment comes when the little horn is making war and prevailing over the saints (vv. 21-22, 25-26). At the time of that judgment, the saints shall be given, shall enter into, the consummated kingdom of God (vv. 26-27), the final eternal state.

(6) In association with this vision of divine judgment, Daniel sees one "like a son of man," a picture of humanness, but who comes with the clouds of heaven as God is said to do, a picture of divinity. This is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is given by God the Father an eternal and universal kingdom. It is this kingdom that is consummated, that comes to full expression, in conjunction with the final judgment and is inherited by the saints (vv. 22, 26-27).

f. With many commentators (e.g., Keil, Young, Archer, Ferguson, Miller, Steinmann), I am convinced this little horn is the person known in the New Testament as the man of lawlessness or Antichrist.

(1) In 2 Thess. 2:1-12 Paul explicitly rebuts the claim that the Second Coming referred to in 1 Thess. 4:13-5:3 had already occurred by reminding them

of what he previously had taught them, namely that Jesus will not return until the rebellion and the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, is revealed. Since that had not occurred, the claim that Jesus had already returned was false.

(2) Paul says this person will exalt himself over any claimed deity or object of worship. In this he is, symbolically speaking, taking a seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. According to 2 Thess. 2:8, he will be on the scene at the time of Christ's return. Leon Morris states in "Antichrist" in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (p. 49): "Paul does not use the term 'antichrist', but the 'man of lawlessness' of whom he writes in 2 Thess. 2:3ff. clearly refers to the same being."

(3) John tells his readers in 1 Jn. 2:18 that as they had heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. They had been taught about the coming of Antichrist, just as Paul had taught the Thessalonians about his coming. I believe that is the same figure referred to in Revelation 13 as the beast rising out of the sea. He is a Satan-inspired ruler of a powerful, worldwide, and violently anti-Christian empire who draws people from God through deception.

(4) John says that *even now*, before the coming of the Antichrist they had heard about, that climactic opponent of God, many antichrists (plural) have come. John is referring to the false teachers who were threatening those to whom he was writing. They are "antichrists" in the sense they share the spirit of the Antichrist (4:3), that spirit that opposes God and his Christ. This is evident from their denial of Jesus as the Christ (2:22; 2 Jn. 7). In saying this, John is not denying the future coming of *the* Antichrist. As George Ladd states, "We may conclude that the spirit of antichrist manifests itself everywhere in heretical, schismatic teachers, but will be climactically embodied in a single evil person at the end of the age."<sup>8</sup>

4. At the end of the vision's interpretation, Daniel is greatly troubled and rendered pale. Tremper Longman comments (p. 191), "Though it ends well from the perspective of the godly, it does paint a picture of continued and difficult oppression. The divine victory does not come easily, but through a cosmic struggle." Daniel kept the matter in his heart meaning that he did not for a time reveal it to anyone.

## H. Chapter 8

1. A couple of years after the dream visions of chapter 7, Daniel saw another vision. Depending on when one dates the beginning of Belshazzar's co-regency, this vision was given in 551/550 B.C. or 548/547 B.C. It is about a decade before the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians. In this vision, Daniel was at the Ulai canal which ran near the city of Susa, a city that would later become the winter capital of the Persian Empire.

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<sup>8</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 662.

2. Daniel sees standing on the bank of the canal a ram with two large horns, one of which was higher than the other. It charged westward, northward, and southward and became great, overpowering all opposition. As the angel Gabriel reveals to him in v. 20, the two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. That means that this ram represented the Medo-Persian Empire, the longer horn representing the dominant Persian element of that kingdom. This kingdom dominated the Near East for about two centuries.

3. While Daniel was contemplating the two-horned ram, he saw a male goat with a large horn between its eyes racing across the earth from west to east. This goat overpowered the ram and became exceedingly great, but while the goat was in its prime its great horn was broken and four large horns arose in its place. Gabriel explains in vv. 21-22 that the goat represents the kingdom of Greece (as embodied in its king) and that the great horn represents its first king. The four horns that arise in place of that great king represent four kingdoms that arise from the first king's empire.

a. This is a clear prophecy of the amazingly swift conquests of Alexander the Great. He began to engage the Persians militarily in 334 B.C., and by 331 B.C. he had gained control of the Persian Empire. This ultimately led to the widespread adoption of Greek culture throughout the Empire.

b. Following Alexander's death at a young age in 323 B.C., his kingdom was divided among four of his generals. Ptolemy I gained Egypt, and Seleucus I gained Syria and Mesopotamia. For some years there was contention between them for control of Palestine. The Ptolemies succeeded in controlling Palestine until 198 B.C., at which time it fell into the hands of the Seleucid rulers.

4. In the vision, a horn that began small arises out of one of the four horns. Steinmann translates vv. 9-12 as follows (p. 392, see also, 395-397):

Then from one of them came a single horn that began small, but it became very large toward the south and the east and the beautiful [land]. It magnified itself against the army of heaven and made some of the army and some of the stars fall to earth, and it trampled them. It magnified itself against the Prince of the army, from whom the continual sacrifice was taken, and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down. The army will be given [to it] together with the continual sacrifice during the transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground. It will succeed in doing this.

a. The "beautiful" or "glorious" land is a reference to Israel (Ezek. 20:6, 15). The traditional translation "*host* of heaven" is rendered "*army* of heaven" by Steinmann (p. 396) and NET. If Steinmann is correct in thinking that heaven is here (as in 4:26) a circumlocution for God, the phrase means "army of God" and probably is a reference to Israel, known elsewhere as the Lord's army or hosts (Ex. 7:4, 12:41).

b. This king tramples the people of Israel and magnifies himself against the "Prince of the army," probably meaning God himself, preventing his sacrifices and attacking his sanctuary.

5. Gabriel explains (vv. 22-23) that this horn represents a bold king who will arise from one of the four kingdoms that arose out of the great king's empire. He adds in vv. 24-25 that this king will be powerful and crafty and will bring destruction on the people of God. He will have an exalted view of himself and will even rise up against God (the Prince of princes), but he will be defeated by God.

a. This is widely recognized as a prophecy of Antiochus IV, who in 175 B.C. usurped the Seleucid throne following the death of his brother Seleucus IV. He assumed the surname Epiphanes, which is Greek for "divine manifestation."

(1) As most commentators agree, the statements in 8:17, 19 that the vision is "for the time of the end" means that its emphasis or focus is on the time period addressed at the end of the vision, the 2,300 evenings and mornings of oppression by the horn that precede the restoration of the sanctuary (8:14).<sup>9</sup> This is confirmed by the fact Daniel's vision is called "the vision of the mornings and evenings" in 8:26. In other words, in this context the vision is "for the time of the end" not in the sense it refers to the absolute end that will occur at the return of Christ but in the sense it refers mainly to what occurs at the end of the vision.

(2) In the oft quoted words of C. F. Keil, "'Time of the end' is the general prophetic expression for the time which, as the period of fulfillment, lies at the end of the existing prophetic horizon – in the present case the time of Antiochus."

b. Notice that this horn is associated with the third kingdom, the Grecian kingdom, whereas the little horn of chapter 7 was associated with the fourth and final kingdom, the Roman Empire, which I suggested functions as a type. There are a number of other differences in the statements about the two horns that support distinguishing them (see, e.g., Steinmann, 154; Young, 276-279), including that the dominion that is taken from the little horn of chapter 7 is given to the saints of the Most High (7:27).

c. From 198-165/164 B.C. Palestine was under Seleucid control. In 175 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes began to rule. In response to bribes, he appointed as high priest men who were favorable to the Hellenization of Palestine. In 169 B.C., while escorted by the second of these appointments, Menelaus (Menahem), Antiochus IV plundered the temple taking "the golden altar, the lampstand . . . the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain" (1 Macc. 1:21-22).

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<sup>9</sup> Most commentators believe the 2,300 evenings and mornings refer to 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices. These would take place over 1,150 days, which figure symbolizes the relatively short time of the temple's desecration.

d. In 168 B.C. Roman power thwarted his designs on Egypt and forced him to withdraw in humiliation. On his return, he took harsh vengeance against Jerusalem for an attempt to unseat Menelaus.

(1) According to 1 Maccabees 1:29-33, a Jewish work dating from the late second century B.C.:

Two years [after plundering the temple] the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. And they took captive the women and children, and seized the cattle. Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel.

(2) Everett Ferguson writes in *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 406:

The walls of Jerusalem were broken down, a new citadel (the Acra) was erected to dominate the temple area, and a garrison was stationed there converting the city into a military settlement. Menelaus and the Jewish Hellenizers collaborated with the military settlers in modifying the temple service into the worship of the Semitic "Lord of Heaven" (*Baal Shamayim*), who was identified with Zeus.

According to Jewish sources Antiochus IV in 168 or 167 B.C. issued decrees prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion: the Scriptures were to be destroyed, the Sabbath and festivals were no longer to be observed, the food laws were to be abolished, and circumcision was no longer to be practiced (1 Macc. 1:41-64). Moreover, at the end of 168/167 a smaller altar was erected on the top of the great altar of burnt offering, and as the supreme insult to Judaism swine were sacrificed on it.

e. This conduct sparked a successful Jewish revolt, which began in 166 B.C., known as the Maccabean Revolt (named for one of its prime figures, Judas Maccabeus).

6. Daniel is told to close up the vision because it was not to be fulfilled for a long time. I think this speaks symbolically of safeguarding the vision so it would be available for generations in the distant future rather than to keeping it secret.

7. The vision of persecution of God's people is so powerful that Daniel is overcome and lies ill (or exhausted) for several days. He then rises and goes about his duties for the king. He continued to be appalled by the vision and acknowledges that he did not fully grasp it.

## *I. Chapter 9*

1. Daniel notes at the beginning of chapter 9 that in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede (Cyrus the Great) he understood "in the scrolls," meaning those scrolls recognized as inspired by God, that God had revealed to the prophet Jeremiah that it would take seventy years for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem. In other words, the Jewish exile from the city would last that long. But it was not clear just when that clock would begin to run (there were three waves of exile: 605/604, 598/597, 587/586) or whether "seventy" was symbolic for the full time determined by God, it being the multiple of seven and ten, two numbers that symbolize completeness (Longman, 222).

a. The first year of Darius's reign probably refers to his first full regnal year as ruler of the defeated Babylonians, which year began in March 538. This was not long after Daniel's deliverance from the lions' den in chapter 6. Daniel has now been in Babylonia about 67 or 68 years and is probably eighty years old or a bit older.

b. The passages in Jeremiah to which Daniel is referring are Jer. 25:11-12 and 29:10. Both of these texts indicate that the end of the seventy years would be marked by God's punishment of Babylonia, and in light of Babylonia's recent fall to the Medes and Persians, Daniel perceived that the time for restoration, the running of the seventy years, was at hand. That is what motivates his prayer, which takes up the majority of the chapter.

2. In 9:3-19 Daniel recounts how he, with fasting and in sackcloth and ashes, emblems of repentance, poured out his heart to God on behalf of Israel. It is a powerful, penitent plea for God now to fulfill his promise to end the punishment by restoring his people to Jerusalem.

a. Daniel seems to have in mind Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the newly built temple, especially that portion recorded in 1 Ki. 8:46-51. Solomon prayed over four hundred years earlier:

<sup>46</sup> "If they sin against you--for there is no one who does not sin--and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, <sup>47</sup> yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' <sup>48</sup> if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, <sup>49</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause <sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may

have compassion on them<sup>51</sup> (for they are your people, and your heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace).

b. Daniel follows the condition expressed in Solomon's request, even tracking in v. 5 some of Solomon's language: we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly. As they are a truly penitent people, God need not delay his promised extension of mercy.

c. Just as is done in Lamentations, Daniel connects their present suffering to God's righteous judgment against them for their persistent rebellion. He prays in vv. 11-12:

<sup>11</sup> All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. <sup>12</sup> He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.

d. Verses 16-19 are an appeal to God's mercy that he not delay in delivering them from their captivity, that he again look with favor on Jerusalem and on his destroyed sanctuary. Not long thereafter Cyrus would issue his decree permitting the Jews to return (Ezra 1:1-4).

3. Daniel 9:20-23 reports that the angel Gabriel, appearing as a man, came to Daniel while Daniel was praying in a state of extreme weariness or exhaustion, probably associated with his fasting. (This seems preferable to the translation that Gabriel came to him in swift flight – see NAS, NET, Goldingay, 228, and Steinmann, 444). Gabriel informs Daniel that because Daniel is greatly loved he has come to give him wisdom and understanding by delivering to him a message that went out when Daniel began praying.

4. The message delivered by Gabriel in vv. 24-27 is widely recognized as one of the most difficult texts in the book and even in the entire Old Testament. I offer my understanding being well aware there are other possible takes on the text. This translation, which is a composite from various standard translations and scholarly commentators, will make it easier to follow my comments:

<sup>24</sup> Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy [One]. <sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of the Anointed One, the ruler, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. It will have been rebuilt [with] plaza and moat, and in distressing times. <sup>26</sup> Then after the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be cut off and have nothing. The

people of the coming ruler will destroy the city and the sanctuary; its end will be like a flood. And to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed.<sup>27</sup> He will confirm a covenant for the many [during] one seven. In the middle of the seven, he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease. And on the wing of abominations [comes] one who makes desolate until the decreed end is poured out on the one being desolated.

a. Because of God's great love for Daniel, which he was prompted to express by Daniel's tremendous prayer of contrition, God is giving him a vision of the future of the Jewish nation, the Jewish people as centered around the holy city of Jerusalem (9:24), that goes beyond the return from exile referred to by Jeremiah. Jim McGuiggan states (p. 150): "God is saying to Daniel: 'Yes, I know 70 years were decreed and are now fulfilled, but Daniel, I have another decree. It is one which carries within it the outline of my completed work in regard to your nation.'"

b. The message to Daniel indicates, consistent with the visions of chapters 2 and 7, that God's kingdom in the person of the Messiah, the great Davidic king, which kingdom is the full and true fulfillment for which they long, would not come at the time of their physical return from exile but only after a much longer time than the time they had spent in exile (seventy **sevens** instead of seventy **years**). Israel's return from exile could be thought of as being tied tightly to the coming of the Messiah, one like Moses, who would lead this new "exodus." But the Messiah, the ultimate answer to their (and the nations') need, was still the rise of two kingdoms away.

c. Through Messiah's coming, God will finally, effectively, and ultimately deal with transgression and sin and atone for iniquity; he will bring in everlasting righteousness, seal both vision and prophecy, in the sense of certifying their authenticity through fulfillment of their messages, and anoint the Most Holy [One] (9:24).

d. In v. 25, Gabriel says that the sixty-nine sevens that precede the coming of the Messiah, the ruler/prince/leader, in the climactic seventieth seven divide into two groups or periods: a period of seven sevens and then a period of sixty-two sevens.

(1) A number of English versions translate the verse in keeping with the uninspired accents of the MT and thus start a new sentence or clause after the reference to seven sevens (RSV, NEB, NRSV, REB, ESV). The effect is that the anointed one is said to come after seven sevens, and the following sixty-two sevens refer to a time after his coming. This seems quite unlikely given that v. 26 specifies that the anointed one is "cut off" *after* the sixty-two sevens.

(2) Most English versions, however, have the anointed one, the Messiah, the ruler, coming after the combined periods of seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. This is in keeping with the ancient Greek versions. This not only makes more sense

of v. 26, but it is quite possible that the MT accentuation was a reaction against the messianic interpretation of the text by early Christians.<sup>10</sup>

(3) Before the Messiah, the ruler/prince/leader, comes, a period of seven sevens will run from the going out of the word to rebuild and restore Jerusalem until the city is actually rebuilt. Historically, this period of seven sevens ran from Cyrus's decree in 538 B.C. allowing the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem to 445/444 B.C. when Neh. 7:1-2 makes clear that the city had been rebuilt. This suggests that seven sevens is not meant as a literal forty-nine years but as a symbol for the shorter phase, the rebuilding of Jerusalem phase, of the sixty-nine sevens that precede the climactic coming of the Messiah in the seventieth seven.

(4) The rebuilding of Jerusalem will be followed by a much longer period of time, symbolized by sixty-two sevens, in which the rebuilt city will exist through troubled times. (Another possible understanding is that the rebuilding of the city during the seven sevens would be over much opposition.) This is a reference mainly to the tumult of the Hellenistic era, especially the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, pictured in the vision of chapter 8.

e. According to v. 26a, after this longer post-rebuilding phase of sixty-two sevens, that is, after the total of sixty-nine sevens (seven sevens + sixty-two sevens), the Messiah, the anointed one who is identified in v. 25 as a ruler/prince/leader, will be cut off. In the words of Isa. 53:8, he is "cut off from the land of the living." The following clause commonly is rendered "and have nothing," which means that when he is cut off he owns nothing and is completely abandoned by everyone. That obviously fits the Lord's death. However, the KJV, NKJV, footnotes in NIV and TNIV, and some modern scholars believe the clause should be translated "but not for himself," which would indicate that his death was vicarious, something endured on behalf of others.<sup>11</sup>

f. There is a textual issue regarding v. 26b. All the standard English translations accept the reading: the people of the coming ruler/prince/leader will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The alternate reading, noted by commentators and in the NET footnote, is: the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed with the coming ruler/prince/leader. Both readings speak of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that occurred in association with the coming of Christ.

(1) In the context, the coming ruler/prince/leader is the coming anointed one, the Messiah, who in the preceding verse is specifically identified as the ruler/prince/leader. Under the standard reading of v. 26b, it is *his* people, his ethnic kin (Rom. 9:4-5), meaning the Jewish people, who are said to destroy the city and the sanctuary. They do so in the sense their infidelity and rejection of Christ brought God's judgment on the city, which he administers through the troops of Rome (Mat. 23:36-39/Lk. 13:34-35; Mat. 24:1-2/ Mk. 13:1-2/ Lk. 21:5-6; Lk. 19:41-44). Luke 19:41-44 states (ESV):

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<sup>10</sup> See Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *Revue de Qumrân* 40 (1981): 521-42.

<sup>11</sup> See Peter J. Gentry, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the New Exodus," *SBJT* 14.1 (2010), 34-35, 37.

<sup>41</sup> And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup> and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

(2) In *The Jewish Wars* Josephus places the blame for the destruction of Jerusalem on the Jewish zealots who brought down the wrath of Rome. In doing so, he illustrates how Jews rather than Romans can be seen as the cause of the destruction, despite the fact the Romans did the actual destroying. So it is a perfectly understandable concept.

(3) Under the alternate reading, the statement is that Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed "*with* the coming ruler/prince/leader," meaning simply that their destruction is associated with his coming in some unspecified way. We know that his coming resulted in that destruction because he was rejected by the leaders and majority of the Jewish people.

g. According to v. 26c, the city's end will come with the destructiveness of a flood. More specifically, it will come by means of war pursuant to desolations decreed by God.

h. Verse 27a says that "he," meaning the Messiah, will "make" or "confirm" a covenant for many *during* one "seven," meaning during the seventieth seven, the final seven of the prophecy.

(1) Though translations typically state he will make or confirm a covenant "*for* one week," the word "for" is supplied; it is not in the Hebrew text. The point is not the duration of the covenant but the time when the covenant is made or confirmed – during the final, climactic seven of the prophecy. So I think Steinmann is correct in supplying "during" rather than "for."

(2) If "*make* a covenant" is the correct translation (per ASV, NAS, RSV, NRSV, ESV), it refers to the new covenant of Mat. 26:28 and Jer. 31:31. If "*confirm* a covenant" is correct, then it refers to Christ's confirming God's faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham by fulfilling the promise of blessing to all nations (e.g., Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:7-29) and his faithfulness to his covenant with David (e.g., Psalm 89) by fulfilling the promise of an eternal dynasty.

i. Verse 27b indicates that in the midst of the last seven, the climactic seventieth seven, the Messiah will put an end to sacrifice and offering. Verse 26 made clear that the Messiah would be cut off (put to death) after the sixty-ninth seven, meaning sometime in the seventieth seven. Christ's crucifixion was the true sacrifice that effectively

put an end to the sacrifices and offerings under the Mosaic law by rendering them illegitimate in God's sight.

j. Verse 27c can be translated: And on the wing of abominations [comes] one who makes desolate until the decreed end is poured out on the *one being desolated* (see KJV, NKJV, ASV, and the translations of Young, Goldingay, and Gentry).

(1) The "wing of abominations" is the abomination of desolation to which Jesus referred in Mat. 24:15/Mk. 13:14, which Lk. 21:20 explains refers to pagan armies surrounding Jerusalem. "Wing" brings to mind swiftness, and the phrase seems to refer to the attacking power of the pagan Roman legions surrounding Jerusalem. With that attacking power comes one who, as God's agent, is bringing desolation on the city, and he will do so until what has been decreed has been fully poured out. As Goldingay expresses the meaning (p. 263): "Devastation will continue to overwhelm desolate Jerusalem until what God has decreed is exhausted." This occurred, of course, with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(2) Sinclair Ferguson remarks:

If this is the correct interpretation, it is not too difficult to see what it was that heaven was so anxious to communicate to Daniel, its representative on earth. It was right that he should long to see the people delivered from captivity; it was right that he should long to see Jerusalem rebuilt and the temple worship reinstated. Yet the Lord wanted Daniel to see beyond these things to what they foreshadowed, however painful that might be. God's ultimate purpose was not a temple made with hands and a holy place entered but once a year. His Son was the place in which men were to approach God; His sacrifice was the one which would bring forgiveness. Then if men still clung to the shadows and symbols of the old order, rejecting what they symbolized, there was only one terrible prospect: judgment and destruction of the most terrible kind.<sup>12</sup>

### *J. Chapter 10 (including 11:1)*

1. Daniel 10:1-11:1 is Daniel's vision of a divine man that introduces the revelation that is given to Daniel in 11:2-45. This vision occurs on the twenty-fourth day of the first month of the third year of Cyrus king of Persia (vv. 1, 4), which translates to April 23, 536 B.C. (Steinmann, 482). Daniel 10:1 says this divine message was true and that it related to a great conflict, which we will see involves both heaven and earth. Daniel understood at least the broad meaning of this word and vision, even if he did not know the meaning of every detail (12:8).

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<sup>12</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *Daniel*, Mastering the Old Testament (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), 203.

2. Daniel had been fasting and mourning for three weeks, during which time he was apparently praying for understanding (v. 12). As he was standing on the bank of the Tigris River, he saw a man whose description is quite similar to the description of God in Ezek. 1:4-28 and the Lord Jesus in Rev. 1:13-16. Those who were with Daniel did not see the vision, but they obviously sensed something of the being's presence because they began trembling and ran away to hide. The vision was so awesome that Daniel became weak and his expression completely changed. When he heard the sound of this being's words, he fell flat on his face in a deep sleep.

3. Daniel is awakened by a hand touching him, which enables him to rise to his hands and knees with trembling. This being, who is not identified and need not be the same being described in vv. 5-6, tells Daniel that he is greatly loved and that he has been sent to speak to him. He instructs Daniel to stand up, which he does, again with trembling.

4. The being explains that he had been sent in response to Daniel's prayers when Daniel had first started his prayerful fast three weeks ago but had been detained by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" until Michael, one of the chief princes, had come to help him.

a. The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" seems to refer to a demon, a fallen angel, who focused on resisting God's use of Persia in his unfolding plan of world history. He apparently perceived that the revelation to be delivered to Daniel was significant and thus battled to prevent it.

b. The fact the first angel was delayed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia until Michael came to help him does not mean that demons are a match for God's power. It means that God has a purpose for allowing certain battles to be waged between spiritual powers in the heavenly realms.

c. Michael, who in 10:13 is called "one of the chief princes," is mentioned two other times in Daniel (10:21, 12:1) and also in Jude 9 and Rev. 12:7. These references make clear that he is a powerful spiritual being who plays an important leadership role in God's heavenly army. In Jude 9 he is identified as an archangel. As a result of Michael's help, the messenger angel was a needless surplus (v. 13b – "so I was left over" in the sense of being no longer needed so as to be able to come to Daniel – see Lucas, 259).

d. The angel explains in v. 14 that the message he is to deliver to Daniel relates to some of what is in store for his people in the future.

5. In vv. 15-17 Daniel turns his face to the ground and is silent. An angel, in the appearance of a man, touches his lips which gives him the strength to speak. He tells the angel that the vision he had seen, presumably the awesome vision of vv. 5-6, had so affected him that he is unable to carry on a conversation.

6. In vv. 18-19 the angel again strengthens him, and Daniel asks him to speak. In 10:20 the angel tells Daniel that he will be returning to the fight against the prince

of Persia, the fight from which he had been freed by Michael's help, and that when he leaves that battle he will then need to engage the prince of Greece (see RSV, NRSV; Steinmann, 488, 494). In other words, there will be a demonic power analogous to the prince of Persia that will work to thwart God's purposes for Greece as that nation rises to the fore in God's unfolding plan of world history.

7. The angel says in v. 21a that before he returns to the battle he will reveal to Daniel what is contained in the Book of Truth, which apparently contains the course of history as recorded by God in his foreknowledge. The angel says in Dan. 10:21b that he and the archangel Michael, which possibly includes the angelic forces under Michael's command, are the only angels engaging these particular demonic powers. He says in 11:1 that in the first year of Darius the Mede, which would be the year that Darius/Cyrus issued the decree permitting the Jewish captives to return, he had stood up to support and strengthen Michael. Presumably the heavenly battle with the prince of Persia began in earnest at that time.

### *K. Chapter 11 (from 11:2)*

1. In 11:2 the angel tells Daniel that he will now reveal the truth to him. He informs him that three more kings will arise in Persia before a fourth, wealthy king. Recall from 10:1 that the vision is given in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia (536 B.C.). The three kings who followed Cyrus were Cambyses (530-522 B.C.), Gaumata (Pseudo-Bardiya/Pseudo-Smerdis; 522 B.C.), and Darius Hystaspes (522-486 B.C.) The fourth king, Xerxes (486-465 B.C.), who is called Ahasuerus in Esther, was very rich.

2. The last clause of v. 2 literally reads: "he will arouse everyone, the kingdom of Greece." Most English translations supply "against" to yield "he will arouse everyone [against] the kingdom of Greece." Steinmann argues that the more probable meaning is "he will arouse everyone, [especially] the kingdom of Greece." This was fulfilled in Xerxes who incited his people to join his army and invade Greece. The Greek city-states of that time repelled his invasion by forming a coalition, the effect of which was to arouse or awaken the Greeks to the potential of their being a unified force. This unity was realized just over a century later under Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great.

3. The revelation jumps from the mention of Xerxes' arousing the *kingdom of Greece* in v. 2 to the mighty *king of Greece* in vv. 3-4, Alexander the Great. It ignores the kings that ruled Persia after Xerxes and prior to Alexander because the movement is dictated by the mention of Greece, a catchword that triggers the next reference. That the prophecy relates to Alexander is clear from the description in v. 4. As soon as he conquered a vast territory in only a decade, Alexander died at the age of thirty-two and his kingdom was divided among four of his generals (Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy) rather than his descendants.

4. It is agreed by all that 11:5-35 is a description of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms that were fragments of Alexander's empire. The detail of these

prophecies is so amazing that skeptics claim they must have been recorded after the fact, but God revealed this history to Daniel centuries before it happened. (The following depends largely on Steinmann, 520-532.)

a. King of the south refers to the Ptolemaic rulers, and king of the north refers to the Seleucid rulers. Verse 5 describes how the Seleucus I fled to Egypt in 316 B.C. when he was attacked by Antigonos, another Greek general, and was made a general by Ptolemy I. After Ptolemy and Seleucus defeated Antigonos in 312 B.C. in Gaza, Seleucus returned to Babylon. After Antigonos's death in 301 B.C., Seleucus's kingdom came to exceed that of Ptolemy.

b. Verse 6 describes a peace treaty between Ptolemy II and Antiochus II that was entered into around 250 B.C. It involved a marriage alliance between Ptolemy II's daughter Berenice and Antiochus II, which required Antiochus II to leave his first wife, Laodice. Berenice's son was to become the next Seleucid ruler. However, four years later Antiochus II took back his wife Laodice. She apparently poisoned Antiochus II, had Berenice and her son murdered to insure her son's succession to the Seleucid throne (as Seleucus II), and had many of Berenice's attendants from Egypt murdered. That same year Berenice's father (Ptolemy II) died. This is all predicted in v. 6.

c. Verses 7-9 describe the retaliation by Berenice's brother Ptolemy III against the Seleucids. He had a successful campaign during which he executed Laodice and recovered the Egyptian idols that had been taken from Egypt in 525 B.C. by the Persian king Cambyses. Ptolemy III was unable to consolidate his control over the Seleucid territory because he had to return to Egypt to deal with a rebellion, which allowed Seleucus II to reestablish his authority. In 242 B.C. Seleucus II then made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Egypt.

d. Verse 10 describes the campaign of Antiochus III in Syria and Palestine against Ptolemy IV in 219-218 B.C. He regained territory his father had lost and pushed the battle all the way to an unidentified stronghold of the Egyptians.

e. Verses 11-13 describe the response of Ptolemy IV in 217 B.C. to the successful campaign of Antiochus III.

(1) He fought against Antiochus, and though Antiochus raised a huge army, that army was given into Ptolemy's hand. Ptolemy regained control of Palestine and southern Syria, but rather than press his advantage chose to make peace with Antiochus.

(2) So despite killing nearly twenty thousand of Antiochus's troops and regaining some territory, he did not prevail in the sense Antiochus would attack again some years later (204 B.C.) and ultimately (198 B.C.) remove forever southern Syria and Palestine from Ptolemaic control. Ptolemy returned to Egypt where the second-century B.C. historian Polybius says he gave himself up to a life of debauchery, thus fulfilling the reference in v. 12 to his heart being exalted.

f. Verses 14-19 refer to the subsequent conflict with Antiochus III.

(1) It seems from v. 14 that, in conjunction with Antiochus's initially successful assault in 204 B.C., some Jews joined in violent resistance to Ptolemaic rule, but that Seleucid victory was short-lived. The Egyptian general Scopas drove Antiochus back until 200 B.C. when Scopas was defeated in a decisive battle at Paneas (Caesarea Philippi in the N.T.). Scopas retreated to Sidon, where Antiochus forced his surrender in 198 B.C. after besieging the city. This led to "permanent" Seleucid control of Palestine, the beautiful land.

(2) Since Rome's power was rising in the west, Antiochus did not invade Egypt. Instead, as prophesied in v. 17, he entered into a marriage alliance by giving his daughter Cleopatra (not *the* Cleopatra) to be the wife of Ptolemy V. He apparently was hoping she would help him destroy the Ptolemaic kingdom from within, but that scheme was thwarted because Cleopatra turned out to be steadfastly loyal to her husband.

(3) Verses 18-19 describe how Antiochus subsequently turned his military desires westward until the Romans and Greeks defeated him at Thermopylae in 191 B.C. and the Roman general Lucius Cornelius Scipio drove him eastward and defeated him at the Battle of Magnesia in 190. In 188 B.C. Antiochus was forced to accept a treaty in which he became a Roman vassal and was forced to send his son Antiochus IV to Rome as a hostage. In 187 B.C. he was killed by a local population when he attempted to pillage a temple of Zeus/Bel to secure the funds necessary to pay his tribute to Rome.

g. Verse 20 refers to the reign of Seleucus IV the successor of Antiochus III. He sent his finance minister, Heliodorus, to Jerusalem to loot the temple, but he was prevented from doing so. Seleucus IV died in 175 B.C. under mysterious circumstances, it being thought he was poisoned by Heliodorus.

h. Antiochus IV was returning to Syria from years of captivity in Rome when his brother Seleucus IV died. Antiochus had been released in exchange for Seleucus IV's elder son, Demetrius, who was the rightful heir to the throne. Another nephew, an infant also named Antiochus, was next in line for the throne after Demetrius. On his way back to Syria, Antiochus IV convinced Eumenes, the king of Pergamum, to support his bid to become coregent with his infant nephew, apparently claiming it was necessary to guard the nephew's rule against potential usurpers. When young Antiochus died or was murdered in 170 B.C., Antiochus IV ruled alone. So as prophesied in v. 21, the throne was not given to him in rightful course; he seized it by intrigue or deceit.

i. Verses 22-24 seem to be a general characterization of Antiochus's reign. He will defeat military opponents, depose a high priest ("a prince of a covenant"), make alliances he has no intention of keeping, and develop his power from a small initial base of support. He also will plunder the rich parts of his realm and spread that wealth to his

supporters in an unprecedented manner. All of this fits what is known of Antiochus IV. The last sentence of v. 24 turns the prophecy to Antiochus's designs on Egypt, but God will allow him to succeed only for a time.

j. Verses 25-27 prophesy about the conflict between Ptolemy VI and Antiochus IV. Two of Ptolemy's advisors encouraged him to take Palestine back from Seleucid control, but Antiochus was told of Ptolemy's plan. He defeated Ptolemy in battle, captured him, and came to control most of Egypt. The exception was Alexandria where the leaders declared Ptolemy's younger brother Ptolemy VII to be king. Antiochus made an alliance with Ptolemy VI, setting him up as a puppet king in Memphis under the claim that he was the rightful king. Both Antiochus and Ptolemy were scheming to enhance their own power never intending to be bound by the pact they had made. But their schemes will be to no avail in that God determined an end for them contrary to what they had hoped to gain through their duplicity.

k. Verse 28 prophesies about Antiochus's return from this Egyptian campaign. It was fulfilled when he plundered the temple as told in 1 Macc. 1:20-28. Apparently his victory over the Egyptians (except Alexandria) encouraged him to express his hostility toward the Jews by taking valuables from their temple.

l. Verses 29-30 were fulfilled when Antiochus, two years later, launched another campaign against Egypt, where Ptolemy VI had become a joint ruler with his brother Ptolemy VII. This time, however, he was forced to withdraw in humiliation by a show of Roman power. (*Kittim* can be a general term referring to parts of the Mediterranean world that lay west of the Middle East [e.g., Rome]. LXX has "Romans.") On his return, Antiochus took harsh vengeance against Jerusalem for an attempt to unseat Menelaus, his handpicked high priest. He showed favor toward "those who forsake the covenant," meaning those who supported his Hellenizing agenda.

m. Verse 31 predicts Antiochus's assault on Jewish religious practices. To quote Everett Ferguson again (p. 406):

The walls of Jerusalem were broken down, a new citadel (the Acra) was erected to dominate the temple area, and a garrison was stationed there converting the city into a military settlement. Menelaus and the Jewish Hellenizers collaborated with the military settlers in modifying the temple service into the worship of the Semitic "Lord of Heaven" (*Baal Shamayim*), who was identified with Zeus.

According to Jewish sources Antiochus IV in 168 or 167 B.C. issued decrees prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion: the Scriptures were to be destroyed, the Sabbath and festivals were no longer to be observed, the food laws were to be abolished, and circumcision was no longer to be practiced (1 Macc. 1:41-64). Moreover, at the end of 168/167 a smaller altar was erected on the top of the great altar of burnt offering, and as the supreme insult to Judaism swine were sacrificed on it.

n. Verses 32-35 predict the resistance to Antiochus by those faithful to God. Those with Daniel's kind of wisdom about God will enlighten and influence others but will also suffer persecution. In their hardship they will receive a little help, probably referring to the encouragement of those joining the resistance – it being "little help" perhaps in contrast to the greater help God would later provide – but it is revealed that many at that time will be insincere in their affiliation with them. The purpose of this persecution of the wise, those who see correctly how they are to relate to God, is the refinement and purification of their faith so that they may be ready for the ultimate end, which still awaits the appointed time that is beyond their time of suffering.

o. With the early church fathers and many modern commentators (Young, Archer, Ferguson, Miller, Steinmann; see also Longman), I think the focus in vv. 36-45 shifts to the end of history, to the time of Antichrist, the final climactic opponent of God. Admittedly there are no clear indications of this shift, only hints, but that may be a way of suggesting that Antichrist will be a kind of Antiochus, a kind of king of the north, on steroids. The ambiguous hints of a shift include:

(1) The end of v. 35 says the purpose of the suffering by the wise under Antiochus is that they will be purified until the end that God has appointed for a future time. The meaning of the phrase "the time of the end" depends on the time frame or temporal horizon of the particular prophecy in question. In other words, it need not refer to the end of history at the return of Christ, but it can refer to that time. Its meaning must be determined by the context, which is not always easy (Steinmann, 409, 538-539). The phrase is used three other times in this particular revelation (11:40, 12:4, 12:9), and since its uses in 12:4 and 12:9 follow the reference to the resurrection of the dead at the final judgment in 12:1-3, it seems to encompass the end of history.

(2) The reference in 11:36 to "*the* king" is unique. No Hellenistic king prior to 11:36 is referred to simply as "the king." There is always some further identification.

(3) These hints assume greater weight in light of the fact a number of the prophecies in vv. 36-45 cannot be said to have been fulfilled by Antiochus IV. Though he clearly had delusions of grandeur, there is no indication that Antiochus exalted and magnified himself over every god and paid no attention to the gods of his father or to any other gods. On the contrary, Antiochus was known for his devotion to Greek gods in general. He honored them on coins and with festivals, probably erected a statue of Zeus in Jerusalem and ordered sacrifices to be offered to it, and promoted the worship of Dionysius in Jerusalem. The prophecies of vv. 40-45 also were not fulfilled by him, even granting their symbolic nature.

p. According to vv. 36-39, this ruler exalts himself over every so-called god and blasphemes God Almighty. He makes a god of military power and spends on it lavishly. It is by this "foreign god" of military might, something his ancestors did not worship, that he deals with the strongest opponents. Those who support him are given

benefits and brought into the fold. He will be allowed to succeed until God's time to take him out.

q. In vv. 40-45, he engages in a struggle with a rival power and overcomes him. He flows into other countries like water and comes into the "beautiful" or "glorious" land. Steinmann remarks (p. 545):

This power struggle will affect God's people. "The beautiful land" (11:41) is a metaphor for God's people, the Christian church, the new Israel, residents of the "Jerusalem above" (Gal 4:26; see also Heb 12:22). Many will "stumble" (Dan 11:41). This verb was used earlier in Daniel 11 to refer to believers who were persecuted even to the point of martyrdom (see the third textual note on 11:14). Here these Christian believers will be willing to suffer death rather than fall away from the faith or the visible church because of the king's actions. However, the king will spare enemies of the Gospel. "Edom, Moab, and the chief part of the Ammonites" (11:41) are metaphors for the theological enemies of Christ who contribute to the persecution of God's people.

r. The ruler receives some kind of news that alarms him, and then he goes on a spree of destructive fury. He centers his attention in the beautiful land, symbolized by him pitching his palatial tents "between the sea(s) and the glorious holy mountain," which may symbolize his zeal against the church. At that point, he shall be taken out by God, or in Paul's words in 2 Thess. 2:8, "the Lord Jesus will kill [him] with the breath of his mouth and bring [him] to nothing by the appearance of his coming."

## *L. Chapter 12*

1. During this time of great distress for the people of God,<sup>13</sup> the days when Antichrist is on the scene, the archangel Michael will arise. He, and presumably the heavenly army he commands, will deliver the saints in that they will be God's agents in bringing history to a close and executing the final judgment (see, e.g., Lk. 9:26; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Jude 14-15; Rev. 14:14-20). Indeed, 1 Thess. 4:16 mentions the presence of an archangel at that time.

2. The end of v. 1 refers to those whose names are written in "the book," meaning God's book of life (see Mal. 3:16-17; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:18, 20:12, 20:15, 21:27). Verse 2 is a description of the general resurrection of the dead that occurs in association with Christ's return and the consummation of the kingdom. The wise, meaning the faithful, are resurrected to an eternal life of glory. In Jesus' words in Mat. 13:43, "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father." Those who were not faithful will be resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt; they will be condemned.

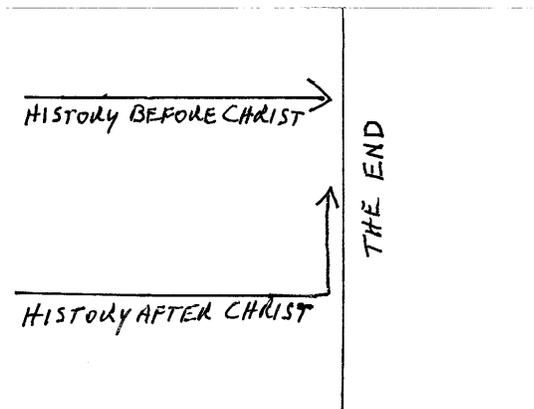
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<sup>13</sup> The depiction of the distress as "such as never has been since there was a nation" is a proverbial way of expressing its utter horror. As McGuiggan notes (p. 184), "It is used in Ezekiel 5:8-9 of the 586 B.C. destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus just used it of the 70 A.D. conflict. Both can't be literally correct."

3. Daniel is told in v. 4 to seal the book until the time of the end. As in 8:26, I think this speaks symbolically of safeguarding the vision so it would be available for generations in the distant future rather than to keeping it secret.

(a) The Apostle John, on the other hand, is told in Rev. 22:10 *not* to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book because the time is near. This was a way of emphasizing the significance of Christ's coming. The last days, the time of the end, had already begun through Christ's ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. Life from that time has been lived on the brink of the final, ultimate end, the consummation of the kingdom at his return. However long God in his purposes extends the time since Christ, Christ's coming is ever at our door. The command not to seal the prophecy is a symbolic way of communicating that fact.

(b) I have on a number of occasions used this (poorly drawn) diagram to help communicate the idea. It's from J. H. Newman, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century pastor, and was cited in the commentaries on 1 John by F. F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall, and Gary Burge.



4. In the time until the end, many will dash about for the purpose of increasing knowledge (see NIV, TNIV). The similarity to Amos 8:12 seems to imply a vain effort to obtain knowledge. Young paraphrases the meaning (p. 258), "Preserve the book until the end, for it contains the truth as to the future. Many shall go to and fro in search of knowledge, but they shall not find it." As Longman says (p. 285), "people will scurry about desperately trying to find knowledge in their own power, but will fail in their attempt." Knowledge of the future is only in the revelation of the Lord.

5. In verses 5-7 Daniel sees two figures, presumably angels, standing on opposite banks of a river.

a. Someone says to the man clothed in linen who was above the waters, which is probably the awesome being described in 10:5-6, "How long until the end of these astonishing things?" With Steinmann (p. 565), I think this refers to the astonishing

things uttered by Antichrist against God that are mentioned in 11:36. It is a question about the length of Antichrist's rule and subjugation of the saints.

b. The awesome figure, perhaps a manifestation of God the Son, raises both hands to heaven and swears that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people, the subjugation of the saints, comes to an end all these things will be finished. The return of Christ and the associated resurrection and consummation shall occur when Antichrist is on the scene (2 Thess. 2:8).

c. Notice that "time, times, and half a time" matches the time during which the saints are said in 7:25 to be given into the hand of the little horn, whom I take to be Antichrist. It seems to refer to a time of suffering that is cut short by God; the expected progression is terminated (Baldwin, 146), which indicates God's protection.<sup>14</sup> It also is widely taken as a way of saying "three-and-a-half years" (1 time [sg.] + two times [pl.] + one-half a time). "As half of the perfect number, seven, it denotes a short period of evil" (Lucas, 194). This same expression is used in Rev. 12:14, and various equivalents (42 months and 1,260 days) in Rev. 11:2-3, 12:6, 13:5, with the same general import.

6. Daniel's grasp of the vision is not as clear as he desires, so he asks the being for clarification regarding the last stage of these events (not "end"; see Young, 260 and Goldingay, 275, 281). He wants more information about the ending of the shattering of the power of the holy people. He is told simply to "Go," as that aspect of the revelation has been finalized (shut up and sealed), preserved for the time of the end. No further details would be provided in response to his specific inquiry.

7. The being then gives the "take home lesson" by referring back to the nearer coming persecution of Antiochus that was addressed in 11:31-35. This redirection is signaled by use in 12:10 of the language of 11:35 and by use in 12:11 of the language of 11:31. The crucial point about persecution of the people of God by worldly powers of any age (something with which Daniel was well acquainted) is that the wise, those who understand the greatness of God and his rule over history, will remain steadfast in their faith in the face of suffering and be blessed through their suffering as a result. The persecution will strengthen and benefit their faith, and that faith will be richly rewarded.

8. As God will be in control when Antiochus rages – he numbers the days of his power – and will bless those who wait on him through the full time of that struggle (1,335 days: the 1,290 days of the most severe persecution, symbolized by the removal of the sacrifice and the defiling of the temple, plus 45 days of lesser persecution before and/or after that peak), so he will bless the faithful through every persecution. Why the specific numbers 1,290 and 1,335 were used in the symbolism is a mystery.

a. Possibly they are alternate ways of representing three and a half years under different calendars, when allowance is made for the periodic insertion of months

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<sup>14</sup> This is the "cutting short" of Mat. 24:22 (Mk. 13:20) if, as I believe is the case, 24:22 refers back to the *age of distress* in Mat. 24:9-14 rather than to the specific episode of distress that was the fall of Jerusalem referred to in Mat. 24:15-21 (see my "A Sketch of Mat. 24:1-42").

(intercalation) to bring those calendars in line with the true length of a solar year. Goldingay states (p. 310): "When allowance is made for intercalation, 1290 days can represent 3 ½ lunar years [citation omitted] or 3 ½ solar years [citation omitted]; 1335 days can also be reckoned to comprise 3 ½ solar years [citation omitted]."

b. As noted above, three and a half years (time, times, and half a time) and its various equivalents (42 months and 1,260 days) seem to symbolize a period of suffering that is cut short by God in his protection. If 1,290 and 1,335 are alternate ways of representing three and a half years, they are two symbols of God's providential protection through suffering, the juxtaposition of which serves to distinguish the time of total persecution from the time of intense persecution.

c. But recall that the time of Antiochus's persecution is symbolized in 8:14 as 2,300 evenings and mornings, which most commentators believe refers to 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices, which translates into 1,150 days. All these times are in the same ballpark of between three and four years, so maybe the symbolism lies more in the ballpark than in any specific time.

9. Daniel is told in the final verse to live his life faithfully until its end. He will rest, meaning he will die, and will arise to his allotted portion in the resurrection at the end of days.