

Understanding the Bible

(An Independent Baptist Commentary)

Minor Prophets

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An Overview of
Understanding the Bible
(*An Independent Baptist Commentary*)

Understanding the Bible has one purpose: to help the reader understand the Word of God. It seeks to accomplish what Nehemiah wrote, “*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading*” (Nehemiah 8:8). This work endeavors to give the *sense* of any given passage of Scripture and help the reader to *understand* the reading.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction: *The Book of Daniel is considered as either the largest of the minor prophets, or the smallest of the major prophets. It is a book of two basic themes: (1) the spiritual character of the man Daniel and his companions and (2) the prophecies that God gave concerning things to come. The man Daniel is one of the spiritual giants in the Bible and a wonderful example for Christians to this day. The prophecies in Daniel touch on not only the Old Testament history of Israel, but right on into the future. The prophecy in Daniel forms a frame work for most Bible eschatology (the study of last things). It contains some of the most comprehensive outlines of all prophecy in the Bible.*

Daniel was written well after the division of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In fact the northern kingdom of Israel no longer existed. Daniel was a part of the original Jewish exiles sent to Babylon in about 605 B.C. by the victorious Babylonian armies. It was the practice of the Babylonians to try and incorporate the bright young minds of their captive territories into their own nation. There were two purposes for this. One was to inculcate Babylonian culture and government into the captive peoples, and two, to benefit from the brightest of their captured subjects. Hence, Daniel and other young men from Judah had been transported to Babylon. Daniel spent the rest of his life there. He wrote over a span of more than 70 years

from Babylon. (Needless to say he was an aged man at the end.) He witnessed not only the mighty Nebuchadnezzar and his heir Belshazzar rule the kingdom, but also the conquering of the realm by the Medes and Persians. The book begins in Jerusalem about 605 B.C. and ends in Babylon a little more than 70 years later. During this time, Babylon was the super power in the world, both militarily and culturally. God used Babylon to chasten his people Judah for their backslidden and rebellious hearts. The kingdom in Israel has not been restored to this day.

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Overview of Daniel I: *Daniel as a teenager found himself as an exiled, prisoner of war in the foreign country Babylon. Daniel was of noble birth, if not one of the royal family of Judah. He was carried captive to Babylon during the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Among others, he had three companions whose Jewish names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The Babylonian government intended to groom them for future governmental service for the Babylonians. Therefore, the Babylonian official placed over them introduced to them the foods and drink of the court of Babylon. This undoubtedly included pork and alcoholic beverages which were in violation of the law of Moses. Daniel and his companions had to quickly make some basic decisions.*

1:1-2 **In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.** The third year of Jehoiakim is about 606 B.C. As detailed in II Chronicles 36:5-8, Babylon under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. That siege lasted about a year.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar was at the direct dispensation of God. God in fact was chastening Judah for their sin. Accordingly, the Babylonians plundered the Temple at Jerusalem, though not destroying it on this their first incursion into Jerusalem. They therefore took part of the vessels of worship (no doubt of gold) back to Babylon. There they were placed in the temple of Bel, the god of Babylon. The name *Shinar* literally refers to the 'land of two rivers.' The land of Chaldea, which was the heart of Babylon, literally was situated between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The name is a synonym for Babylon even as Colombia, America, and the United States are all general synonyms.

1:3-4 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes. Upon overrunning Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar also directed the chief of his eunuchs, a man by the name of Ashpenaz, to bring back to Babylon young men of royal or noble descent. Because Ashpenaz evidently was a eunuch himself and placed over the young nobles of Judah, the question might arise whether these taken under his authority were likewise made eunuchs. From all appearances, Daniel never married.

4 Children in whom *was* no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. The Babylonians had a policy of removing to Chaldea the best and brightest of the young nobles of conquered lands. In so doing, they trained them

in the ways and values of Babylon and they helped pacify rebellion against their rule. As Moses was trained in the learning of the Egyptians, so Daniel was trained in that of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans sought for adolescents who were of perfect form physically and were bright mentally. They hoped to build upon the educational foundation already instilled in these young men. The word translated as **learning** (סֵפֶר *cepher*) literally means ‘books.’ Daniel and his associates were to learn not only the language of the Babylonians (which likely was Aramaic), but also the history and philosophy of Babylon.

1:5-6 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Upon arriving in Babylon, the king ordered that Daniel and associates be given a daily allotment of the same meat and wine which he drank. This was to continue for the space of three years. The Babylonians likely thought that by eating the king’s diet, these young men would be further improved both physically and mentally. The word translated as **meat** (פֶּתֶבַּג *pathbag*) refers to delicacies of meat. From the context to follow, these clearly involved meats which observant Jews considered unclean, including various cuts of pork, bacon, and hams, for example. The word translated **nour-ishing** (גָּדַל *gadal* in the Piel construct) has the idea to ‘make great or powerful.’ The Babylonians thought they were giving Daniel and associates ‘health’ food to improve their physique and intellect.

1:6-7 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Each of the primary characters in the story at hand had names which referred to God. *Daniel* literally means ‘God is my judge.’ *Hananiah* literally means ‘God has favored (or blessed).’ *Mishael*

literally means ‘who is what God is’ or perhaps by extension ‘in the image of God.’ And, *Azariah* literally means ‘Jehovah has helped’ or perhaps ‘Jehovah is my help.’ It is remarkable how ancient Hebrew names were not only Bible based, but actually all focused praise to God. Even in apostate Judah of that day, some in the upper class thereof named their children with praise to God. Implicit is the godly heritage of these four young men. And, as the case will bear out, they lived up to their namesakes.

7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name of Belteshazzar*; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. The Babylonians took the Jewish names which all referred to God in some way and gave them pagan names referring to their pagan gods. To Daniel was given the name *Belteshazzar* which has the sense ‘Bel’s treasurer,’ or the keeper of his treasures. Hananiah became *Shadrach* which has the sense ‘king’s messenger’, or ‘the messenger the sun god.’ Mishael became *Meshach* which has the sense ‘guest of Shach,’ the latter being a Babylonian god. Finally, Azariah became *Abednego* which has the sense ‘a servant of Nebo,’ the latter again being another Babylonian god. What chagrin it must have been for these godly Jewish young men to have such pagan names pinned on them. Yet as the text to follow will show, these pagan names likely further steeled their resolve to remain faithful to Jehovah.

1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. It is remarkable how that Daniel and his companions had such spiritual character. Remember, they were just teenagers, far from home, far from any direct Jewish religious influence. They in all likelihood knew that they would never again see their

home land. Where did they get such character and conviction? Undoubtedly from the training they had received from their parents. They obviously had been well grounded in the Law of Moses. It reflects upon the consistency and character of their homes prior to their exile.

The word translated as **purposed** (שׁוּמַם *suwm*) also has the sense to ‘determine.’ Daniel was determined to not defile himself. Though his daily rations from the king undoubtedly contained meats from unclean animals such as pork, ham, or bacon (not to mention the alcoholic beverages accompanying them), Daniel was determined not to be defiled. He purposed in his heart to be obedient to the Word of God as it pertained to him as an observant Jew. There is a remarkable indication of the determination that Daniel had to do right and keep pure. And as we shall see, God richly rewarded and blessed this upright young man. Having thus determined to refuse the unclean foods set before him, notice how Daniel reacted thereto. Daniel was not in any way disrespectful to the governmental authority over him. He did not demand his rights or threaten. Rather, he *requested* a variance.

Daniel had respect for the authority over him, even though he did not agree with it. He was neither surly, obstinate, or impudent. He was respectful and therefore requested. Later in the book, Daniel is described as having an excellent spirit. (See Daniel 5:12 and 6:3.) That excellent spirit was already apparent in young Daniel.

1:9-10 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Notice how God providentially protected Daniel by causing him to be highly regard by the prince of the eunuchs. This was, in part, because of Daniel’s respect and deference, but also more importantly, because God so arranged it. One will never go wrong doing what is right.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.

Ashpenaz, the prince of the eunuchs, was under the authority of Nebuchadnezzar. He was merely following orders. Now he was faced with a respectful and honest refusal of a royal order by Daniel. The head eunuch therefore feared for his own fate. Ashpenaz quite apparently believed that by eating the king's delicacies and alcoholic beverages that Daniel and friends would profit thereby. And as so often is the case, the people of the world believe the lie of the devil. By declining to eat the king's fare, Ashpenaz feared his young charges would be visibly diminished, even in their faces, when they stood before the king three years later. He thus feared for his own head.

1:11-13 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. It is apparent that Ashpenaz had placed an intermediate supervisor over Daniel and friends by the name of Melzar. Upon hearing the complaint of Ashpenaz as noted above, Daniel therefore offered a counterproposal to Melzar.

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Daniel and his companions took a large step of faith. Rather than eat the Babylonian foods which were not lawful for a Jew to eat, they requested *pulse*. The latter simply means vegetables. They offered to eat only a vegetarian diet and water for ten days. They effectively put God to the test. In other words, they trusted God to honor them and bless them for doing what was right. And God did exactly that. They, by faith, believed that by eating a vegetarian diet rather than the king's meats (which were ceremonially unclean) and his alcoholic beverages that God would

honor them. The thought is not necessarily that eating a vegetarian diet is the way to better way to health, though it certainly cannot hurt. Assuredly, they would not eat unclean meats. Rather, the greater truth is doing right by faith and trusting God to bless. Daniel therefore challenged Melzar to allow this alternative for ten days and then test them—“prove thy servants.”

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. The test Daniel proposed was simple. Allow him and his three associates to eat only a vegetarian diet for ten days. Then, compare these four with the others who did eat of the king’s meat. (What clearly is implied is that other Jewish young men present did not have the character and conviction to say no to the Babylonian diet. They quite apparently were willing to compromise convictions to get along.) Moreover, Daniel proposed a simple test. Check out the complexion of the faces of the four who ate only a vegetarian diet versus those who ate the king’s fare. After ten days, make a decision based upon what you can actually see. Again, the lesson is not vegetarianism versus eating meat. Rather, the moral of the story is of four young men who were willing to take a stand by faith, be obedient to God’s Word, and do right before God. God will always honor such a conviction.

1:14-16 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. Having that simple proposition set before him, Melzar consented. He allowed Daniel and his three friends to proceed with their test for ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. At the end of the ten days, the complexions of Daniel and friends were clearer

and their bodies appeared more solid and firm. The other Jewish captives who went along with the world's program and compromised their convictions were less by comparison. Once again, God honors those who by faith obey His Word and do that which is right. God thus honored Daniel and associates.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. Melzar, the supervisor over Daniel and friends, therefore exempted them from the king's meats and alcohol and allowed them to only eat vegetables and water. That apparently continued throughout the three years in which they were in preparation to stand before Nebuchadnezzar.

1:17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Daniel and friends had put God to the test. They by faith had obeyed God's Word as it pertained to them. They by faith had done what was right. As a result God gave them (1) knowledge, (2) skill in all learning, (3) wisdom and to Daniel, (4) God gave understanding of dreams and visions.

God blessed His obedient young servants with unusual mental acumen, I.Q., and intellect. He also gave them wisdom. Their diet coupled with their obedience to God resulted in sharpness of mind. Moreover, God gave Daniel, the leader of this group, special understanding of visions and dreams. God was also providentially at work for He had a special ministry for Daniel ahead.

1:18-20 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. When the prescribed three years were completed, Ashpenaz brought Daniel and his three associates before King Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. Evidently, the rest of the young Jewish captives were also brought before Nebuchadnezzar. However, Daniel and friends had no comparison. As the king communed with them (i.e., talked to them, asked questions of them, and listened to them), it was apparent that they were brilliant beyond degree when compared to even their own colleagues of the captivity. Further-more, God caused them to be visibly and physically better than their peers who partook of the Babylonian fare. They had honored God by avoiding the unclean foods and drink of the Babylonians. They by faith had obeyed the Word of God as it pertained to them. God in turn honored and blessed them. It was apparent for all to see.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. Of interest is that they were better in *all* matters of wisdom and understanding than their peers. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar found them ten times better than his own native-born, professional “magicians and astrologers” in his realm. The latter bear witness to the pagan and even occult nature of Babylonian culture.

The word translated as **magicians** (חַרְטוּם *chartom*) literally refers to ‘diviners, magicians, or astrologer.’ It also has the sense of ‘of one possessed of occult knowledge.’ The word translated as **astrologers** (אַשְׁשַׁפִּי *ashshaph*) refers to ‘necromancers, conjurers, astrologers, enchanters, or exorcists.’ Such were the royal advisors to Nebuchadnezzar. The world then and today is run by the devil. It was open and obvious then, though perhaps more discreet today. A clear moral of the story of Daniel chapter 1 is that God will specially bless those who by faith obey Him and do what is right. See Psalm 5:12

1:21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in about 606 B.C. The initial captivity of Judah began the year later in 605 B.C. Cyrus ascended to his throne in 534 B.C. and Daniel lived at least that long. It was in the first year of Cyrus that the first decree allowing Ezra and others to return to rebuild the Temple was ordered. See Ezra 1:1 *ff.* It is significant that Daniel, who was one of the first captives taken to Babylon, apparently lived to see the end of the captivity.

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Overview of Daniel 2: In this second chapter, Nebuchadnezzar's dream is set forth in verses 1-13. It is revealed to Daniel in verses 14-23. Daniel is brought to the king in verses 24-30. Daniel interprets the dream in verses 31-45. And, honor is given to Daniel and associates in verse 46-49.

2:1-3 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. A seeming difficulty is at hand regarding biblical chronology. Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem in the first year of his reign according to Jeremiah 25:1. At least a year had passed in the siege. After arriving in Babylon, three years had passed before Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar. See Daniel 2:18. However, here, Nebuchadnezzar had his disturbing dream in second year of his reign. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown offer this answer. "The solution of this difficulty is: Nebuchadnezzar first ruled as subordinate to his father Nabopolassar, to which time the first chapter refers (Daniel 1:1); whereas 'the second year' in the second chapter is dated from his sole sovereignty." Thus, in the second year of his full sovereignty, God gave him

a very disturbing dream which wakened him in the night. Because of the occult nature of Babylonian culture, emphasis was placed upon the meaning of dreams.

2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar called out his usual suspects: his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. A brief discussion is made of the magicians and astrologers in 1:20. Sorcerers and Chaldeans are added here. The former refers to those practicing witchcraft and sorcery. Chaldeans, in this context, refers to a certain order of priest-magicians from the region of Chaldea. These were marched out in front of King Nebuchadnezzar.

3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Nebuchadnezzar, likely suspicious of the abilities of his assembled occult fakers, only told them that he had had a troubling dream.

2:4-6 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The assembled occult charlatans led by the Chaldeans promptly and piously urged the king to tell them his dream and they would then interpret it for him. Syriack is otherwise known as Aramaic or Syrian. It is the precursor of modern Arabic. It apparently was the official language of official Babylon. (From Daniel 2:4 through chapter 8, the Book of Daniel is written in Aramaic, the ancient language of Syria and essentially the same as Chaldean, the official language of Babylon. It is similar to Hebrew, though not identical.

4 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. Nebuchadnezzar

chadnezzar informed his assembled ‘wise men’ that he had forgotten the dream. There likely was a grain of truth in that. Seldom does one remember all the details of unusual dreams upon awakening. However, implied is that Nebuchadnezzar was suspicious of the true ability of his advisors. Therefore, he ordered them to recall his dream for him. If they failed to do so, he promised he would cut them in pieces and make their houses piles for garbage and manure.

5 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. If however, these official occult charlatans could first recall the king’s dream and then interpret it correctly, he promised to reward them handsomely. He therefore ordered them to recall the dream and interpret it. It is apparent that Nebuchadnezzar had little patience with his pompous advisors.

2:7-9 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. One can only imagine the frustration as the flustered advisors to the king again pled for him to tell them his dream. Then they would interpret it for him.

8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. The reply of the king has the sense, ‘I certainly knew that you would try and buy time (i.e., stall) inasmuch as the thing has slipped my mind.’ The word translated as **gain** (זָבַן *zeban*) literally means to ‘buy.’

9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. Nebuchadnezzar had little regard for his advisors. If they would not tell him his

dream, there was one decree for them—death. Insight into the distrust and suspicion of the king for these charlatans is apparent. He accused them of preparing lying and corrupt words to speak to him “till the time be changed.” The king was aware that they hoped they could stall until (1) either he forgot the matter and changed the subject.

More ominous is the implication (2) that he suspected they were plotting a change in government against him. He accordingly was both suspicious and unsympathetic to them. He again order them to reveal his dream as a proof they could give a proper interpretation thereof.

2:10-11 **The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king’s matter: therefore *there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.*** The flustered Chaldeans and associates protested that there was no one upon the earth who could do what the king demanded. They further protested that no ruler had ever asked such a thing from their likes.

11 **And *it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.*** The word translated as **rare** (קִיָּר *yaqqiyr*) also has the sense of ‘difficult.’ They accused the king of requiring an extremely difficult thing. As far as they were concerned, no one could perform his request except the gods. They were partially right. No mortal man could so do what Nebuchadnezzar required. However, the true God of heaven could and would.

2:12-13 **For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men of Babylon.*** In reaction to the resistance of his advisors, Nebuchadnezzar was enraged and ordered *all* the wise men of Babyl-

on executed. He had had it with them all. He considered them all fakes of questionable loyalty.

13 And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

A warrant was therefore issued for all the ‘wise men’ of Babylon to be rounded up and executed. Daniel and his three associates were also included in that decree.

2:14-15 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king’s guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise *men* of Babylon. The captain of the king’s guard, Arioch by name, evidently showed up to arrest Daniel and associates. However, Daniel replied to him “with counsel and wisdom”—wisely and discreetly. Apparent in the character of Daniel was the wisdom of respect for authority. His soft words and gentle language stayed the execution of the officers orders.

He answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Daniel therefore inquired of Arioch about what was going on. He asked why the decree was so hastily ordered. Whereupon Arioch told the whole story to Daniel.

2:16-18 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. Daniel apparently impressed upon Arioch to allow him to petition an audience with the king, informing the king that given time (to pray over the matter) that he would reveal the dream and rightly interpret it. It is apparent that Nebuchadnezzar had respect to Daniel. He had no political axe to grind and he knew Daniel to be a man of integrity and moral uprightness. As the following verse indicates, Daniel was granted his request.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions. Daniel promptly went home and told his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah the story.

18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon. It is clear that Daniel desired time to go home and pray and ask God to reveal the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation thereof. They also had an added incentive. If God was so gracious to answer their prayer, their lives would be spared. If not, they would perish. That undoubtedly added fervency and effectiveness to their prayer. See James 5:16. To their knees they therefore went. Men pray never so hard than when the consequences thereof are most dire. Though the prayers of Daniel and friends are not recorded for us, they undoubtedly were effectual and fervent.

2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. God hears the prayer of the upright. See Proverbs 15:8. That night, God revealed to Daniel the entire matter in a vision. He gave to Daniel the details of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation thereof. Accordingly, Daniel proceeded to praise and bless God as recorded below.

2:20-23 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. When God answered Daniel's prayer, Daniel responded with an outpouring of praise to Him. He blessed the name of God in perpetuity, for God is source of all wisdom and power.

21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know under-

standing. It is God who changes not only the seasons of the year, but also brings times and seasons of prosperity and adversity. Clearly implied is that God is over the affairs of men. He puts rulers on their throne and removes them at His will. He gives additional wisdom to those already wise and increases knowledge of them already given to understanding. In short, God can and does give wisdom and knowledge. See James 1:5. It all is within His prerogative.

22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. Daniel spoke from firsthand experience. God had just revealed to him the deep and secret details of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Moreover, the omniscience of God is clearly set forth. He knows the secrets of the darkest recesses of the human heart. He knows what goes on under the cover of darkness. In fact, He is light, the source of light, and light dwells with him. See John 1:7-9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, and 12:35,46. Daniel proclaimed the glory and light of His heavenly Father even as did Jesus centuries later.

23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter. He concluded his paean of praise by thanking God and praising God. Thanks and praise are at times virtually synonymous. God had answered his prayer and Daniel thanked God for so doing. God had given him wisdom to know and understand the dream of Nebuchadnezzar as they had asked. God had revealed not only the details of the king's dream but the interpretation thereof. Therefore, Daniel thanked and praised God on the spot. A lesson remains to this day to thank and praise God as He answers our prayers.

2:24-25 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon:

he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. Upon receiving the dream and its interpretation, Daniel rushed over to the quarters of Arioch, the captain of the guard and directed him to not kill any of the wise men of Babylon. He was ready to stand before the king and explain his dream to him.

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. Arioch in turned rushed before the king and informed him that one of the captives of Judah was about to explain the king's dream to him. It may be that Arioch was not aware of Daniel's personal petition for time in 2:16. Or, it may rather be that he merely wished to ingratiate himself to the king by implying that he personally had found someone who could interpret the king's dream. The latter is more likely.

2:26-29 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Upon being brought again before Nebuchadnezzar, the king asked if Daniel were able to make known (1) the dream itself and (2) the interpretation thereof.

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king. Standing before the most powerful man in the world of that day, Daniel made clear that the pagan wise men, astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers of Babylon could not reveal to the king as he demanded.

28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head

upon thy bed, are these. Daniel took no credit for the revelation he was about to reveal. Rather, he did not miss the opportunity to glorify the God of heaven and testify of Him. The God of heaven and He alone would make known to Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its significance. Daniel also made clear that the dream about to be revealed was a revelation of the last days—a prophecy of things to come. Thus, one of the great frameworks of eschatology is about to be unfolded.

29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. Daniel briefly informed the king that God had showed him what he was about to reveal while on his bed. Furthermore, all that God would reveal to Nebuchadnezzar would come to pass.

2:30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Daniel made clear to the king that what he was about to reveal was not from him. Daniel let it be known that he had no more wisdom than others. His honesty, modesty, and genuine humility are refreshing. What was about to be revealed was for the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king. Daniel with God's help was about to reveal to the king his very thoughts and dreams. Though he had forgotten or could not remember, Daniel would refresh his memory with God's help.

* * * * *

Below is an overview and outline of Nebuchadnezzar dream and Daniel's interpretation thereof.

The vision itself: (Daniel 2:31-35)

Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image in his dream. The word *terrible* has the sense of frightening or awesome.

1. The Image itself:
 - The head of the image was gold
 - The arms were of silver
 - The belly and thighs were of brass
 - The legs were of iron
 - The feet were part of iron and part of clay.
2. A “stone cut out without hands” smote the image and broke it to pieces.
3. The residue of the image was destroyed and dispersed.
4. The stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The interpretation of the dream: (Daniel 2:36-45)

1. The head of the image was in fact Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. (Daniel 2:37-38)

2. The next portion (silver being inferior to gold) was the next empire to arise and “bear rule over all the earth.” History shows that this was the Media-Persian Empire. (Daniel 2:39)

3. The next portion (brass being even more inferior to the preceding) would be an empire that would arise and rule over the earth. (Daniel 2:39) History again has demonstrated that this was the Greek Empire.

4. The fourth part of the image represented a fourth kingdom which would be strong as iron. But its feet of iron mixed with clay represented the division of this kingdom into two parts. And the final form of this empire would in part be strong, and yet at the same time weak. In fact its final form would have ten divisions and not have great unity. (Daniel 2:40-43)

5. At the time of those ten final kings God will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and this kingdom will

destroy the culmination of human kingdoms. This divine kingdom will stand for ever. The stone cut out without hands showed the supernatural quality of the final kingdom.

2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Daniel proceeded to inform Nebuchadnezzar, step by step and detail by detail, precisely what he had seen in his dream. The king had seen a great image (i.e., statue) which was brilliant in its brightness. The word translated as **terrible** (דַּחַל *dechal*) has the sense of ‘dreadful’ or ‘awesome.’ In short, the towering statue (i.e., image) seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream was terrifying.

2:32-33 This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. The head of the towering statue seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was made of highly refined gold. The breast and arms of the image were made of silver. The abdomen and thighs thereof were made of brass.

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. The legs of this great statue (i.e., image) were made of iron. Finally, the feet thereof were made of iron and clay. The thought literally is ‘his feet (were) from iron and from clay.’ As should be apparent, the value of the metals decreased from the head downward. However, with the exception of the feet, the strength of the metals increased from the head downward. Thus the basic statue (or image) of the vision was described by Daniel to the king.

2:34-35 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. The revelation of

Nebuchadnezzar's dream now took action. The initial phrase literally reads, 'thou sawest until it came to pass that a stone etc.' In other words, Nebuchadnezzar viewed the image for a season in his dream. Then climatic events came to pass. A large stone (such as used in building construction) yet "cut out without hands" smote the image upon its feet. The supernatural nature of this *stone* is noted in that it was cut out without hands. The collation of numerous Scriptures should make clear that this Stone is none other than Jesus Christ. The Stone therefore struck the statue (i.e., image) on its feet made of iron and clay and smashed them. Implicit is that the rest of the image came crashing down. The following context makes that clear.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus, the image made of gold, silver, brass, and iron shattered to pieces. It was completely destroyed to such a degree that it became like chaff—like dust blowing off a threshingfloor in the summer. When all was said and done, no trace of the mighty image remained. In the place of the dreadful image seen by Nebuchadnezzar, the supernatural Stone became a great mountain which filled the entire earth. A cursory understanding of biblical prophecy surely will reveal that the Stone is Jesus Christ. At his return, He will smash the world system, setting up His kingdom which will encompass the entire earth. That will become evident in the interpretation of the dream to follow.

2:36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Having revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him, Daniel now proceeded to explain and interpret it for him. The plural *we* indicates that Daniel's

associates, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were there with him.

2:37-38 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. As is often the case in the Bible, Scripture interprets Scripture. God revealed to Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. At that point in history, Babylon was the lone superpower in the world. Moreover, the Babylonian empire ruled over many other lesser kingdoms of the Middle East. Nebuchadnezzar therefore was in fact a king of kings. Daniel also revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that it was the God of heaven who had given him his kingdom, his power, his strength, and his glory.

38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. All the wealth and possessions which Nebuchadnezzar possessed were in fact given to him by the God of heaven. It was Jehovah God who had made Nebuchadnezzar ruler over his vast kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold.

In looking at the overview of the greater prophecy, Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar at that time, was the primary manifestation of the world system. It had begun long earlier when Cain rebelled against Abel and the ungodly lineage of men rebellious against God began. It arose resurgent after the flood at Babel. The vision prophecy of the Nebuchadnezzar's image is a prophecy of the world system looking forward from that time onward. At that point in history, Babylon was the golden manifestation of the world system and its glory.

2:39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which

shall bear rule over all the earth. Daniel continued to explain to Nebuchadnezzar how that after the demise of the Babylonian empire, another kingdom would rise to power and then another. Even as silver is inferior to gold and brass inferior to silver, so the coming empires would be inferior to Babylon. Later prophecies of Daniel as well as secular history show that the inferior empire which rose to power after Babylon was Media-Persia. It was followed by Greece under Alexander the Great. Though various nations have come and gone as world powers, the world system has continued in one form or another through the ages.

2:40-43 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. The fourth and final form of the world system would be strong as iron and in fact would make much use of iron. Though inferior in value to gold, silver, or brass; iron certainly is stronger than the others. Coming prophecy and history show that the fourth manifestation of the world system after Nebuchadnezzar was Rome. And, though the Roman Empire as such has long passed away, we continue to this day to live in the Roman era of history. Interestingly, iron (and steel made from iron) has been the empire-building metal of this era of human history.

41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the twin legs of the image were made of iron. And, in the course of events, the Roman Empire did split into western and eastern divisions. Its final form will be partly of iron and partly of clay. The thought clearly is of lessened strength. The influence and form of Rome would still be present, but its power greatly diminished.

42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Following the presumption of ten toes, the final form of the Roman era of the world system will have ten subdivisions. Unlike the original Roman Empire, they will not have monolithic strength and power but will have some strength but not altogether. Corollary prophecies about the day of the Lord make clear the final form of the Roman world era will be comprised of ten nations and ten kings. See Daniel 7:7, 20, 24 and Revelation 13:1, 17:3, 7, 12, 16.

43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. The implication that the final form of the Roman era of the world system is further set forth. Whereas the original form was the Roman Empire (which later divided into two divisions), the final form will be rather amorphous and will represent more of an era than an empire. Notice how this final form of Rome will be mingled or mixed amongst the human race but not be cohesive. Implied is a Roman influence upon culture, politics, values, and philosophy, but short of an actual empire. Today, the western world is largely a descendant of the old Roman Empire. The west is not cohesive, but certainly is the dominant force in the world economically, politically, culturally, religiously, and philosophically. It is no longer an empire, but rather an era. It is strong in its pervasiveness, but weak in that there is no cohesiveness. Certainly the western world and its colonial history do not cleave one to another. Nevertheless, western influence pervades most of the world, as we speak.

2:44-45 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall

break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Daniel continued to interpret the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. At the time of the final political form of the old Roman Empire, that is the final ten nation coalition—in those days, the God of heaven will establish a kingdom which will never be destroyed. In view is the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ which will eventually be transformed into the eternal kingdom of God. The coming Kingdom of God will not pass on to other people as Babylon was superceded by Media-Persia or the Persians were superceded by the Greeks.

Rather, the coming Kingdom of God will destroy the world system (politically, militarily, economically, philosophically, and certainly religiously). Moreover, it will stand for ever. The world system began long ago. It certainly existed in Daniel's day. From his day onward, God set it forth as one monolithic system in the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It continues to this day, though approaching its final form.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The stone cut out without hands, without doubt, is a poetic reference to Jesus Christ when He returns in power and great glory. He will smash this old world's grasp on planet earth. He will destroy the final form of the Roman era of the world system and set up the Kingdom of God on earth in perpetuity. Thus, the great God, the Almighty, had revealed unto Nebuchadnezzar that which was to come to pass thereafter. The image vision of Daniel 2 is an overview of eschatology from that day unto the consummation of the ages. The majority of the prophecy has already been fulfilled. We today remain in the final stages of the Roman world era, awaiting the Stone cutout without hands to

return. Daniel concluded his discourse before Nebuchadnezzar noting that this certainly is what the king had dreamed—which Nebuchadnezzar knew to be true. In like fashion, the interpretation thereof was certain as well.

A Synopsis of the Prophecy

In the latter portion of Daniel is a prophetic overview of the remainder of human history from the time of Daniel onward. To date it has been remarkably accurate in its fulfillment. The majority of it has already been precisely fulfilled. The final act is yet to happen.

History has shown that the Babylonian empire was conquered and superseded by the Medes and the Persians. Though they defeated the Babylonians militarily, they were an inferior empire. The Greeks under Alexander the Great then proceeded to conquer the known world, including the Persian Empire and the world entered in the Greek era of history. Though the Greeks had much sophistication and ‘culture,’ they were not strong politically and once Alexander died, their military might waned. Eventually, the Greeks fell to the powerful and rising Roman Empire who were masters of the use of iron. They without a question were the most powerful empire in human history to that time. Later in the Roman era, the empire split into the Western (or Roman) Empire and the Eastern (or Byzantine) Empire headquartered at Constantinople.

This much of the prophecy we know to be an accurate overview of human government from the time of Daniel to that time. We still live in a western or Roman world, though Rome itself no longer has any political or military might as such. Nevertheless the dominant civilization of the world today has its origins in Roman tradition, with influence extending even to the orient, Russia, as well as the third world. The nations of the

world today, for the most part, have republican forms of government, often with a senate. That is from Roman influence. The nations of the world have university systems which were something founded by Rome. The world's science and medical terminology is rooted in Latin, the ancient language of Rome. Even American money has Latin words printed upon it. The world's judicial systems are for the most part Roman in form. All in all, we still live in the Roman era of human history.

The rest is still future for us. The final form of this Roman era will have ten loosely linked kings or countries, probably in the areas which once were a geographical part of the old Roman Empire. At that time, a supernatural *Stone* will destroy the final form of human government and its remnants. In its place will arise a government and a kingdom which last for ever—the Kingdom of God. As we will see later in Daniel and else where in the Bible, the Stone is none other than Jesus Christ. When he returns he will destroy human government and establish his kingdom on this earth which will last forever.

2:46-47 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. Nebuchadnezzar knew that what Daniel had told him was the truth. He knew Daniel had accurately revealed his dream. No doubt, the Holy Spirit convicted him of the truth of Daniel's interpretation thereof. The king therefore fell down and worshiped Daniel. He ever ordered that special offerings be made unto Daniel. To that degree, Daniel was a type of Christ, for the day is coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

Implied is that Daniel stopped worship of him. Notice that the king *answered* him. If he could not worship Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar determined to direct glory to the God of Daniel whence it belonged. Indeed, Jehovah God is a God of gods. He is over all spirits, holy or unclean. He indeed is Lord of lords and King of kings. See Revelation 17:14 and 19:16. He is omniscient. God knows the secrets of the hearts of men and can reveal them at His pleasure. Indeed, He did so to Daniel. See Psalm 44:21.

2:48-49 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Another classic illustration of Romans 8:28 is at hand. (There indeed are parallels between the life of Daniel and that of Joseph in Genesis.) Though Daniel had suffered being taken captive to Babylon, God had greater things in mind. Through the providence of God, Daniel was highly exalted. Truly there is a reward for the righteous (Psalm 58:11). Daniel went from being a lowly Jewish ‘wise man’ in Babylon to essentially the prime minister of Babylon.

The province of Babylon was the principal province of the empire in which the metropolis of the empire was located. Daniel was made governor thereof. Moreover, he was made chief of the governors of the ‘wise men’ of Babylon. Some have likened this to him to being appointed chancellor or president of the University of Babylon. Whatever his honors were, God had highly exalted him.

49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king. Daniel thereupon requested of Nebuchadnezzar that his three close associates, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, be appointed as his deputies to take care of the administrative affairs

of the province of Babylon. Daniel, however, sat in the gate of the king. That latter essentially made him second in command to Nebuchadnezzar. To sit in the gate of the king essentially made Daniel the prime minister or chief justice of the empire, or perhaps both. It was a position of high rank.

This elevation of Daniel took place in about 602 or 601 B.C. Of interest is that Jeremiah the prophet was still preaching back in Jerusalem. Babylon would make two more incursions against Judah with the final one utterly destroying Jerusalem and the Temple. At the second incursion, Ezekiel was deported to Babylon, though perhaps not in the province of Babylon. He there uttered his prophecies. There is no record of any interaction between Daniel or Ezekiel. God would continue to use Nebuchadnezzar to chasten Judah and finally remove them from their land in about 586 B.C. Where Daniel was in all of this is not recorded. At the least, he was an underling who had no authority over Nebuchadnezzar and his final decisions. Moreover, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel make clear that God used Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army as instruments of His chastisement against Judah and Jerusalem because of their un-repented sin. God may have revealed that to Daniel in the meantime. More than twenty years transpire before the story of Daniel picks up again in the following chapter.

* * * * *

***Overview of Daniel 3:** As time passed, God used a severe crisis upon Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to (1) test them (2) temper them (3) and bless them. (Curiously, Daniel is nowhere mentioned in this chapter. He may have been out of the country on business or at least not near at hand when this incident took place.) Daniel 3 is thus the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.*

An Outline of Daniel³—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

I. Their Conviction (verse 17)

A. *They claimed the promise of God in Isaiah 43:2.* (Isaiah had already been written and they were conversant therewith.) They (a) obeyed God's commandment to not bow to any image; (b) They did therefore what was right. (c) They in simple faith trusted the Lord to deliver them based at least on Isaiah 43:2 and no doubt the promises in the Psalms and Proverbs (Psalm 2:12, 5:12, 3:1-8, 5:5, 7:10, 18:30b, 22:4-5, 34:8,22; Psalm. 91; Proverbs 2:7). It should be noted that it sometimes is very hard to do what is right. In this case, their lives were at stake.

B. *They knew that God was able to deliver them.* Based upon their promise in God's Word, they believed He would deliver them. That is faith. They took God at his word.

II. Their Courage (verse 18)

In any event, they were not going to disobey God! (Courage is not going without fear, it is going in the face of fear.)

III. Their Consequences

A. *Severe trial (Verse 19-23)*

1. The furnace, which may have been the smelting furnace used to melt the gold for the image, was heated seven times hotter than it was regularly heated.

2. The mightiest men in the Babylonian army were used to cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace. In so doing the soldiers were consumed.

B. *Divine Deliverance (verse 24-27)*

1. Nebuchadnezzar's astonishment.

2. Evidently Jesus Christ appeared in person to deliver them. This is called a Christophany which is pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord.

3. The deliverance was total. Not even their hair was singed and their clothes did not smell of fire.

C. God was Glorified (verse 28-29)

1. God not only delivered his servants who had obeyed him, had been upright, and had trusted him, he glorified his own name before the world at hand.

2. Nebuchadnezzar plainly knew who had delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was their God.

3. Jehovah God was magnified throughout the Babylonian empire.

D. Divine Promotion (verse 30)

These three Jewish young men were promoted and blessed for their righteousness. See Psalm 5:12.

Commentary of Daniel 3

3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. There are no date markers in Daniel 3 and we can only speculate as to when events described therein took place. However, Bishop Ussher considered the events described to have taken place in about 580 B.C. This is more than twenty years after the last record of Daniel or his associates in Babylon. Whenever, Nebuchadnezzar clearly attempted to implement a

‘one-world’ religion in the Babylonian empire. Some even think the image about to be described was of Nebuchadnezzar himself and was an attempt on his part of self-deification. In any event, the image was made of gold (or at least was gold plated).

Recall how in the image dream of chapter 2 that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. See Daniel 2:38. The image (statue-idol) was sixty cubits (i.e., about ninety feet) tall. The breadth of six cubits (i.e., about nine feet) may not refer to the width of the shoulders of the image, but rather of its thickness from its back to its chest. An image of a man would be out of proportion—tall and very skinny if the proportion of height to width was a factor of ten. However, a factor of ten is the right proportion for height to thickness of body from front to back.

The statue (image) of gold was set up in the plain of Dura. Though not of certain location, the plain of Dura may have been located about 300 miles northwest of the city of Babylon, up the Euphrates River. If that be the case, it was considerable distance from the city of Babylon. Presumably, Daniel remained there to tend to the business of state while Nebuchadnezzar traveled to this site. This may explain why Daniel was not present in this episode. However, the plain of Dura is still mentioned as being in the province of Babylon.

3:2-3 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Though Daniel was described as being the chief of the governors of the wise men of Babylon and ruler of the province of Babylon, he himself may have been exempted from the journey to the plain of Dura. However, it appears that virtually all other governmental officials of the empire were ordered there for the dedication of the great golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. In

any event, it is apparent that Daniel was not present when the proceedings described below took place.

3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. After the army of governmental officials of the Babylonian Empire had assembled before the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, they all stood before the statue.

3:4-6 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages. As the ceremony began, an official herald of the king issued an edict to the assembled officials from the various nationalities and languages represented in the Babylonian Empire.

5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. A band (or orchestra) had been assembled and was prepared to play a great fanfare exalting the golden image. When the band played its fanfare, the assembled officialdom of the Empire was to fall down and worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. There certainly is no unanimity of opinion as to what the various instruments listed correspond to in modern musical instruments.

Commentators routinely contradict each other in describing these various instruments. What is clear however is that a great band or orchestra had been assembled and were prepared to play a fanfare promoting the golden image. All assembled were under orders to bow down and worship it.

6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. However, anyone of the great throng assembled who

refused to fall down and worship the golden image would die that same hour by being cast into a super-heated furnace—perhaps the smelting furnace used to prepare the gold for the statue. It may well be that Nebuchadnezzar was attempting to not only impose emperor worship on his empire, but to unify the disparate religions therein.

The Babylonian Empire was comprised of many conquered nations, not the least of which was Judah. These all had their own forms of religious practices. In order for the officials of the Empire to assemble and worship, he may have intended to impose a national religion on his kingdom. In any event, refusal to worship the image would bring immediate death.

3:7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

At the appointed hour, the band played its fanfare to the golden image and the assembled throng of officials from throughout the Babylonian Empire proceeded to fall down and worship it. However, as the text to follow will reveal, there were three who refused.

3:8-12 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. The Chaldeans were the native Babylonians. They had not been forcibly assimilated into the empire. As the text will reveal, only three Jews are named—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Perhaps others were present, but only three are named. It is apparent that Daniel was not present as discussed in verse 2. It may be that Daniel was so powerful that jealous Chaldeans dared not challenge him. However, in knowing that Daniel was not present, they decided to go after other Jews, notably Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-

nego. They were the three most prominent Jews in the Empire under Daniel.

9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. The Chaldean courtiers thus approached the king with obligatory flattery.

10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image. They then reminded the king of the standing orders of the day—falling down to worship the golden image when the music played.

11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Moreover, any who refused to so acquiesce was to be executed on the spot.

12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

The jealous Chaldeans therefore sprang their trap. It is of interest that they first named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as *Jews*—Jews who had been placed over the affairs of the province of Babylon. The accusers promptly informed the king that these named Jews ignored the king's order. They never served Nebuchadnezzar's standing gods and they refused to worship the golden image set up on that day. It seems that this whole affair may have been a well-planned scheme of anti-Semitism against Jews in authority in the Babylonian Empire. It well may be that Nebuchadnezzar had been 'conned' into forcing all government officials to bow down to the golden image upon pain of death. They knew that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would refuse. By executing them, they could then isolate and deal with Daniel later and then the entire Jewish

‘problem’ in Babylon. The devil’s hatred of God’s people has long and deep roots.

3:13-15 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Upon learning of the presumed insolence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar was enraged and ordered them brought before him. That they were.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?* He directly asked them if it was true that the neither served the gods of Babylon nor worshipped the golden image he had set up.

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Without giving Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego an opportunity to answer, Nebuchadnezzar offered them one more chance to fall down and worship his image. He would have the band play its fanfare again. However, if they refused to so worship the golden image, the king again warned they would be cast into the furnace directly—as soon as it could be stoked to full heat.

3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. These three godly men answered Nebuchadnezzar firmly yet with courtesy. The text literally reads, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter.’ Your mind is made up for your part. Our mind is made up for our part.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. They firmly informed the king that if it came to being thrown into the furnace, their God—whom they served—was able to deliver them. Moreover, as far as they were concerned, they were assured that God *would* deliver them from the king. There certainly is courage and conviction evident in these three Jews.

Isaiah 43:2, of which they no doubt were conversant says, “When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” These godly Jewish men in all likelihood took the Word of God at face value. They *believed* the promise of God. They knew the furnace lay ahead for them. But they also knew the promise of God. They, by faith, had obeyed God’s Word regarding bowing down to other gods. They therefore were convinced that God would deliver them as He had promised. That is faith!

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. However, on the other hand, if God sovereignly chose not to deliver them, the decision had already been made. They would not serve the pagan gods of Babylon nor worship the golden image Nebuchadnezzar had set up. End of discussion!

3:19-20 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. Nebuchadnezzar, as an absolute eastern monarch, was used to having his way. Rarely if ever had anyone ever openly defied him to his face. When Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego informed him they would not obey his order, Nebuchadnezzar was enraged to the point his face was distorted. He was utterly infuriated—enraged to such a degree he was out of control of himself. He therefore ordered the furnace at once to be heated seven times more than it had ever been heated. The fiery furnace in question likely was the massive smelting furnace which had been used to melt the gold and other metals for the casting of the molten image.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Whereupon Nebuchadnezzar also ordered the most stalwart and renowned warriors in the Babylonian army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in preparation of casting them into the super-heated furnace.

3:21-23 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were therefore bound with all their clothes on, including undergarments as well as coats. The intent likely was that the burning of their clothing would prolong their agony and increase their pain. But God allowed such to make them all the more conspicuous and demonstrate even more clearly the miracle He was about to perform. Thus bundled up, each were thrown into the roaring furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When the battle-hardened veterans of the Babylonian army threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace; the intense, super-heated gasses of the furnace took their lives.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning

fiery furnace. At the mouth of the furnace with their executioners already dead, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, all bound, stumbled and fell down into the midst of the roaring furnace.

3:24-25 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. Just when Nebuchadnezzar thought he would be vindicated and gratified in snuffing out defiant Jews, he could only gasp in astonishment. Clearly, he could see into the furnace, perhaps through the portal through which the three Jews had been cast. As he gasped in astonishment, he asked his advisors if they had not cast three men bound in the midst of the furnace. His courtiers assured him that they had.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. To the consternation of Nebuchadnezzar, he now saw four men in the furnace. They were loosed, walking around, and quite apparently were not injured in any way. And then to the utter amazement of the king, he proclaimed that the fourth one “is like the Son of God.” Modern commentators and translators have routinely sought to render this ‘like *a* son of the gods.’ They thus handle this passage like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the way they handle John 1:1. The text can be rendered either way. However, both ancient Hebrew authorities as well as the early church considered the definite article to be the proper rendering.

In any event, the words translated as **God** (אלהּ *‘elāh*) as well as **son** (בן *bar*) are both singular and not plural, lending credence to the definite article. Moreover, there is no definite article before the word translated as *God*. The only accurate

alternative of the rendering of the Authorized Version is 'is like a son of a god.' Let the reader decide the proper translation. There is no question in the mind of this commentator that the Authorized Version has properly translated the phrase. That being determined, what Nebuchadnezzar saw was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Nebuchadnezzar may not have understood what he saw or uttered, but God placed His words in his mouth.

Jesus Christ, in the person of Jehovah, had promised in Jeremiah 42:11, "Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for *I am* with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand." Our Lord gave similar promise to the church in Matthew 28:20. Jehovah in the person of Christ therefore came for the comfort and deliverance of His faithful servants.

3:26-27 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

Utterly astounded and no doubt chagrined, Nebuchadnezzar therefore got as near to the mouth of the furnace as he dared and called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out. Notice also how he voluntarily described them as "servants of the most high God." Nebuchadnezzar did not need a sermon or lecture on the omnipotence of God and how He delivers His people. He had just witnessed first-hand how Jehovah delivered three Jews who were willing to lay down their lives to be faithful and obedient to their Lord and Savior. They were a profound testimony to the most powerful man in the world. Upon being commanded to get out of the fire, they therefore walked out as ordered. Their bonds had burned off, but nothing else, including their clothes.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Not only was Nebuchadnezzar astonished by what he had witnessed, but all his courtiers and advisors gathered around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They marveled how the intense fire had no power over them. Their hair was not even singed, their coats were not burned, nor even was there the smell of smoke on them. Anyone who has ever been around any kind of substantial fire knows the smell of smoke is inevitable upon clothing and hair. God had performed a major miracle of deliverance for His three faithful and obedient servants. Those who witnessed were in unison astonished.

3:28-29 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. The ruler of the Babylonian Empire had just had another encounter with the God of Israel. He could not deny it. His power and deliverance were apparent for all to see. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar cried out in praise to Jehovah God and blessed His name. He here refers to the Son of God as His angel. Not a theologian, Nebuchadnezzar explained as best he could what he had seen. God indeed sent His Son with the appearance of an angel and delivered His servants.

They had trusted God for their salvation and accordingly defied and altered the king's commandment. They faced the consequences thereof and yielded their bodies. See Romans 12:1. They were determined to obey the first three of the ten commandments. Even Nebuchadnezzar knew that God had honored and delivered them in turn.

29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Nebuchadnezzar therefore on the spot decreed that if anyone in his vast realm in any way denigrated the name of Jehovah God, the God of the Jews; they in turn were to be butchered and their houses made a dunghill—a pile for sewage and manure. Nebuchadnezzar became a believer in Jehovah God to the degree he acknowledged the power and deliverance of the Almighty. The decree also may have prevented other weak-kneed Jews from drifting back into idolatry.

3:30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon. Not only were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego restored to their former positions, they actually were promoted to even higher rank in the province of Babylon. Indeed, there is a reward for the righteous. See Psalm 58:11.

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Overview of Daniel 4: Daniel 4 sets forth another significant event in the life of Nebuchadnezzar in the tree vision. God literally caused Nebuchadnezzar to lose his mind and live like an animal out in the field to humble him and to teach him to honor God. The chapter contains three divisions: (1) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the power of Jehovah in verses 1-18. (2) Daniel interprets the king's dream in verses 19-27. (3) The fulfilment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is recorded in verses 28-37.

4:1-3 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. The chapter begins with Nebuchadnezzar sending a proclamation to all parts of his vast empire.

2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. Most of the chapter is presented in the first person with Nebuchadnezzar as the speaker. As the narrative of the chapter unfolds, Nebuchadnezzar determined to testify to his entire empire and the rest of the world, for that matter, of the goodness and power of the God of Israel. He referred to Jehovah as the most high God. As the context will show, Nebuchadnezzar clearly ascribed power and praise to Jehovah and Him alone. He further speaks here of “the signs and wonders of the high God.” The thought is of His miraculous power. Liberal theologians have dismissed this claim, alleging that Nebuchadnezzar was only speaking of one of his own pagan gods. However, the latter portion of the chapter will make clear that he spoke of the God of heaven—Jehovah God.

3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. These introductory comments at the beginning of the chapter were made in retrospect after all of the events of this chapter had taken place. Nebuchadnezzar could only praise the power of God. Furthermore, he openly acknowledged that the kingdom of God is everlasting and that His realm continues from generation to generation. Nebuchadnezzar as a pagan gentile king made a marvelous admission of the omnipotence and eternity of the God of Israel. He had come to learn the hard way of the power of God. Accordingly, he had come to have a fear of the Lord.

4:4-5 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace. Nebuchadnezzar described the cir-

cumstances preceding the fearsome dream he received. He was comfortable at home and things were going well for him.

5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Though at ease and prosperous, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream one night which frightened and deeply troubled him. Though the most powerful man in the world, God could still cause such an one to be frightened. Truly, God can give peace and take away the same.

4:6-7 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. Like the scene in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the occult wise men of his court to appear before him and interpret his dream to him.

7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. Accordingly, the various occult ‘wise men’ of Babylon were assembled before the king. Unlike chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar told these charlatans what he had dreamed. Notwithstanding, they could not make heads or tails of it. They did not have a clue as to its meaning.

4:8-9 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying. Nebuchadnezzar then recounted how that after the others had come and failed to interpret his dream, Daniel (a.k.a., Belteshazzar) arrived. Nebuchadnezzar freely acknowledged how that Daniel was indwelt by the spirit of the holy gods. The latter likely was Nebuchadnezzar’s clumsy way of describing the power of the Holy Spirit upon Daniel. Though sympathetic by now to the God of Israel, it is clear that Nebu-

chadnezzar had little grounding in proper theology. Nevertheless, he told Daniel what he had dreamed.

9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. Though a man of God, Daniel was described as being the master of the magicians—that is, the head wise man. See Daniel 2:48. Once again, Nebuchadnezzar described the Holy Spirit’s working in Daniel from his pagan background—the spirit of the holy gods. As he was about to reveal the dream to Daniel, the king directed him to explain the significance of his dream and the meaning thereof.

4:10-12 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree in the midst of the earth, taller than others.

11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. In his dream, the tree grew not only in breadth, but its height reached unto heaven and its branches extended to the end of the earth—as far as the eye could see.

12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. Not only was the tree great of size, but bountiful of foliage and fruit. The creatures of the earth found shelter under it or in its branches. And, through its abundance all creatures were fed.

4:13-16 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. The Aramaic word translated as **watcher** (עִיר *‘iyr*) among other things can refer to an angel. The greater point is

that Nebuchadnezzar also saw a holy angel come down from heaven in his dream.

14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. The angel ordered the tree to be cut down, stripped of its branches and leaves, and its fruit scattered. The creatures taking refuge in and under the great tree were to be driven away.

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Though the great tree had been cut down, its stump and roots were to be left in place. The stump was to be circled with a band of iron and brass, likely to prevent it from splitting and rotting away. The stump was to be kept moist from the dew. Notice now how the gender of the pronouns changes from neuter to masculine. Clearly implied is that the tree/stump represented an individual which indeed they did. This individual would now subsist from the grass and plants of the ground.

16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. Again, the application of the dream clearly is referring to a man for the one so intimidated is referred to as having a man's heart. However, in being cut down to the earth, this great man was to be given the heart (i.e., mind) of an animal. Furthermore, seven times, that is, seven years would pass upon him in this condition.

4:17-18 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and

setteth up over it the basest of men. Nebuchadnezzar added that this entire matter had been decreed by the watchers (i.e., angels) and ordered by them. They had made known to him in his dream that the purpose of the dream was how those still alive would know that the most High God rules over the kingdom of men. Moreover, God can give power and rule to whoever he so chooses. God can and does set up men from humble backgrounds to rule on the earth. Men such as David who originally was a shepherd is a clear example.

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. Thus was the summary of Nebuchadnezzar's dream by his own description. He therefore ordered Daniel to interpret it for him. Nebuchadnezzar freely admitted the whole of the occult 'wise men' of his realm could not explain the dream. But he knew Daniel could because the Spirit of God was in him. See comments for verse 8 regarding the phrase "the spirit of the holy gods."

4:19-21 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. Picture the scene at hand. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful ruler in the world of his day. The setting likely is in his royal court before his royal throne. Daniel stood there before him. Upon hearing the king's dream, Daniel was stunned—appalled. Moreover, he apparently stood there for some period of time, visibly shaken. God immediately revealed the dream to him. However, he was appalled at its implications. He was about to

inform the most powerful despot in the world that he was about to be overthrown. Perceiving that Daniel was deeply troubled, Nebuchadnezzar urged him to speak, though disquieting. Daniel thus prefaced his interpretation by letting the king know that he was not sympathetic to what he was about to reveal. Daniel therefore warned that he hoped those who hated Nebuchadnezzar and were his enemies would suffer the fate he was about to reveal.

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth. Daniel began by acknowledging the tree described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was great, strong, reaching to heaven, and extending across the earth.

21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation. As described by Nebuchadnezzar, the leaves of this great tree provided food and shelter for the creatures of the field as well as the birds of the sky.

4:22-23 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. Daniel cut to the chase. The great tree seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was none other than Nebuchadnezzar himself. God had allowed him, as a powerful king, to extend his empire to the ends of the civilized world of that day. And, the greatness of that world kingdom surpassed all other kingdoms and reached, if it were possible, to heaven—at least in Nebuchadnezzar's mind.

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let

his portion *be* with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him. Daniel thus rehearsed the matter of the angel descending from heaven and cutting the tree down. See comments for 2:14-15.

4:24-26 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king. Daniel therefore announced he was about to reveal the interpretation of the dream. The decree of the watchers found in verse 17 is now expanded upon. The decree came ultimately from the most High God, the Almighty, and was about to be imposed upon Nebuchadnezzar.

25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Nebuchadnezzar was about to lose his mind. He would be driven from his throne as a madman and live like an animal in a field. He would eat grass and plants like an oxen and be wet with the dew at night. The thought is how he would live out in the field like an animal. This sentence would continue for seven years and until Nebuchadnezzar was willing to acknowledge that God Almighty was the ultimate ruler over mankind. It was God who gave rule over mankind to whomever He so chose. Clearly implied is that Nebuchadnezzar had become overwrought with pride. He had come to think he was deity.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Daniel assured Nebuchadnezzar that another king would not usurp his throne. Though the kingdom and rule thereof would be taken from him, yet it would be restored to him again. Nebuchad-

nezzar clearly had been afflicted with pride and God was about to teach him a lesson. As would be revealed in Daniel 4:37, “those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” Nebuchadnezzar would have to learn that the hard way.

4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. Upon delivering such a stunning revelation, Daniel therefore urged the king to receive his interpretation. However, he had a twofold admonition for the king: (1) break off (i.e., terminate) your sins and replace them with righteousness; (2) show mercies to the poor. Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar had been greatly afflicted by the sin of pride as well as ignoring the poor of his kingdom. In so repenting, he might prolong his reign.

4:28-29 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. The narrative now switches to Daniel as the speaker. Writing from the perspective of history, Daniel now wrote how all that was foretold to Nebuchadnezzar came to pass.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Evidently, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent. Clearly, he did not. Thus, one year later, the events foretold to him came to pass. Bishop Ussher says that this took place in the year 569 B.C. Oblivious to what was about to happen, proud Nebuchadnezzar strode through his great palace in Babylon.

4:30-32 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? The pride of life exuded from this vainglorious king. As he contemplated his great realm and its great capital metropolis, he

reveled in how he had built it all. It was by his might and power and for his honor and majesty this great kingdom of the world's system stood—or so he thought. Like the King of Tyrus (a.k.a., Satan), Nebuchadnezzar was permeated with pride. Some ancient historians claim that the walls of the city of Babylon were sixty miles in circumference and stood 300 feet tall. It was the capital city of the world of that day, no doubt beautiful with its hanging gardens. No nation of that day or hitherto could come close to the size, power, or majesty of Babylon the great. And, Nebuchadnezzar claimed all the glory thereof to himself. In his mind, he had built it all and made it the great city and empire it was.

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Yet even while the braggadocios claims of the previous verse were still in his mouth, a voice from heaven fell upon him announcing that the warning given a year earlier remained. But now it was too late. His kingdom was now taken from him. God had given him space to repent over the previous year. Clearly, he had not. Now the fate foretold by Daniel fell upon him suddenly.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. As Daniel had warned a year earlier in interpreting his frightening dream, the voice from heaven told Nebuchadnezzar that he now would be driven from the presence of men to live like an animal of the field. He would now eat grass and plants of the ground like an oxen for the next seven years until this proud and arrogant king learned the hard way that God Almighty ruled the kingdom of men. It was God's prerogative to give rule over men to whom He chose. Nebuchadnezzar was about to learn that the hard way!

4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. The dire prophecy foretold a year earlier suddenly came to pass. He lost his human mind and was driven as insane from his throne, perhaps by his court advisors. He thence wound up in a farmer's field eating grass like an oxen, sleeping under the stars at night. His hair grew long and unkempt. His finger nails and toe nails became like bird's claws. In modern parlance, he had gone insane. He became like an animal and lived accordingly. It is thought that his grandson Belshazzar assumed rule over the kingdom in his father's absence.

4:34-35 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. When the seven years foretold by Daniel were accomplished, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven—perhaps for the first time in his life. When, and only when, he was willing to finally look to God did his understanding return to him. In that day, he blessed, praised, and honored the most High God. Nebuchadnezzar had learned his lesson the hard way. He therefore honored the God of heaven whose kingdom is eternal. His realm, unlike human kings, continues in perpetuity. See comments for Daniel 4:3. Though unlearned in formal theology, Nebuchadnezzar had come to learn that God Almighty, the God of Israel was omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal. He alone is worthy of all praise.

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none

can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Nebuchadnezzar had learned the hard way that *all* the inhabitants of the earth, including himself, were as nothing before the Almighty God. God Almighty is sovereign and does according to His will, whether in heaven or on earth. The army of heaven likely refers to the angelic throng, holy or unholy. No one in heaven or earth can withstand Him or question his actions. Nebuchadnezzar had learned the hard way that God is sovereign and omnipotent alone. He himself was nothing when compared to the Almighty.

4:36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. When Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before God and glorified Him, then at that same time, his right mind was restored to him. Moreover, God restored to him his throne and majesty as king over Babylon. His courtiers and lords once again honored him as king.

4:37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. Nebuchadnezzar therefore concludes his story by praising, exalting, and honoring the King of heaven. All His works are in truth and all His ways are in judgment (i.e., righteous). Finally, Nebuchadnezzar bore witness from first-hand experience that “those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” See Daniel’s comments thereto in 5:20. God is not only able to humble those who walk in pride, He likely will do so. See Matthew 23:12. Thus, ends the history of Nebuchadnezzar as far as the Book of Daniel is concerned. One of the great enigmas of history is whether Nebuchadnezzar actually believed in

Jehovah as his Savior. Or, to use New Testament terminology, did Nebuchadnezzar actually get 'saved.' He certainly came to believe in Jehovah as God and he certainly praised and honored Him.

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Overview of Daniel 5: Chapter 5 deals with the 'handwriting on the wall' incident. This event occurred perhaps almost 70 years after Daniel was taken into captivity. In the meantime, Nebuchadnezzar had passed the scene and his grandson Belshazzar now ruled. By the end of the chapter, the Medes and the Persians had overthrown Babylon. At Belshazzar's impious feast, the handwriting on the wall is recorded in verses 1-9. Daniel is summoned to interpret the handwriting in verses 10-17. And Daniel foretells the king's destruction in verses 18-31.

5:1-2 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. There certainly is not unanimity of opinion as to exactly who Belshazzar was. However, most historians consider him to be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, who by now had passed the scene. The events of this chapter are thought to have taken place in about 537 or 536 B.C. This is almost 70 years after the initial deportation of Jews from Jerusalem in about 605 B.C. Thus, Daniel had to be in his upper eighties as a man. The setting of the chapter is thus described. Belshazzar the king held a huge drunken party for 1,000 of his lords.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Though Nebuchadnezzar is

here called the father of Belshazzar, the thought likely is that he was his father in the sense of a ‘forefather.’ Most historians agree that Nebuchadnezzar was the grandfather of Belshazzar. In the course of events, Belshazzar decided to fetch the sacred temple vessels that had been taken from the Temple at Jerusalem decades earlier. They evidently were kept on display or in store somewhere in Babylon. They then were used as drinking vessels for the drunken orgy. Belshazzar thus determined that he, his princes, his wives, and his concubines would drink their alcoholic beverages from the sacred vessels from the Temple of Jehovah. In so doing, they desecrated the sacred.

5:3-4 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. The sacred vessels from the Temple of God were thus set before Belshazzar’s drunken revelers and they proceeded to get further inebriated with them. To add insult to injury, they then praised their heathen pagan gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and of stone.

5:5-6 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Verse 30 indicates that the time was at night, and indeed the worst of sin usually takes place under the cover of darkness. There in the great royal palace of Babylon at that hour of the night, there appeared the fingers of a man’s hand writing on the wall above a lamp stand. God no doubt so wrote there so that there would be light enough for all to see. Moreover, Belshazzar clearly saw the part of the hand writing on the wall.

6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Belshazzar clearly was shaken. His facial expression went from party mode to terror. He became so frightened that “the joints of his loins were loosed.” Some have speculated that his hip joints shook. Others have interpreted this to mean he lost control of his bladder or his bowels. In any event, Belshazzar was so shaken that his knees actually shook against each other. God clearly had gotten the attention of this pagan ruler.

5:7-8 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. In his agitated frame of mind, Belshazzar did not discreetly whisper for an aide to summons the royal ‘wise men.’ Rather, he yelled out for these various occult fortune tellers to be summoned. Moreover, he promised that whoever could read the writing and interpret it would be rewarded handsomely. This one would become third in command behind the king and his heir apparent. Scarlet or purple was a color of garment reserved for royalty and few but royalty could afford it in any event.

8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. The royal ‘wise men’ were thus assembled to read the inscription on the wall. It, in all likelihood, was written in Hebrew characters of which none of them were familiar. None of them therefore could make heads or tails thereof.

5:9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were

astonied. Hope of learning the inscription was dashed before Belshazzar. Moreover, though not mentioned in the text so far, Babylon was under attack by the Medes and Persians and Belshazzar knew it. He had assumed that Babylon was impregnable. But those were troubled times nevertheless. Thus, the mysterious handwriting on the wall and the fact none could read it brought forth consternation in the king. He became greatly agitated. His facial expression once again was distorted by fear and anxiety. Moreover, his lords about him were appalled at the terror in the eyes of their leader.

5:10-12 *Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed.*

The queen here spoken of likely was either the mother of Belshazzar or even his grandmother—the queen mother. She was not present at the drunken party, but word reached her of the consternation of her son (or grandson). She therefore entered the banquet hall and made obligatory public homage to the king of Babylon.

11 *There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.* The queen mother proceeded to inform Belshazzar that there was a man in his kingdom who had great understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of God during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The latter had made this man chief over the wise men of Babylon years earlier.

12 *Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of*

hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. The queen mother described Daniel as having an excellent spirit. He also had the ability to understand and interpret dreams, difficult visions, and troubling events. Nebuchadnezzar had named him Belteshazzar. The queen mother therefore urged Belshazzar to call for Daniel and he would interpret the handwriting on the wall.

5:13-14 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? Poor Daniel evidently was located and roused out of bed in the middle of the night. He thus was marched in before Belshazzar, still in his banquet hall. The king therefore ascertained if he were the Daniel who was one of the Jewish captives brought from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. Belshazzar therefore informed Daniel he had heard the Spirit of God was in him and that he had the ability to discern the difficult.

5:15-16 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing. Belshazzar also informed Daniel that his royal 'wise-men' could not read or interpret the handwriting on the wall.

16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation

thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. Moreover, Belshazzar told Daniel that if he could read the inscription and interpret it, he would be rewarded handsomely with royal awards as described earlier in verse 7.

5:17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. Daniel therefore told the king to keep his gifts and give them to someone else. Nevertheless, he would read the inscription and interpret it. Knowing he was again to be placed on the hot seat, Daniel undoubtedly had prayed and asked God for help as he was brought before Belshazzar. The writing undoubtedly was in Hebrew which Daniel could read. That would be no problem. However, God would have to impart the interpretation thereof. Daniel knew that God had done so before and could do so now. His faith in Jehovah therefore was implicit.

5:18-19 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. Daniel began by rehearsing how that God had given to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's grandfather, the kingdom of Babylon with all its majesty, pomp, and glory.

19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. Because of the great power given to Nebuchadnezzar, his vast empire of many nationalities and peoples feared him. Nebuchadnezzar by his own fiat sentenced men to death or allowed them to live. He, by his own decree, allowed subordinates to rule beneath him or he removed them. In short,

Nebuchadnezzar was given power and authority such as no other king before him had held.

5:20-21 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Yet, in his power and glory, Nebuchadnezzar became clothed with pride and arrogance. Accordingly, God deposed him from his throne as detailed in Daniel 4.

21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from his throne and considered insane. He lived like an animal for seven years until he would recognize that God alone ruled over the realm of mankind and placed men on their thrones according to His sovereign will. Clearly implied is that Nebuchadnezzar groveled like a beast until he would acknowledge the power and glory of God.

5:22-23 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this. Clearly implicit is that Belshazzar had assumed the same pride and arrogance his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar once had. Furthermore, he was aware of Nebuchadnezzar's divine chastening and why it was so accomplished. Nevertheless, he refused to humbled his own heart even though he knew that God had so judged his grandfather.

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of

silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Daniel therefore drove home his pointed message. He charged Belshazzar with blaspheming the God of heaven, especially by bringing the sacred vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem and using them in his drunken orgy. He further had insulted the Almighty by praising the pagan gods of Babylon with the sacred vessels of Jehovah. The God who had given him life and all he had, he had ignored and not glorified. Daniel was thus fearless in indicting the king for his godlessness and wickedness.

5:24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. Daniel therefore informed Belshazzar that the handwriting on the wall had been sent from God and the writing was from Him.

5:25-28 And this *is* the writing that was written, **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.** There is not unanimity of opinion as to whether the words are Hebrew or Chaldean. The characters likely were in Hebrew for no one else could even read them. The phrase literally reads, “Numbered, numbered, Weighed, Divided.” It essentially means, “He hath numbered, He hath numbered. He hath (also) weighed. And they divide the kingdom.”

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Daniel then proceeded to interpret the writing to Belshazzar. God had numbered the days of Belshazzar kingdom and it was finished! Belshazzar’s reign was over.

27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances of God’s justice and found lacking. Belshazzar thus had no standing before Almighty God.

28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. The kingdom of Babylon was about to be divided and given to the attacking Medes and Persians. With terse bluntness, Daniel informed Belshazzar that his reign was over and his kingdom was about to be divided up between the Medes and the Persians—mortal enemies of Babylon. In short, the jig was up. It was curtains for Belshazzar. Fearless is the character of Daniel in delivering such a blunt and jarring message to the all powerful Belshazzar. But it came from God and all present knew that.

5:29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. To his credit, Belshazzar kept his word. He reward Daniel as he had promised. Perhaps, he hoped that by honoring the man of God that he would in some way mitigate the wrath of God. But it was too late. He had ignored the God of heaven and blasphemed Him.

5:30-31 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. The king of Persia had ordered his field commanders to divert the Euphrates River which flowed beneath the walls of Babylon. A diversionary channel had been furiously worked upon at length. On that particular night, the river was diverted and Persian and Median soldiers were able to sweep under the wall of the city whence the river previously had flowed. They poured into the city and quickly located the drunken banquet hall whence Belshazzar was. That night, Belshazzar was killed by Media-Persian forces. Belshazzar was done. God wasted no time in fulfilling His prophecy.

31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old. There are divergent views as to who Darius the Median was. Some consider him to

be a subordinate of Cyrus and others consider the opposite to be true. In any event, Darius was the commander of the scene who personally effected the conquest of Babylon while Cyrus would become the ruler of the rising Persian Empire. Darius the Mede apparently was the son of Ahasuerus, king of the Chaldeans and conquered the Babylonian kingdom on the death of Belshazzar. He probably is the same as 'Astyages,' the last king of the Medes. The solution to the riddle may be that the Babylonian Empire was divided as God had said it would be. Darius was given rule over Babylon while Cyrus ruled other portions of the empire. The Babylonian era of world history thus came to a dramatic close that night and the Persian era of world history began its ascent. In the meantime however, it appears that Darius became the new resident ruler over the city of Babylon. Later the Persians would completely destroy that great city.

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***Overview of Daniel 6:** Daniel 6 deals with the famous Daniel-in-the -lions'-den episode. It is an event remarkable for the insight in Daniel's spiritual character. He was a man of not only great righteousness and obedience, but also great faith. (They usually go together.) The chapter presents (1) the malice of Daniel's enemies in verses 1-5. (2) His constancy in prayer in verses 6-10. (3) Him being cast into the lion's den in verses 11-17. (4) His miraculous preservation in verses 18-24. And, (5) the decree of Darius in verses 25-28.*

6:1-3 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. Babylon was now a part of the Media Persian empire. The new ruler over Babylon was a man by the name of Darius. See comments for 5:30-31. He reorganized the new and

expanded empire into 127 provinces or satrapies, each with a prince as ruler.

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Over all of these satrapies were 3 ‘presidents’ and Daniel was the chief of them. Apparently, the respective princes over the 127 satrapies answered to one of the three presidents and they in turn answered to Daniel who answered to Darius. Thus, a orderly chain of command and administration was established.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Though he was already a powerful man, the king was about to turn over all the day to day operation of the kingdom to Daniel because there was an ‘excellent’ spirit in him. Daniel was promoted in part because of his attitude and ‘spirit.’ Darius quite apparently quickly came to trust the aged Jew named Daniel. He had not heard of his loyal service to Nebuchadnezzar, his confrontation of Belshazzar, and his contact with God.

6:4-5 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Jealousy is a powerful and destructive force. (It, by the way, is entirely of the flesh and is sin.) These other politicians sought for a way to destroy Daniel politically or otherwise. Yet, because of the integrity, righteousness, honesty, and faithfulness of Daniel, his subordinates could find no fault. They could pin nothing on Daniel. They could find no skeletons in his closet, try though they might.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning

the law of his God. To their chagrin, Daniel's enemies could find no fault in him, "for as much as he was faithful." Therefore, they sought to entrap Daniel through his faithfulness to his God. They knew they would have to concoct a scheme whereby they could accuse him for faithfulness to Jehovah God. Undoubtedly knowing the aversion observant Jews had to idolatry, they realized they could snare Daniel thereby.

6:6-7 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. With obligatory adulation, these jealous, scheming courtiers appeared by Darius.

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Daniel's jealous enemies connived and came up with a scheme in which they would have the king sign a decree of which no one could pray to anyone but the king for thirty days. If this was violated they would be cast into the den of lions. Daniel's foes no doubt knew they could snare Daniel thereby. Furthermore, they figured the king's ego would agree as well.

6:8-9 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. The king was no doubt flattered by their scheme and he signed into law the decree. In Media Persia, it was a basic axiom that once a decree had been signed into law, even the king could not alter it or change it. Moreover, Jamieson, Fausett, and Brown note, "The order of the names is an undesigned mark of genuineness." Cyrus the Persian reigned subordinate to Darius the Mede as to

dignity, though exercising more real power. After Darius' death, the order is "the Persians and Medes." These two nations were now united in one government and Darius and Cyrus were partners in the empire.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. The trap had been set. Now the perpetrators thereof only had to wait. They were sure of their objective.

6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. In all likelihood, Daniel knew that this was coming. Rather than protest or make a scene about it, he evidently left it with the Lord. Notice Daniel's reaction: (1) he went home and opened the windows so there was no secret about what he was doing. (2) He kneeled (again very visibly) and prayed three times a day and gave thanks before his God.

There are several other things to note at this point: (a) It was already Daniel's practice to go to prayer at least three times a day and he continued that practice. See Psalm 55:17. Daniel carefully followed the pattern on Scripture for his life. (Psalms had already long been written and Daniel no doubt was conversant with it.) (b) Daniel was in fact doing exactly what God had commanded Israel to do in captivity. See II Chronicles 6:38-39. Hundreds of years earlier, God had commanded Israel to pray towards Jerusalem from the land of their captivity. Daniel did exactly as God had commanded him. There thus was great obedience in the life of Daniel. And, he no doubt, obeyed by faith. In so doing, he was upright before God.

6:11-13 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Daniel no doubt knew that he was the target of this new 'law.' And he

knew he would be found out. Nevertheless, he was prayed toward Jerusalem and implored God for help.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a *petition* of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. The connivers immediately took note of Daniel's violation of the law and reported it to the king. It should be noted that when there is a conflict between human law and divine law, God's law takes precedence. Daniel was about to pay the consequences for his righteousness. There at times is a price for doing right.

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Daniel's accusers made sure King Darius knew that Daniel continued to pray three times a day to Jehovah God and not to the king. They also made sure that the king remembered that Daniel was a Jew and as such ignored the king's ordinance. There surely is a strong hint of anti-Semitism present.

6:14-15 Then the king, when he heard *these* words, was sore displeased with himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Darius realized what had been done and how he had been made an unknowing and unwilling part of the plot of Daniel's enemies. He thus was disgusted with himself. He therefore set his heart to find a way to deliver Daniel. Moreover, he struggled all that day with the laws of the land trying to find a way to extricate Daniel.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and

Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. Notwithstanding his best efforts, Darius had painted himself into a legal corner. Daniel's accusers reminded the king that he could not change the law once enacted. The 'constitution' of the Medes and Persians was that no decree ratified by the king could be altered. Darius therefore was stuck. He had no recourse but to execute sentence against Daniel.

6:16-17 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. Sentence therefore was executed against Daniel and he was cast into the den of lions. However, take note of what Darius said to Daniel as he was about to be face his execution. "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Darius knew that Daniel was so faithful in his devotion to Jehovah that God certainly would deliver him. Moreover, notice the testimony which Daniel had: he served God continually. A powerful lesson therefore remains to this day.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. The greater story of the den of lions seems to indicate that the den was a pit or 'basement' in which the lions were confined. Some have suggested that the lions were kept underfed and the den of lions was a prepared place for executing prisoners. In any event, the mouth of the den was closed with a great stone. The king was required to seal that door with his signet ring along with those of the other lords. The latter were determined to see Daniel executed that night by the lions.

6:18-20 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Darius obviously was distraught. He went home and spent the night fasting. The thought is that did not allow himself the pleasure of his concubines. He sent his royal musicians home and laid awake all night. He was vexed for what he had done to Daniel and fretted that he could not save him. He no doubt was grieved over the whole matter.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. At the crack of dawn's light, Darius got up and rushed over to the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Upon arriving at the den, Darius called out with a sorrowful voice to Daniel. Once again, he addressed Daniel as "the servant of the living God." Though not a believer in Jehovah altogether, Darius clearly had been influenced by the testimony of Daniel. He therefore asked if Daniel's God—whom he served continually—was able to deliver him from the lions. To us as God's people, the answer is apparent, even if after the fact. But Darius surely hoped that the God of Israel was able to deliver his trusted subordinate Daniel. He would not be disappointed.

6:21-23 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. The excellent spirit in Daniel remained. Though having been sentenced to an otherwise sure death, Daniel still proclaimed homage to his earthly king.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O

king, have I done no hurt. Daniel had the happy report that God had sent an angel who had shut the lion's mouths. They did Daniel no hurt. Someone once said that the lions could not eat Daniel because he was all backbone. Moreover, Daniel pled his case of being innocent of any genuine wrong against the king. He had been persecuted for righteousness' sake. See Matthew 5:10-12. God supernaturally delivered Daniel. See Psalms 34:7-10 and especially 34:10. Notice that Daniel not only obeyed God (Exodus 20:1-4), but he also trusted him (vs 23b).

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. The king was relieved and glad. He therefore ordered Daniel taken up out of the den of lions. Upon extricating him, they found that he had not been injured in anyway. The reason was apparent: he had trusted his God.

6:24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den. Darius surely realized what had happened in how Daniel's accusers had used him as part of their plot to destroy Daniel. The king therefore had the plotters arrested and cast them along with their families into the lion's den. Again, the thought clearly is implied that the den was a pit or 'basement' wherein the lions were confined.

As the plotters and their families were cast therein, the lions had caught them, broke their bones in their powerful jaws, and tore them apart before they reached the bottom of the den. These had laid a trap for Daniel, but were caught in it themselves. See Proverbs 26:27.

6:25-27 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. Darius was so impressed by the testimony of Daniel and the God of Daniel that he wrote a decree to every region and nationality of his vast realm, first saluting them.

26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. Darius therefore ordered that throughout his vast realm, all men hereby were ordered to fear Jehovah, the God of Daniel. Though a pagan gentile king, Darius quickly perceived that the God of Israel was the true, living God and endured forever. Furthermore, the kingdom of God will never be destroyed and He will rule forever and ever. That is a remarkable proclamation from a gentile king. He no doubt had been taught by Daniel.

27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. Darius continued to praise the Almighty, noting that He delivers and rescues his people. He worked great miracles in heaven and in the earth. Most recently and notably, God had delivered Daniel from the otherwise certain death of the lion's den. Again, this a most remarkable testimony of a man who had until just recently been an idolater and a pagan. But the testimony and witness of Daniel had convinced Darius of the truth of God.

6:28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Daniel had the remarkable experience to be a powerful testimony to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius—the most powerful men in the world of that era. With perhaps the exception of Belshazzar, the others

clearly became believers in some measure in the God of Israel. Accordingly, God blessed and prospered Daniel. His ministry continued not only in the days of Darius, but also his co-regent Cyrus who succeeded him when he died. Some historians says that Cyrus was in fact the son-in-law of Darius. Others believe Cyrus and Darius to be one and the same person. The former is more likely. In any event, God used Daniel to influence the most powerful rulers of his day. He was a bold testimony while maintaining an excellent spirit.

Though a mortal man, there is no record of sin or failing in Daniel. He surely did sin, for all have. Yet, his testimony surely was that of a righteous man. Even Ezekiel, a contemporary, bore witness to the righteousness of Daniel. See Ezekiel 14:14, 20.

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***Overview of Daniel 7:** Daniel 7 is another major chapter of prophecy. It parallels the prophecy of chapter 2 with the final four era's of world history. However, it goes on into even greater details of end time events, notably the final judgement. This vision/prophecy occurred before the fall of Belshazzar to the Medes and Persians. The chapter contains the following divisions: (1) Daniel's vision of the four beasts in verses 1-8. Daniel's vision of Christ's kingdom in verses 9-14. And, Daniel's interpretation thereof in verses 15-28.*

7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Bishop Ussher placed the date of this chapter at 555 B.C., the first year of Belshazzar's ascension to the throne of Babylon. On this occasion, it was Daniel who had a dream and visions during

the night. He accordingly wrote down what he had dreamed and the summation of the matter.

7:2-3 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. The developing vision will parallel that of the image vision of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2. However, Daniel's dream began with the four winds (north, east, south, and west) churning the great sea. The latter may be a reference to the Mediterranean which Daniel no doubt had seen in his youth. The analogy might be to that of a great cyclonic windstorm wherein the winds eventually go through the four points of the compass as the storm passes over. However, the prophetic application of the great sea likely refers to the masses of humanity—the sea of the nations in all points of the compass. See Revelation 13:1 and 17:5. The greater thought likely is how that Daniel looked ahead through the telescope of prophecy to see the troubled sea of humanity from his time forward. Even as winds trouble bodies of water, so humanity in general and the world in particular will be troubled. See Isaiah 57:20.

3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. In Daniel's dream, he saw four great beasts or creatures arising from the troubled sea. As the vision will unfold, these four creatures will clearly represent four successive stages of the world system from Daniel's day onward. The allegory likely is these four empires or eras rising out of the troubled sea of human (or alternatively, from the nations of the earth). As in the image vision of chapter 2, this vision will encompass the four major eras of the world system from Daniel's day onward.

7:4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man,

and a man's heart was given to it. The first beast was like a lion and had eagle's wings. Its wings were plucked and it was made to stand like a man. Moreover, a man's heart was given to it. Interestingly the national symbol of the Babylonian Empire was of a lion with eagle's wings. Daniel clearly understood the significance thereof. More than likely, the 'plucking' of the eagles wings is a reference to the chastening of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in chapter 4. Alternatively, the plucking of the eagle's wings may refer to the judgment of Babylon recorded at the end of chapter 5. The reference to a man's heart most likely is a reference to the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. He certainly did soften his heart toward God and glorified him in chapters 2 and 4.

7:5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. The second beast like a bear is no doubt a reference to the coming Persian empire. It was large and powerful. And, militarily it was like a bear—relatively slow moving but strong. The reference to it being raised up on one side and having three ribs in its mouth, probably is a reference to how that the Persians dominated their alliance with the Medes, and the three ribs no doubt is a reference to other nations they had devoured including the Babylonians. The Persian Empire dominated the world for approximately 250 years. It indeed devoured much flesh as it conquered westward to the shores of Greece and eastward as far as India.

7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. The third beast was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. History records that the next major world empire was the Greek empire

and era of history. The Greeks moved with speed like a leopard in their military conquest under Alexander the Great. They essentially overran the Persian Empire and added regions such as Egypt to their empire. When Alexander died after his brief and victorious career, four of his subordinates divided up the conquered territories of the Greek empire with each ruling over one region. After their deaths, their descendants ruled each region for over 300 years.

7:7-8 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it *was* diverse from all the beasts that *were* before it; and it had ten horns.

The fourth beast was awesome and terrifying. It was not likened to any ordinary animal. It had iron teeth, it was powerful, and it had ten horns. It crushed everything in its path. Furthermore, it was altogether different from any of the other preceding creatures. This undoubtedly is a reference to the coming Roman Empire and its era of history. The ten horns undoubtedly correspond to the ten toes of the image of chapter 2. That being established, the ten horns in all likelihood correspond to the final form of the Roman era of the world system. Later in this chapter (7:24) there will be additional description of this era of history in the last days.

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn *were* eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. As Daniel pondered the ten horns upon this dreadful creature, another little horn sprang up from their midst. In so doing, it rooted up three other horns. Moreover, this horn had human-like eyes and spake great things.

A horn (i.e., a bull's horn) in ancient times was a symbol of power and authority such as a president or king. The little horn described undoubtedly refers to a ruler which will arise in the final days of the Roman era of the world system. In his rise to power, he will uproot three other rulers. When collated with other prophetic portions of Scripture, the little horn undoubtedly refers to the man of sin, the antichrist. He surely will blaspheme the God of heaven. See II Thessalonians 2:3 and Revelation 13:1-6, and 17:12-18. See Also Daniel 7:19-24.

7:9-10 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. Daniel beheld until these four thrones (or eras) of the world system were cast down, implying the end of human history. See Revelation 11:15. At that time, the Ancient of Days will sit (in judgement). This undoubtedly is a reference to Almighty God. He is described in terms similar to the resurrected Christ mentioned in Revelation 1:13-14. His throne is of 'fiery flame.' Though the Father has given all judgment to the Son (see John 5:22, 27), and though the Ancient of Days certainly fits the description of the glorified Jesus Christ found in Revelation 1:13-15, He is distinguished from the Son of Man (i.e., Jesus Christ) in verses 13-14 of this chapter.

The distinction likely is found in Jesus' comment, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). The throne area of God is described as a sea of glass mingled with fire in Revelation 15:2. The mention of "his wheels as burning fire" parallels that of Ezekiel 1:16, 19, et al. The thought is not clear, but may refer to the ancient oriental custom of thrones having wheels (evidently so that they might be moved easily). The greater thought is that Daniel continued to ponder what he had seen in his dream until he was allowed a glimpse of the throne room of God Almighty.

There are similarities in this scene to both the coming of Jesus Christ in power at the end of the Tribulation and also of the Great White Throne Judgement at the end of the Millennium. In any event, we catch a glimpse of the coming, awesome, holy judgement of God. Though a portion of the text lends itself in similarity to the Great White Throne Judgement, the greater context would indicate rather that this scene is of events in heaven just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on the earth.

10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. The scene becomes even more dramatic. Notice the awesome holy grandeur of heaven's throne. Bear in mind that God is referred to in Scripture as a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29 and Deuteronomy 4:24). *Thousand thousands* (untold millions—probably angels) minister before Him. *Ten thousand times ten thousand* (an essentially numberless multitude) stood before him. This very well may be looking forward to the Great White Throne Judgement where all unsaved people of all time will be judged (see Revelation 20:11-15). Verse 11 seems to indicate that verse 10 jumps ahead over the immediate context of the return of Christ.

“The judgement was set, and the books were opened.” What an awesome scene as the lost and ungodly of all ages are brought before the bar of God's eternal judgement. There will be no unbelievers or mockers in that crowd. But it will be too late for them then. Again, the greater scene is of the final judgement of God against the ungodly. The setting likely does not refer to one specific event such as the Great White Throne, but rather to the coming judgement of God in general.

7:11-12 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld *even* till the beast was

slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. The last half of Daniel 7 is entirely prophetic. There are two major themes. One is of the *little horn* mentioned throughout the chapter. The other is the crushing of the final form of human government and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. Here (as in verse 8, and 24-26) Daniel speaks of the *little horn*. This is none other than the antichrist who appears during the tribulation. He is characterized as one who speaks great words. Evidently the anti-Christ will be a great orator—maybe like Hitler. Later in verses 24-26, this same individual is described as subduing three of the final kings of the fourth kingdom. As we shall see shortly, the time undoubtedly will be the Roman era alluded to in chapter 2 with its final 10 divisions.

He also will speak against the God of heaven (vs 25). See also Revelation 13:6. He shall also “wear out” or persecute the saints. Here the word *saint* most likely is a reference to the Jewish people. In Revelation 12 we know that the antichrist will fiercely persecute and seek to destroy Israel and the Jews. Satan is at the root of anti-Semitism. See Revelation 12:13-17, 13:7

The antichrist will change the entire course of human custom. Perhaps such as changing Jewish holy days and ceremonial laws. Notice also in verse 25 that this fellow will be allowed full power for a “time, and times and a dividing of time” (three-and-one-half years). This evil one will come to full power by the middle of the Tribulation and will have unrestricted authority in those final three-and-one-half years. See Revelation 13:5 and also Daniel 12:7

The reference to the beast being slain in this context is probably a reference to the fourth beast of the chapter—the culmination of human government under the leadership of the antichrist. However, it is noteworthy that in Revelation, both the antichrist and his government are called ‘the beast.’ At the end, they become essentially one and the same. Notice that the

beast is then cast into the burning flame. See Revelation 19:20 and Isaiah 14:9-12

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. This is reference to how the earlier human eras of government faded away as they were superceded by the next form of the world system. Babylon was conquered by Persia. Persia was overrun by Greece. And as Greece faded from world dominance, Rome rose to power.

7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. The following evidently is a follow-up vision, shortly after the previous one. Notice again the titles of the Godhead: the Son of Man is undoubtedly a reference to Jesus Christ. This is the first reference to the Son of Man as Christ in the Bible. Though there are other references in Scripture to Christ coming with clouds, they all are in the context of His return either in the Rapture or when He returns with power and great glory.

John Gill has speculated that “His coming with the clouds of heaven denotes the majesty, visibility, and swiftness, with which he came to take open possession of his kingdom and glory.” Jesus Christ in that day is therefore brought before the Ancient of Days which clearly is a reference to God the Father. The setting apparently is just prior to the return of Christ in power and great glory at the end of the Tribulation. At that time, the Son of Man will receive the authority to seize the kingdoms of this earth from the Father.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. This is a striking reference to the return of Jesus

Christ in power at the end of the Tribulation to establish His kingdom on this earth. See Revelation 11:15, 19:11-16, 20:4-6, II Thess. 1:8-9, and Revelation 21-22. As Jesus Christ meets with His Father prior to returning to earth in power and great glory, dominion (or sovereignty) over the earth is given to Him. The glory of His Deity is also reconfirmed. In that official ‘commissioning’ ceremony, the Kingdom of God is given to Jesus Christ as He prepares to return to earth.

Notice the purpose of the return of Christ is to set up His kingdom. In it *all* people, nations, and languages will serve Him. His dominion will be everlasting. We know from Revelation that the first 1,000 years of the Kingdom will be the Millennium in a renovated earth. Then, it will blossom on forever in a new heaven and a new earth. That coming kingdom will never be destroyed. Moreover, it will last for ever and ever. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

7:15-16 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. In attempting to digest his dream and the several visions he had received from God, Daniel was **grieved**. The Aramaic word so translated (כָּרָא *kara*) also has the sense of being distressed. In not understanding what he had seen, Daniel was troubled.

16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. Apparently still in his vision, Daniel therefore approached an angel and asked the meaning of all of this. The entire matter was therefore explained to Daniel.

7:17-18 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. Daniel was informed that the four great beasts he had seen in the vision were in fact four kings (or, kingdoms) which would arise out of the earth. See comments for verses 4-8 for greater detail. The four beasts

were the four kingdoms (or, eras) which would follow Babylon on to the end of human history (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome).

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Though a powerful and pervasive world system would manifest itself through four successive eras of human history, the day is coming when the people of God will receive the Kingdom of God and possess it forever. This of course refers to the coming Millennium and the Eternal Kingdom to follow. For the people of God, total victory is ahead. We truly are on the winning side!

7:19-20 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet. Daniel wished further understanding of the dreadful fourth beast. The final form of the Roman era would have ten horns (kings) of which three fall before the horn that has eyes and a mouth speaking great things—the anti-Christ. An additional detail is herein made of the “nails of brass” on the fourth beast. This may refer to how the Romans, ascending to world power, trampled and destroyed any nation which opposed them.

20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. Daniel also wanted to know about the ten horns of the fourth beast, and especially of the horn which had eyes and a great mouth which was greater than the other horns. Accordingly, Daniel is given further information, especially about the fourth beast in the text to follow.

7:21-22 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. During the final portion of the Tribulation, the beast will turn his full fury against the Jews. See Revelation 12:13-17 and 13:7. The final fit of anti-Semitism and holocaust against the nation of Israel will be perpetrated in the final dark years of the Tribulation. If it were not for divine intervention, the devil in the person of the antichrist would succeed in destroying the Jewish people which he hates.

22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. The antichrist will prevail until the Ancient of Days (God) intervenes. The thought is not of God the Father Himself descending to intervene, but rather His power. In fact, Jesus Christ, God's Son, returns in power and great glory, destroys the antichrist and his power, delivers Israel, and proceeds to establish His kingdom, giving it to His people. The thought is how that God, in the person of the Son, will intervene to protect Israel and establish His kingdom for ever.

The judgement mentioned here may be the judgement of the sheep and goat nations mentioned in Matthew 25 wherein all gentile nations and peoples surviving the Tribulation stand before Jesus Christ in the valley of Jehoshaphat—"multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14).

7:23-25 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. Daniel's divine commentator then proceeded to give additional information regarding the Roman era, as Daniel had requested. Rome conquered the known world of its day and forcibly assimilated it into its empire. To this day, the world, though not politically called Rome, or under Roman military might, is influenced by western (i.e.,

Roman) culture. We remain in the Roman era of the world's system.

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. Again a further explanation is given about the final form of the Roman era of human government: the ten kings and their notorious successor. The final political form of the Roman era of government will evidently be some sort of ten-nation coalition, probably in the same general geographic region of the old Roman Empire. (A case certainly can be made which would include the United States as an extension of Roman culture and civilization.) In as much as the little horn arises from the midst of the ten horns, it has been assumed that the antichrist will arise out of the west. Because he is initially accepted by the Jews as their Messiah, it has been assumed by some that he may be a Jew.

25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

In the final days of the Roman era, the Tribulation, the little horn (i.e., the antichrist) will blaspheme the God of heaven and viciously persecute the Jewish race (i.e., the saints of the most high). His changing of times and laws at the least may refer to changing Jewish holy days and longstanding rules regarding Jewish worship. He ultimately will desecrate the rebuilt Temple of God, setting himself up there as God. At the middle of the Tribulation, the antichrist will turn against Israel and they will suffer greatly at his hand for the last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation. (The phrase "time and times and the dividing of time" refers to three-and-one-half years. A time is one year. Times is two years. A dividing of time is one-half year.)

7:26-27 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. Notwithstanding the terrible persecution against the people of God during the Tribulation by the antichrist, the judgment of God will prevail. When Jesus Christ returns in power and great glory at Armageddon with the armies of heaven (see Revelation 19:11-15), *they* will take away the worldwide dominion of the antichrist and destroy it altogether.

27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Notice how the coming kingdom of God is described. It is a dominion or kingdom. It will be great under the whole heaven (that is, world wide), and it will be everlasting. It will be given to the people of the saints of the most high—God’s people. And, all nations on the earth will serve and obey Jesus Christ. What a day that will be! For the people of God, there awaits a bright future. Once again, we are on the winning team. In that day, Jesus shall reign where-er the sun doth his successive journeys run. His kingdom will spread from shore to shore, til moons shall wax and wane no more.

7:28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart. Daniel’s great vision of the four beasts is thus concluded. As Daniel thought thereon, he was burdened, realizing the time of trouble still ahead for his people. Even his demeanor was transformed. The prophet thus kept the matter in his heart before God.

* * * * *

Overview of Daniel 8: *Daniel 8 is a prophecy somewhat similar to that in chapter 2 and 7, though the scope of it is much more limited. From our perspective today, it is a prophecy that has already been largely fulfilled. It adds further detail and clarity to the prophecies of chapters 2 and 7. It is notable because most of the prophecy has been fulfilled in exacting detail already.*

Here, Daniel details what was coming in the near future when the coming Persian and Greek empires collided. It is fascinating because history reveals that the prophecy was fulfilled in minute detail. The chapter is thus divided: (1) Daniel's vision of the ram and the he-goat in verses 1-14; and (2) the interpretation of it in verses 15-27. There are clear eschatological hints toward the end of the chapter.

8:1-2 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

The preceding chapter ended with Daniel being troubled over the vision given to him there. That was in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar over Babylon. Now in Belshazzar's third year, approximately two years later, God gave Daniel another vision. The comment "after that which appeared unto me at the first" clearly refers to the vision given to Daniel in Daniel 7:1.

2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. At the time mentioned above, Daniel was at Shushan which was the winter residence of the Persian kings, located on the river Ulai. This was in the province of Elam which was another name for Persia. It was located in the southwestern portion of what is now modern Iraq, not far from modern Iran. While likely in prayer by the Ulai River, God gave Daniel this next vision.

8:3-4 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. Daniel saw a ram with two horns—one was higher than the other, the higher one appeared last. (We shall soon see this is a picture of Media-Persia. The Persian part of the coalition came to power later than Media, but was without question the dominate part.)

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

In the Media-Persian Empire, the Mede's home region was to the north, south of the Caspian Sea. Persia initially was more to the south of what would be modern Iraq. In the vision, the ram was relentlessly pushing westward, northward, and southward and nothing could stop it. The Persian Empire in fact did expand to the west, north, and south. In time they conquered to the west: Babylon, Syria, Asia, and a part of Greece. To the north they conquered Iberia, Albania, Armenia, Scythia, Colchis, and the inhabitants of the Caspian sea. To the south they conquered: Arabia, Ethiopia, Judea, Egypt, and India. East is not mentioned because the Persians came from the east.

Though not the first ruler of the coalition, in due season, Cyrus the Persian quickly became the dominant ruler. As he pushed his empire outward, no nation could stop the Persian armies.

8:5-7 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. As Daniel contemplated what was going on, a male goat came out of the west moving so fast so as not to touch the ground. He had a notable horn. This was none other than

Alexander the Great. He led the Greeks in a blitzkrieg war against Media-Persia. It is noteworthy that the he-goat corresponds to the leopard in Daniel 7:6 whereas the ram corresponds to the bear in Daniel 7:5

6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. In the course of events (future for Daniel, though history for us), the he-goat from the west (i.e., Alexander the Great) collided with the ram with two horns (Media-Persia). It was at the river Ulai that Alexander fought his first victorious battle against Darius in 334 B.C. Daniel foresaw that conflict with Alexander's army running into the Persian army in the fury of his power. The running of the he goat into the ram in a hostile fashion describes the manner of these creatures in nature when they fight with one another.

7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Daniel further describes the mighty battle between Alexander and the Greeks against Darius and the Persians. The Greeks came with *choler* or angry bitterness against the Persians. Accordingly, the goat smashed both horns of the ram and utterly defeated it. Thus, Alexander utterly defeated the Medes and the Persians. They never again would rise to dominate power.

8:8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. When the he-goat (Greece) was in control, the great horn was broken. After conquering the Persian Empire, Alexander the Great died. Secular history records that he died of a venereal

disease. Thereafter, four notable ones sprang up. After Alexander's death, four subordinates divided up the empire amongst themselves. These four ruled the four quadrants of the empire: Ptolemy from Egypt; Cassander was king of Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus was king of Asia to which belonged Thrace, Bithynia, and other places; and Seleucus was king of Syria and of the eastern countries. These four kings correspond to the four heads of the leopard in Daniel 7:5. The Greek Empire thus continued for more than two-hundred years.

8:9-10 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. The focus of the Greek Empire now turns to that which pertains to the 'pleasant land,' that is Israel. From Seleucus, king of Syria, came a 'little horn.' This little horn proceeded to magnify himself and enter the 'pleasant land' (Israel).

10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. This little horn is different from the little horn in Daniel 7. This horn was a grandson of Alexander known as Antiochus Epiphanes. He eventually ruled over the portion of the empire that included the land of Israel. Upon entering the land of Israel (though not a sovereign nation), Antiochus Epiphanes not only dealt harshly with the Jews in the land, but murdered spiritual leaders—Levites and priests of God. A parallel thought is found in Revelation 12:4.

8:11-12 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. Antiochus Epiphanes exalted himself against even the "prince of the host." Some have thought this to be the high priest while others have suggested it is God Himself. In any event, Antiochus Epi-

phanies blasphemed the God of heaven either through the high priest or directly. At his orders, the daily sacrifices of the Temple were halted. The Temple itself was desecrated, robbed, and disdained by him.

12 And an host was given *him* against the daily *sacrifice* by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. Antiochus Epiphanes ordered a garrison of Greek soldiers stationed in the Temple to enforce his decree of no daily sacrifices. He utterly cast aside all Levitical observance of the Law and the things of Jehovah. He did whatever he pleased and seemed to prosper therein.

8:13-14 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

On top of all his blasphemy, Antiochus Epiphanes deported himself like an ‘anti-christ’ and utterly desecrated the Jewish Temple. He offered a pig (the epitome of unclean animals according to Jewish law) as a sacrifice upon the brazen altar and placed its blood on the mercy seat. This was known to the Jews as the ‘abomination of desolation.’ Their temple had been defiled and could not be used. Daniel therefore in his vision heard one godly man speaking to another, asking how long the transgression of desolation would continue. How long would the Temple be trodden under foot of pagan gentile feet?

14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. The length of the desecration of the Temple was foretold to last 2,300 days. That is 6 year and 110 days. There is no unanimity of opinion as to the beginning and terminus of the 2,300 days. However, Jewish tradition holds that the desecration of the Temple lasted 2,300 literal days which is six years, three

months, and eighteen days. Accordingly, John Gill writes, “reckoning from the fifteenth day of the month Cisleu, in the year 145 of the Selucidae, in which Antiochus set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, to the victory obtained over Nicanor by Judas, on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, Anno 151, are just 2,300 days.” The greater point is that in due season, the desecration of the Temple was halted during the Maccabean era of Jewish history.

The abomination of desolation spoken of here does not have eschatological implications. However, in Daniel 9:27 the abomination there certainly refers to end-time events as does Matthew 24:15.

8:15-17 And it came to pass, when I, *even I Daniel*, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. Having seen the vision from God, Daniel sought understanding thereof. God therefore sent a messenger with the appearance of a man. As the text will unfold, this messenger was an archangel

16 And I heard a man’s voice between *the banks of Ulai*, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision. As Daniel witnessed the proceedings, he heard a voice from the river ordering Gabriel to give understanding to Daniel of the vision. This is the first of two times in Daniel that Gabriel was sent to Daniel. He also appears twice in the nativity story, once to Zechariah and once to Mary. See Luke 1:19, 26. Gabriel is one of only two (or three if Lucifer is considered) angels who are named in Scripture. He quite apparently is an archangel (along with Michael), though Gabriel is not so noted. The name Gabriel literally means ‘man of God,’ or perhaps, ‘strength of God.’ The voice ordering him to speak to Daniel evidently was that of God Himself.

17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me,

Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end *shall be the vision.* Gabriel therefore came to where Daniel stood. Daniel's reaction was the same as that of virtually every mortal recorded in Scripture confronted by an angel. Daniel was terrified. The reflected holiness and glory of God apparent in all angels so convicted Daniel of his sin, that the fear of the Lord gripped him. He could only fall on his face. In response, Gabriel spoke reassuringly to Daniel, informing him the vision he had seen was yet to be fulfilled. The thought was there was a determined time when the vision would be fulfilled: when the 2,300 days were expired along with other events still to come.

8:18-19 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. As Daniel fell to his face, recorded in the previous verse, he evidently entered into deep sleep. (Again, all of this is within his greater vision.) The angel Gabriel therefore touched Daniel and set him on his feet.

19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall be.* Gabriel therefore informed Daniel that he was about to give him understanding of the ongoing vision. Of interest is that Gabriel speaks of the "last end of the indignation." The implication is eschatological—the events of the end time. Furthermore, the angel remarked, "for at the time appointed the end *shall be.*" The end of the ages will be at God's appointed time. It is totally in His control. Moreover, clearly implied is that the last end will be a time of indignation—the wrath of God against a wicked world. From the greater mosaic of prophecy, this seems to allude to the Tribulation. The following text will eventually zoom in to the last days of the age.

8:20-22 The ram which thou sawest having *two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.* The angel Gabriel thus

explains to Daniel the significance of what he had seen in his dream. The ram with two horns were the kings of Media and Persia. Darius I was a Mede and Cyrus (who reigned with him and then succeeded him) was a Persian.

21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. The rough goat would be Alexander the Great of Greece. Though Philip of Macedon was the first king of the Greeks at this time, it was Alexander who put Greece on the map and eventually conquered the mighty Persian Empire.

22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. After Alexander's untimely death, four of his subordinates divided the empire between themselves. See comments for 8:8. Though maintaining the loose framework of a Greek empire, none of the four divisions of Alexander the Great's empire had the power or influence of the original whole. That is all fulfilled history. Though prophesied decades prior to its inception, that is exactly how the history of Persia and Greece unfolded.

8:23-25 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. The focus now turns to the latter years of the Greek era of history. Out of the Seleucid division of the Greek empires arose a great wicked one. At that time "a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences" would arise. The one foretold was Antiochus Epiphanes, king of the Seleucid dynasty. During the course of his reign he ravaged Jerusalem and the Temple thereof.

24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.

Some have thought that the mention of his power not being his own power refers to ruling in the shadow of Alexander the Great. However, decades had passed from the time of Alexander to that of Antiochus. Others have suggested that his power was satanic and that which he perpetrated against the Jews and the Temple was by the power of the devil. That seems a more plausible explanation. He in fact is a foreshadow or anti-type of the antichrist. Antiochus desecrated the Temple and the antichrist will do the same some day. The former fiercely turned against the Jewish people. The latter certainly will also do so. John Gill wrote that Antiochus “slew fourscore thousand Jews in three days’ time, bound forty thousand, and sold as many.” His destructive persecution of the Jews was astounding (i.e., wondrous).

25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

This verse seems to leap-frog ahead to the Day of the Lord. Antiochus certainly was crafty, proud, and destroyed many. However, the foreshadow here seems to clearly refer to the antichrist and his diabolical power. The Prince of princes is an undoubted reference to Jesus Christ. Though Antiochus certainly was blasphemous, there is no record of him directing challenging the coming Messiah, the Prince of princes. Hence, the greater thought must be yet prophetic in the antichrist. Implied is that the man of sin will advance his agenda in part by preaching peace—maybe between the Israelis and Arabs. Yet, once deceiving Israel into entering his seven year peace covenant, he then will turn against them to destroy them. Though he will stand up against the King of kings, Jesus Christ will summarily destroy him with the breath of his lips. That is, the stone cut out without hands will destroy him. The greater thought likely is the supernatural destruction of the man of sin.

8:26-27 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. The vision of Daniel evidently began during the night and then concluded the following morning. Gabriel certified its truthfulness to Daniel. Daniel therefore was directed to “shut thou up the vision.” The thought likely is that he was to keep it to himself. Write it down, but do not proclaim it. It may be that the current political climate was not receptive to hearing of the overthrow of first Babylon and then of Persia. Moreover, the fulfillment of the vision certainly was for many days. There was the coming demise of Babylon, then Persian, and then of Antiochus. Furthermore, the eschatological portion regarding the antichrist, we know, certainly is yet unfulfilled as yet.

27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it. Upon the conclusion of the vision and its interpretation, Daniel was utterly shaken. The thought is not that he passed out, but that he was sick of heart. Though the prophecy had revealed things to come, there was bad news regarding Jerusalem and the Temple. He finally was able to return to work to tend to his governmental business in administrative matters for the king. In conclusion, Daniel was utterly astonished (even appalled) at what had been revealed to him. God had chosen him to channel the blueprint for the rest of the ages. And, much of it was bad news for his own homeland. Moreover, he had been forbidden to verbally speak of these things. Therefore, no one understood why he was so shaken. (Verse 28 also ends the portion of Daniel written Aramaic. See comments thereto for Daniel 2:4.)

Overview of Daniel 9: Daniel 9 is the mountain peak of the book of Daniel. Here Daniel goes to God in prayer and pours out his heart before God in confession and intercession. In turn, God sent the angel Gabriel to minister to Daniel and reveal to him perhaps the most graphic and specific framework of prophecy in the entire Bible—the Seventy Weeks of Daniel. The chapter has four divisions: (1) Daniel considering the time of the captivity in verses 1-3; (2) Daniel’s intercessory confession of the sin of Israel; (3) Daniel’s prayer in verses 4-19; and, (4) the revelation to Daniel concerning the coming of the Messiah in verses 20-27.

9:1-2 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. The time is the year after Darius the Mede overran Babylon. See Daniel 5:31. The time is likely about 537 B.C.

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Recall that Daniel had spent his entire adult life as an exile in Babylon. At this time, Daniel received a copy of the recently-written Book of Jeremiah. In it, Daniel read that the captivity of Judah would be for seventy years. (See Jer. 25:11-12 and 29:10.) The focus is specifically upon the destruction of Jerusalem. It likely only took Daniel a moment to realize that those seventy years would soon be finished. The very idea therefore likely shook Daniel to the bottom of his being.

9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. Daniel knew why God had delivered Judah into captivity. It was because of their sin, rebellion, and disobedience to their God. He also knew that the spiritual condition of Judah had

changed little during their captivity in Babylon. Daniel may have feared that God would continue the captivity because of the ongoing sin of the Jews. Therefore, he set himself to prayer, fasting, and utterly humbling himself before God in intercession and confession on behalf of Judah. We have before us one of the great intercessory prayers in the Bible. Evident is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.

9:4-6 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments. Notice how Daniel began praying by acknowledging the Lord his God. One of the remarkable things about the life of Daniel is the degree he patterned his life according to the Word of God. He praised the power, faithfulness, and mercy of God as he began to confess and intercede on behalf of Judah. He further reminded God that He had promised to show mercy to those who loved Him and kept His commandments. This is exactly what God had instructed in His Word. See Leviticus 26:40-46. Also I Kings 8:47-50 and Jeremiah 3:12-14. Daniel did exactly what the Bible said to do in this circumstance. His prayer was eminently Scriptural.

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. On behalf of Judah as a nation, Daniel prayed, confessed, and interceded on behalf of his people. He acknowledged to God that Judah had departed from God's Word. He acknowledged their sin and rebellion against Him. Daniel undoubtedly knew the spiritual condition of Israel in Babylon. He was a Jew himself and was well aware of where his own people were before God.

6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our

princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. Daniel freely confessed to God that his people had ignored prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah, both of whom had written to the Jews in captivity. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had written during Daniel's lifetime, warning Israel from their kings on down to repent of their sin. Daniel knew their warning had largely been ignored.

9:7-9 O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.* Notice how Daniel praised and glorified God as he poured out his heart in confession and contrition on behalf of his people. This is a classic example of intercessory prayer. Daniel ascribed righteousness to God. He was just in judging Israel. They deserved the confusion of the captivity which continued to that day. The sin of Israel had brought just recompense from a righteous God. Daniel freely acknowledged to God that their punishment and captivity was richly deserved.

8 O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. The phrase "confusion of face" has the sense of 'shame.' Daniel repeats again that he and his people deserved the shame of their captivity. From their leaders on down, they deserved the shame of their captivity because of their national sin.

9 To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Daniel therefore pled the mercy of God for forgiveness. He freely acknowledged their sin. His only hope was the mercies of God. That truth remains to this day for all. Faith follows from grace.

9:10-11 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Daniel freely acknowledged to God that he and his people had disobeyed God's Word and His laws. They had been reiterated by the various prophets over the years. Yet, Israel as a nation had repeatedly ignored and disobeyed God's Word.

11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. All of Israel—both the northern kingdom and Judah—had transgressed God's Law. They had departed from Him and not the other way around by disobeying His voice. Therefore, Daniel freely acknowledged that the curse of their captivity was richly deserved. It had been foretold in Leviticus 26:14-39, Deuteronomy 27:15-26, and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Notwithstanding the clear, written Word of God warning them, Israel had flagrantly sinned against their God.

9:12-14 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. God therefore had confirmed (i.e., fulfilled) His words, which He had long ago foretold, in bringing the judgment of their captivity and diaspora upon them. Not another nation on the earth had ever witnessed such judgment against themselves as God had done to Jerusalem and Judah.

13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. God had clearly foretold in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 all the misery which had come upon Israel

for their sin. Notwithstanding, few in Israel had confessed and sought to turn their people from their sins or understand the truth of God. The notable exceptions were Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and now Daniel.

14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. God was therefore just in sending judgment against His people for their great sin. Israel had flagrantly disobeyed God's Word. God was therefore righteous in His judgment of them.

9:15-17 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. Daniel reminded God how He worked on behalf of His people in days gone by. Godly prayer throughout the Bible often reminds God of His promises or of His work in the past.

16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us. As Daniel neared the climax of his prayer, he besought God to turn from His anger against His people. Their sin had brought them great shame.

17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. Daniel therefore besought his God to hear his prayer and to look kindly upon the Temple at Jerusalem which had been destroyed. Furthermore, Daniel besought God to do it for His own sake.

9:18-19 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is

called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. Daniel now reached the climatic intent of his prayer. With great eloquence he pled with God to hear his prayer. He pled with God to take note of the desolation of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Daniel reminded God it was not because of their righteousnesses that he prayed, but because of God's great mercies. Again, Daniel could only plead for the mercies of God.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. With fervent intensity, Daniel made a four-fold appeal for God to (1) hear, (2) forgive, (3) take heed, and (4) do that for which he pled. He begged God to not wait (i.e., defer). He implored God to do so for His own sake. The truth was that Jerusalem and Israel were called by Jehovah's name. They were God's people and, therefore, Daniel besought God to act if for no other reason. The pathos, and fervency, and urgency of his prayer is evident. It is a classic example of the kind of prayer described in James 5:16. God indeed heard it.

9:20-21 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God. Notice how Daniel himself described his prayer: speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, and presenting my supplication.

21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. God was so moved by the prayer of Daniel that the archangel, Gabriel came even while he was still praying. Daniel had seen Gabriel earlier at the beginning of Belshazzar's reign. The implication that angels fly is here found.

Gabriel had been sent from God to Daniel, and the angel had come swiftly to him. (The thought inherent in the word translated as **swiftly** {**יָעַף** *yeaph*} also has the thought of weariness—apparently from flying swiftly.) The evening oblation (of sacrifice) took place at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At that time Gabriel approached and touched Daniel while he was still praying.

9:22-23 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. While Daniel was praying, God sent the angel Gabriel who proceeded to reveal to Daniel one of the most detailed and comprehensive prophecies in the Bible—the 70 weeks of Daniel.

23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. When Daniel began his fervent prayer (recorded in Daniel 9:4 *ff*), God issued a commandment for Gabriel to go to Daniel. He therefore came with haste and noted that Daniel was greatly beloved (literally, greatly desirable) by God. God was faithful, righteous, and godly. God therefore took heed to his prayer. Gabriel therefore prepared to present to Daniel the 70 week prophecy laid out below.

As summary thereof is as follows. The seventy weeks of Daniel would begin in the not distant future and form a chronological framework for God's time line from then until the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Of the seventy 'weeks,' 69 have been remarkably fulfilled. We presently are in a 'prophetic time out.' Moreover, God can restart His prophetic clock at any time.

The 'prophetic time out' or interval between the 69th week and the seventieth week is the church age. When Christ returns in the Rapture, the church age will be over and God's prophetic

clock resumes for the seventieth week which is essentially the Tribulation. It may be helpful to understand that the seventy weeks prophecy is for Daniel's people, the Jewish nation. Because the church is essentially gentile in nature, it is not in view here. The church is the 'mystery' that Paul refers to in Ephesians.

We will notice the seventy weeks are broken up into three segments: 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and the final week. We will also see that the term 'week' is of years and not of days. This was a normal alternate usage in Hebrew. The first 69 weeks culminate and conclude with the 'cutting off of the Messiah.' In retrospect, we know this to be the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (This a remarkable prophecy in the Old Testament how that the Messiah would be put to death. Most Jews to this day remain blind to it.)

Throughout this amazing prophecy are details concerning events for Israel, the Messiah, and the antichrist. Some of it has already been fulfilled. Some of it is yet future. The fascinating thing is that the events spoken of about the seventieth week are easy to envision taking place in today's current events. In some cases the stage already has been set.

9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. In the Old Testament there were two types of Hebrew weeks: one was of days, the other of years. The Jews not only had a sabbath of days, but they also had a sabbath of years according to the Law of Moses—the Sabbatical Year, when the land was to lie fallow for a year. Here it is obvious that the 'weeks' are speaking of years. Therefore, a total of 490 years would transpire (not including any time outs).

It is of further note that Israel had ignored the law of the Sabbatical year for 490 years. That is why they were in captivity. God gave them one year of captivity for each year they had ignored the Sabbatical year. They indeed reaped what they had sowed. (See II Chronicles 36:21 and Jeremiah 25:11-12.) The seventy weeks were determined upon “thy people and thy holy city.” The prophecy was thus for the Jewish nation and Jerusalem.

Notice the scope of the prophecy. (1) It was to “finish the transgression.” When this period was complete, sin will have been finished (literally restrained). That of course is what happened in part at Calvary and will reach its culmination in the Eternal Kingdom. (2) It also was to make an “end of sins.” Once God establishes His eternal kingdom there will no longer be sin. (3) It also was to make “reconciliation for iniquity.” That is what Jesus Christ did at Calvary. (4) The goal of the prophecy is to “bring in everlasting righteousness.” This will commence in the Millennium and continue on into the Eternal Kingdom. (5) Daniel also was to “seal up the vision and prophecy.” Though this is not as evident, it may be a reference to how that Israel has been blinded to God’s truth because of their hardness of heart and rejection of Christ. (6) Finally, the fulfilled prophecy will be “to anoint the most Holy.” When Jesus Christ returns, He will be anointed as king of the earth. Therefore, the prophecy goes from the time of Daniel until the Messiah returns and establishes His kingdom on this earth.

9:25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. The beginning of the time line is established. The entire prophecy is anchored chronologically from “the commandment to restore

and to build Jerusalem.” There were several biblical/historical decrees concerning the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem.

Ezra was given commandment to return and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, but he had no authorization to rebuild the city. During his time the work was ordered stopped. Eventually a second command was given to finish the temple. (See Ezra 1, 6, and 7.)

However, during the reign of Artaxerxes, in his twentieth year as king of Persia, a command was issued allowing Nehemiah to return and to begin to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. (See Nehemiah 2:1-8.) Historically, this date is thought to be 454 B.C. This is the most likely date for the starting point of the prophecy. It was still about 83 years after Daniel received this prophecy.

Let us therefore build a time line based upon the date of 454 B.C. and the time of the command to rebuild the city by Artaxerxes. We know that the entire prophecy is 490 years. We also know that the Messiah would be cut off (killed) after the 69th week. Therefore, the time from the commandment until Calvary would be 483 years ($490 - 7 = 483$).

If we begin at 454 B.C. and add 483 years to it, we arrive at about A.D. 29. We know from other date markers that Jesus Christ was most likely born in about 4 B.C. according to the noted events in Luke 2 and Matthew 2. (The modern dating system is off by at least four years). Moreover, we know that Jesus Christ began His official earthly ministry when he was “about thirty years of age” when he began his ministry (Luke 3:23). We also know that his earthly ministry lasted about three years. Therefore, he was about thirty-three years old when he was crucified. If Christ was born in 4 B.C., it would have been A.D. 29 when he was crucified. A.D. 29 minus 483 years takes us back to 454 B.C.

The prophecy is clear that during the span of the first seven weeks, the main street of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, even during

very troubled times. The Book of Nehemiah certainly details the trouble during the early years of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The command specified is that of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem (in distinction to that of rebuilding the Temple.)

9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. After sixty-nine weeks the Messiah will be cut off, that is put to death—but not for Himself. Here is a prophecy that the Messiah would die for others, not because of any wrong on his part. The substitutionary death of Christ is thus clearly implied.

At this point in the text the prophecy shifts ahead to the seventieth week. We presently are living in that prophetic ‘time out’ or interval between the 69th and seventieth week of Daniel. The “prince that shall come” is most likely a reference to the coming of the antichrist. The people with this ‘prince’ will destroy the city (Jerusalem). We know from other prophetic passages that during the Tribulation, the antichrist will turn against the Jews and ultimately destroy the city and the rebuilt Temple. (See Daniel 9:27, Luke 21:24, II Thessalonians 2:8-11, Revelation 12:13)

“The end thereof shall be with a flood.” It is interesting to note in Revelation 12:15 (which deals with Israel during the tribulation), that the serpent (Satan) casts out “a flood” against the woman (Israel). The final days of Israel during the Tribulation evidently will involve the devil sending some sort of flood against the remnant of beleaguered Israel. And, “unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” We know from other prophecies that in the final days of the Tribulation will be a great world war centered in Israel, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon. (See Revelation 14:14-20, 19:11-21, and Isa. 63:1-6.)

9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. The *he* here is the prince in verse 26—the antichrist. The indication is that the antichrist will make a ‘peace treaty’ with many for one week (seven years). The context here is very evidently of the Middle East. We know from Daniel 8:25 that the antichrist likely will present himself on a platform of ‘peace.’ Throughout modern times, there has been a constant state of conflict and war between the Jews and the Arabs. There have been endless ‘peace talks’ and ‘peace settlements.’ Yet there is no peace. Evidently, the antichrist will arrive on the scene and announce that he will bring peace to the region—for at least seven years.

However, “in the midst of the week” major events take place. Here we come to the infamous midpoint of the seventieth week, the middle of the Tribulation. Then, the antichrist evidently turns on the Jews, halting their renewed Temple worship. Moreover, “for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate.” We know from II Thessalonians 2:3-4 that during the Tribulation, the antichrist will set himself in the rebuilt Jewish Temple and announce to the world that he in fact is God. We also know from Revelation 13:14-15 that the False Prophet will make an image of the ‘beast’ during the Tribulation and mandate that all mankind worship it. It may be that Satan sets up this image in the Jewish sanctuary. The blasphemous irony is that Satan either in the person of the antichrist or his idolatrous image will be in the rebuilt Temple of God setting himself forth as God. This very likely is what is referred to here as the “overspreading of abominations.”

From other portions of Scripture (Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7, Revelation 11:2, 13:5), we know that the antichrist’s full power

and rule over the earth will be during the last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation. The abomination of the antichrist's rule will continue "even until the consummation." This is the appointed time, the end of the seventieth week. At this time, "that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The Hebrew word translated **desolate** (שָׁמֵם *shamem*) has the literal sense of 'desolator.' In other words, when the time comes, that which has been fore determined will be poured out upon the desolator—the antichrist. See Revelation. 19:19-20.

To summarize, the seventieth week of Daniel begins with Rapture and the removal of the gentile church. God's prophetic clock once again begins to tick. He initially makes a 'peace treaty' between Israel and its Arab neighbors. However, the man of sin then abrogates that treaty and turns against the Jews. During this interval, Satan will seek to empower himself as the ruler of the earth and will establish himself as God in the rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. In the final days of the Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon takes place as Satan arrays the forces of the world against Israel. In that day, Jesus Christ directly intervenes, destroying the antichrist and Satan's system. From verse 24, we know that our Lord then establishes "everlasting righteousness"—the Kingdom of God.

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Overview of Daniel 10: *Though Daniel 10 does not contain any major prophecy as such, nevertheless, it reveals amazing details of battles which go on in the spirit world. Usually we are oblivious to these. Daniel by this time was an elderly man. Some of the captive Jews had already been allowed to return. Here Daniel is in penitent prayer once again. The reason may have to do with complications concerning the return of his people to the land. The chapter contains two divisions: (1) Daniel's vis-*

ion near the river Hiddekel in verses 1-9; and (2) Daniel expecting revelation of future events in verses 10-21.

10:1-3 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. The time is two years after Cyrus had issued his edict for the restoration of the Jews and the rebuilding of the Temple. See Ezra 1:1. Daniel is an elderly man by this point, maybe ninety years old. Daniel writes in the third person at this juncture in referring to himself. In that third year of Cyrus, a *thing* was revealed to Daniel. The word so translated (דָּבָר *dabar*) is the common Hebrew word for *word*. It also is commonly rendered as a ‘matter,’ having the sense of an ‘utterance,’ speech,’ or ‘saying.’ Daniel knew what had been revealed to him was the truth. He also realized its fulfillment was far into the future. God also gave Daniel understanding of the prophecy which was about to be revealed.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. In understanding the prophecy, Daniel mourned three full weeks. He evidently understood the implications of the impending prophecy regarding Jerusalem and Israel. Further judgment was ahead.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Daniel then related how he was essentially in prayer and fasting for a period of three weeks. In understanding the vision and prophecy about to be revealed, Daniel not only mourned, but fasted for three weeks. Here is a scriptural illustration of partial fasting. Daniel did not absent from food for those three weeks. However, he did not eat desirable or tasty food—no meat or sweetened beverages. He essentially ate only bread and water or some derivation thereof.

Neither did he ‘freshen’ himself by anointing himself with unguents. The thought is how that Daniel used no perfume, cologne, or maybe even soap during this time. He truly afflicted himself before God. Though not explicitly noted, Daniel 10:12 indicates the reason for the three weeks. Daniel had been fasting before God to understand the vision given him. It was three weeks until an angel arrived to give him the understanding he sought.

10:4-7 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel. Some commentators view the first month spoken of here as referring to the Hebrew month Nisan (the first month of the Hebrew year). Other’s view is as the first month of the third year of Cyrus. In any event, Daniel continued in prayer and fasting on the twenty-fourth day of that month. Jews in captivity often would gather in prayer near a river, perhaps for ceremonial cleansing from the copious amount of water available. The River Hiddekel is viewed by most commentators as another name for the Tigris River, running through the heart of ancient Babylonia.

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. Whilst in prayer, a ‘man’ appeared to Daniel. It is quickly evident that this ‘man’ is a heavenly messenger. Though his description is similar to that of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1, events in the chapter indicate that this individual is an angel. (He needed assistance in battling satanic opposition. Demons rather tremble at the name of Jesus.) The angelic messenger is described as being clothed in linen, implying pure white. The accessory garment was a girdle or belt of highly refined gold. Uphaz was an ancient site renowned for its pure gold. The angel’s girdle was thus likened unto that famous gold.

6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

The word translated as **beryl** (תַּרְשִׁישׁ *tarshiysh*) literally is ‘tarshish,’ likely referring to the ancient Mediterranean city by that name. Apparently, a fine type of gemstone was made available from Tarshish. Beryl is thus described as perhaps a chrysolite, yellow jasper, or other yellow-colored stone. The body of the angelic messenger was thus likened to this gemstone. His face had the brilliance of lightning and his eyes blazed in a piercing stare. His arms and feet had the brilliance of burnished brass—bright and brilliant. His voice was like the roar of pounding surf or perhaps of a great waterfall. Though the description closely parallels that of Christ, the context to follow will indicate the messenger to be a mere angel. Yet, take note how powerful this angel was.

7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. In fashion similar to Paul on the road to Damascus years later, Daniel saw a vision from God. However, his companions did not. They rather were greatly shaken and fled for safety. As is the case throughout Scripture, being confronted with an angel from God was a terrifying experience.

10:8-9 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Daniel was left alone before a mighty angel of God and saw the impending vision by himself. As he was there alone, he had absolutely no strength. Moreover, his comeliness (i.e., vigor) drained away into a death-like paleness.

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. As Daniel heard the angel begin to speak, he was induced into a deep sleep and fell flat on his face on the ground.

10:10-11 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands. As the angel began to speak, his hand touched Daniel and set him up on his hands and knees.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Though terrifying in his appearance, the angel spoke kindly to Daniel. He referred to him as a man greatly beloved (by God). He therefore directed Daniel to stand upon his feet. The angel had been sent by God to Daniel. Daniel therefore stood trembling before him.

There are similarities here between this event and that of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:5. When mortal men, even as godly as Isaiah or Daniel, are confronted with divine holiness, even in the person of an angel, they are terrified. The absolute holiness of God instills the fear of the Lord.

10:12-14 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. The angel informed Daniel that from the first day he went to prayer and fasting—three weeks earlier—that God had taken note thereof and heard his prayer. As soon as Daniel ‘chastened’ himself before God, God was aware and heard his prayer. In fact God sent the angel to help Daniel. (Remember that Daniel began

fasting and praying three weeks earlier). Clearly implied is that God takes special note when His people set themselves to fast (chasten themselves) and pray. Implicit is a fervency and seriousness of purpose in prayer. As is usually the case when an angel appeared, frightening those present, the angel directed Daniel to “fear not.”

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Notice that it took the angel twenty-one days to reach Daniel. He was withstood by the prince of the kingdom of Persia. A most remarkable glimpse into the spiritual battle in the heavens is thus revealed. The angel described clearly was a powerful emissary from God. The ‘prince of Persia’ most likely refers to a satanic lieutenant who blocked the angel of God from reaching Daniel. Implied is that this fallen angel had been given charge over the kingdom of Persia by the devil himself.

This is an illustration of Ephesians 6:12 where we read of spiritual wickedness in high places—literally ‘wicked spirits in high places.’ Satan evidently has a highly organized and disciplined empire that among other things includes assignment by earthly political subdivisions. They clearly have spiritual power. In this case they withheld an angel of God for three weeks. Notice also that there is allusion not only to the prince of Persia, but also the ‘kings of Persia,’ implying other rulers or principalities in high places. There thus quite evidently is rank and organization within Satan’s empire. The fact the demons of Satan could block an angel of God for three weeks tells of their power.

Finally, God sent reinforcements led by Michael, one of the chief princes (archangels). And the messenger angel prevailed in reaching Daniel. Clearly implied is that we have no idea of the spiritual battles which must rage in the atmospheric heavens above. See Revelation 12:7.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. The angel therefore announced to Daniel that he had come to give him understanding of what would befall his people (i.e., Israel) in the latter days. The prophecy in question will be revealed in the next chapter. Though much of it clearly is of events during the Greek era of history, clearly other portions thereof look forward to the Day of the Lord and events eschatological. The angel therefore informed Daniel that (fulfillment of) the vision was yet for many days—during the latter days. We know that to be the Day of the Lord (i.e., the Tribulation).

10:15-17 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. Upon hearing the introductory comments by the angel, Daniel again is stricken in the presence of God's messenger. He again bows his face to the ground.

16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. Evidently, another angel accompanied the primary heavenly messenger who came and gently touched Daniel's lips. Daniel then spoke to him. Daniel already had evidently received a preview of the impending prophecy and it grieved him to such a degree, he had no strength. He knew the terrible things which eventually would overcome his people Israel.

17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. For Daniel's part, he protested that he was so overwrought with all he perceived that he could not talk to the angel. He had no strength or breath left in him.

10:18-19 Then there came again and touched me *one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.* Notice the mercy and compassion of the angel. Though an angel of God, he was holy. Yet, he also was merciful and gracious. And so is God. The thought is how the angel gently touched him and imparted strength to him..

19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.* Again, the angel relayed to Daniel from God that he was greatly beloved. Again, he sought to still his fears by enjoining him to fear not. He therefore directed Daniel to be strong of spirit, emotion, and otherwise. Notice how when God's messenger had touched him and spoken unto him that Daniel was strengthened. Indeed when God touches us and speaks to us, we are strengthened. And even today when his messengers speak to us, we are strengthened. Daniel therefore indicated to the angel to proceed and talk to him. God through His angel thus strengthened Daniel.

10:20-21 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. The angel then asked Daniel if he understood why he had come to him—to grant understanding of the prophecy to be revealed in the next chapter. Daniel evidently so affirmed that he understood. The angel therefore indicated that he would thence return to heaven and fight his way back against the Prince of Persia. Furthermore, he warned that the Prince of Greece (a demonic spirit) was coming. This likely was an allusion to the fact that the next empire rising on the horizon of history would be the coming Greek empire. There would be a high ranking demonic spirit assigned to that empire as well to

influence it. Clearly implied is that the devil assigns high ranking angels to influence human government, especially nations with worldwide dominance.

21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and *there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.* The angel then prepared to reveal to Daniel the detailed prophecy found in the next chapter, much of which will deal with the coming Greek empire and its aftermath. But notice again that it was necessary for Michael to ‘hold’ (literally withstand) with the other angel in the spiritual battle ahead. Notice also that Michael is referred to as “your prince.” God evidently has assigned him to Israel as their archangel.

In this chapter we have thus caught a glimpse of the spiritual warfare which goes on above us. We also have caught a glimpse of Satan’s organizational structure in this world and of his power. Praise the Lord: greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.

* * * * *

***Overview of Daniel 11:** In review, God had sent an angel while Daniel was in prayer in Daniel 10. Here, he now reveals to Daniel further prophecy. Verses 1 - 35 deal with events, which from our perspective have already been fulfilled (the final details of the Persian Empire and the coming Greek empire). The details of the prophecy in verses 1-35 of the Seleucid era of history are remarkable in their precise detail. Moreover, these precise prophecies have been precisely fulfilled historically. From verse 36 onward, the prophecy seemingly shifts to the Day of the Lord.*

Putting the mosaic of end-time prophecy together, we understand that the antichrist’s rise to power is by warfare,

though initially his platform is of peace. (See Revelation 6:1-8; 9:13-21) From Daniel 11, we will see that much of this warfare is in the Middle East. Some of the opposition to the rise of the antichrist will be the king of the south, most likely Egypt and much of the Arab world. Perhaps they are in opposition to the 'covenant' (of Daniel 9:27) that the antichrist makes with Israel. But another major player will be the king of the north. From Ezekiel 38 and elsewhere, this most likely is Russia moving down from the north into the Middle East. It appears from Daniel 11 that the antichrist, the Egyptians (along with much of the Arab world), and the Russians will be involved in a major war that will center in Israel. The immediate winner will be the antichrist. The ultimate winner will be Jesus Christ.

11:1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. Verse 1 of this chapter might better have been included with the preceding chapter. The speaker remains the angel of the previous verse. He tells Daniel that it was he who enabled Darius the Mede to consolidate and strengthen his rule after he overthrew Belshazzar in Daniel 5:31.

11:2-4 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. The angelic messenger now proceeds to explain to Daniel the prophecy which God had revealed to him. The immediate focus is upon the still young Persian Empire. Most commentators suggest that the three kings to rise to power after Darius were Cyrus, who reigned alone after the death of Darius the Mede (his uncle); Cambyses, the son of Cyrus; and Darius Hystaspes. The fourth king, richer than the rest was Xerxes. For four years, Xerxes gathered forces from throughout the Persian Empire for

war against Greece. Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown note that his vast army grew to 2,641,000 men.

3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. The mighty king mentioned is Alexander the Great, rising up in Greece to avenge the Greeks against Persia for Xerxes' past invasion.

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. The fourfold division of Alexander's empire after his death is foretold after the battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. Cassander killed two of Alexander's sons, preventing them from succeeding their father. Accordingly, none of Alexander's successors had the wide dominion he had. The four succeeding rulers of the Greek Empire will be other lesser chieftains who would seize rule over fragments of the Greek Empire.

11:5-6 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. The division of the Greek Empire to the south went to Ptolemy Lagus, one of Alexander's generals, who seized Egypt for his share. And, indeed, he was a powerful ruler. A subordinate, Seleucus seized the region of Syria for his part of the empire. Moreover, the Selucid kingdom became more powerful than that of Ptolemy's dominion.

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in

these times. The time looks ahead to when Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt entered into an agreement with the Seleucid kingdom. However, through treachery, Ptolemy died by poisoning and Berenice's scheme of a united, greater kingdom fell apart. The details of these untoward individuals is of great immorality and depravity.

11:7-9 But out of a branch of her roots shall *one* stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. In the course of events, Ptolemy Euergetes, brother of Berenice, succeeded Philadelphus and avenged her death by overrunning Syria. He then dealt with the Syrians at his leisure.

8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the north. Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown write, "Ptolemy, on hearing of a sedition in Egypt, returned with forty thousand talents of silver, precious vessels, and twenty-four hundred images, including Egyptian idols, which Cambyses had carried from Egypt into Persia. The idolatrous Egyptians were so gratified, that they named him Euergetes, or 'benefactor.' Ptolemy then lived for four years longer than Seleucus.

9 So the king of the south shall come into *his* kingdom, and shall return into his own land. Ptolemy therefore would return to Egypt.

11:10-11 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and *one* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, *even* to his fortress. The prophecy then records that the sons of Seleucus, Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, would assemble a great army. However, Ceraunus died

and Antiochus alone prosecuted the war with Ptolemy Philopater, Euergetes' son until he had recovered all the parts of Syria. Upon prevailing in the war, Antiochus pursued all the way to an Egyptian fortress on the border of Egypt.

11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. Ptolemy Philopator, who succeeded Ptolemy Euergetes in the kingdom of Egypt, enraged over being defeated by Antiochus, regathered an army and marched to Raphia, a city between Rhinocorura and Gaza. There, he joined with Antiochus in battle. The angel described to Daniel that the multitude of the army of Antiochus would be delivered into the hands of Ptolemy Philopator. John Gill says that "Antiochus lost ten thousand footmen, and three hundred horsemen; four thousand footmen were taken, three elephants slain, and two wounded, which afterwards died."

11:12–14 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. When Ptolemy, king of Egypt, had defeated the army of Antiochus; his heart would be lifted up in pride. Though Ptolemy defeated the large army of Antiochus, he gained nothing from it. Though defeated in battle, Antiochus escaped.

13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. Notwithstanding earlier defeat, Antiochus renewed the war fourteen years later with an even more powerful army.

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown note, “Philip, king of Macedon, and rebels in Egypt itself, combined with Antiochus against Ptolemy.” Rebellious Jews also revolted against Ptolemy and joined battle against him. The latter hoped to make Judea an independent state, but failed.

11:15–17 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. Antiochus therefore would invade Egypt, building siege works where necessary and defeating fortified cities. The combined forces of Egypt would not be able to withstand the onslaught of Antiochus in battle.

16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed. In invading Egypt, Antiochus the great defeated Ptolemy king of Egypt. Because some Jews had allied themselves with Antiochus against Ptolemy, Antiochus aided them in overthrowing an Egyptian garrison Ptolemy had placed in Jerusalem.

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. Antiochus, having conquered Phoenicia and Judea, therefore set his face towards the land of Egypt. The “upright ones” likely were Jews who allied themselves with him. John Gill writes, “finding he could not obtain the kingdom of Egypt by force of arms, for fear of the Romans, who were the guardians of the king of Egypt, he proposed to give his daughter Cleopatra to him (Ptolemy) in marriage, a beautiful virgin; and therefore called the daughter of women.” However, upon

marrying Ptolemy, Cleopatra favored her husband rather than her father and thus thwarted Antiochus' scheme.

11:18-20 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. Antiochus therefore took many of the isles in the Aegean in his war with the Romans and crossed the Hellespont. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown then write, "Lucius Scipio Asiaticus, the Roman general, by routing Antiochus at Magnesia (190 B.C.), caused the reproach which he offered Rome by inflicting injuries on Rome's allies, to cease. He did it for his own glory." John Gill offers, "Without any reproach to the Roman general; the reproach which Antiochus cast upon the Roman nation was turned upon his own head."

19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. Compelled by Rome to give up territories he had conquered, Antiochus, attempting to plunder the temple of Jupiter at Elymais, was slain by his soldiers in an insurrection of the inhabitants (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown).

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. Seleucus Philopator, the eldest son of Antiochus the great, succeeded him. The same became a 'raiser of taxes' in the amount of a thousand talents yearly to pay the Romans as tribute money. However, this taxing king did not reign long. Rather through the treachery of Heliodorus his treasurer, he was poisoned.

11:21-22 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by

flatteries. The focus now turns to the little horn of Daniel 8:35—Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus Epiphanes was brother to Seleucus Philopator and succeeded him. He was a vile, very immoral man, given to drunkenness, lasciviousness, and cruelty. He did not assume rule by force because it was conferred upon him. Rather, by flattery, scheming, and conniving, Antiochus Epiphanes took over the Seleucid kingdom.

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. Daniel foretold how that Antiochus Epiphanes would invade Egypt with overwhelming force. Some understand the overthrow of the prince of the covenant to be Judas Maccabaeus or perhaps the high priest in Jerusalem. Others think Seleucus Philopator his brother is meant. However, he was already dead. Thus, the most likely identification is Ptolemy Philometer, the son of Cleopatra, Antiochus' sister, who was joined in covenant with him. The treachery of this vile man is thus apparent.

11:23-25 And after the league *made* with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown write regarding Antiochus Epiphanes, "Feigning friendship to young Ptolemy, as if he wished to order his kingdom for him, he took possession of Memphis and all Egypt as far as Alexandria."

24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yea*, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. Antiochus therefore under the guise of friendship betrayed Ptolemy Philometer. His predecessors had long coveted after Egypt, but had not been able to conquer it. Yet, Antiochus

accomplished what his forefathers had not been able to do. He thus scattered his forces throughout Egypt, taking prey and spoil at will. He thence commenced to plot strategies against the remaining military strongholds in Egypt.

25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. As the war with Egypt and Ptolemy Philometer continued, the latter assembled a large army for battle. Notwithstanding, Philometer was defeated. Antiochus meanwhile continued to plan further strategies against his defeated foe.

11:26-27 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. With remarkable detail, Daniel's prophecy continues to reveal how that Philometer's own subordinates would turn on him and destroy him. His army would dissipate like water and fall slain.

27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. The prophecy continues to reveal how that both Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, and Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, connived against each other and would be utterly deceitful. Though Philometer was the loser in the war, even the victor Epiphanes did not prosper in the long run. God was not through with him.

11:28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. Antiochus Epiphanes, with the spoils of Egypt, would return to Syria en-

riched by his foray into Egypt. However, on his way back to Syria, he attacked Jerusalem and overturned the covenant he had made with the Jews that they should be a distinct and peculiar people, having their own religion and laws. John Gill writes how that “he ordered his soldiers to slay all they met, without mercy, old and young, women and children, virgins and young men; and in three days’ time eighty thousand were slain, forty thousand bound, and no less sold: he went into the temple, and took all the vessels in it, and all the gold and silver, and hidden treasures of it, to the value of a thousand and eight hundred talents.” Antiochus Epiphanes certainly made himself a foreshadow of the man of sin, the antichrist, who will do similarly to Israel during the Tribulation.

11:29-30 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. The time appointed evidently refers to the same thought in verse 27. Antiochus Epiphanes returns again against Egypt, though apparently not successful as in the former two invasions of Egypt.

30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. Chittim refers to the islands of the Aegean, Cyprus, and Phoenicia in general. Naval forces from this region would join in alliance against Antiochus Epiphanes, frustrating him. History records that these forces were actually under the direction of Rome. He thus was forced to retreat. However, indignant that in the meantime worship of Jehovah had been restored at Jerusalem, he therefore would vent his wrath and frustration on the Jews. Specifically, he would learn from apostate Jews and a ungodly priest named Menelaus of the rebellion of Jews against his rule.

11:31-33 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. Antiochus therefore would send forces for his part against Jerusalem who in turn polluted the Temple with drunkenness and open fornication with harlots in the sanctuary. The prescribed Levitical daily sacrifices of the Temple were stopped. Jamieson, Fausett, and Brown note that the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes, on the “the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty-fifth year, they set up the *abomination of desolation* on the altar; namely, an idolaltar and image of Jupiter Olympius, erected upon Jehovah’s altar of burnt offerings.” They thus made the altar desolate in fashion perhaps similar to that of the antichrist during the Tribulation.

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. Sadly, some Jews were corrupted by flattering promises and became accomplices of the wickedness. However, those who knew the Lord would stand strong and do great exploits. The latter likely refers to the Maccabees and their followers.

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. The thought very well may look forward to the Maccabees, their followers, and their influence. Sadly, these would fall by the sword and at the stake of Antiochus and his soldiers. Multitudes of the Jews so died along with any who would not comply with his godless orders.

11:34-35 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown write at this point, “The liberty obtained by the Maccabean heroes for the Jews

was of but short duration. They soon fell under the Romans and Herodians, and ever since every attempt to free them from Gentile rule has only aggravated their sad lot." Seeing the temporary victories of the Maccabeans, some previously disloyal Jews joined them, but not sincerely and were like those who put their fingers to the wind to see which way it was blowing.

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. During this time of wavering loyalties, some who stood for the truth would try and purge the disloyalty and apostasy from Judaism, seeking to restore it to its biblical base. This section of Daniel's prophecy ends with the pronouncement that the time for all these things was appointed—they would come to pass.

Remarkable is the detail of this section of prophecy. It all was fulfilled during the Seleucid and Maccabean periods of Jewish history. The detail is so remarkable that many a liberal theologian has rather sought to proclaim this as a history section and not prophecy. Yet, the time of its writing, the first year of Darius the Mede, makes clear the events portrayed herein are prophetic.

11:36-39 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. A significant shift takes place at this point. Whereas the prophecy to this point has been largely about the little horn of Daniel 8:35 (Antiochus Epiphanes), the focus now seems to leap ahead to the little horn of Daniel 7:8 (the coming antichrist). The details prophesied from this point onward do not mesh with recorded history and therefore can only be future still in their application. Moreover, the 'king' described below does fit the mosaic of

end-time events and other descriptions of the antichrist. Though there may be applications to Antiochus, the greater application is eschatological.

The spiritual and moral character of the king noted (i.e., antichrist) seemingly is revealed. Notice that he will (a) do according to his own will. (b) He will exalt and magnify himself above all world religions. (c) He will speak marvellous (i.e., awesome) things against the God of gods. (d) He shall prosper until the end of the indignation (i.e., the Tribulation).

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. Because the antichrist is apparently received by Israel as their messiah, it has been assumed by some that this man of sin will be a Jew ethnically. And, certainly some of the most godless individuals in recent history have been apostate Jews. Here, this man is described as disregarding the God of his fathers. The fact that he has no desire for women implies that he may be a homosexual. Disregarding any god implies that he worships himself or rather demands worship of himself by others. He therefore magnifies himself above all others—earthly or heavenly.

38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. The man of sin will honor power and force. The first reference to God here rather is *god* with a small ‘g.’ Pagans have routinely honored many gods. However, the prophecy foretells how this man of sin will honor “a god whom his fathers knew not.” Implied is a people who are monotheistic—the Jews. This again lends credence to the theory that the antichrist will come from Jewish stock ethnically. Moreover, this little horn will honor his special god—perhaps the image of the beast—with large sums of money. See Revelation 13:15ff. See also II Thessalonians 2:3-4.

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. The little horn, the man of sin, will thus climb to power. He will also establish his strange god—the image of the beast and shew himself as God in the Temple of God. By the middle of the Tribulation, the antichrist will have extended his rule over the entire earth, ruling over many. He will then evidently divide the land of Israel for personal gain. This may be a part of his double cross of the Jews alluded to in Daniel 9:27, breaking his covenant with them.

11:40-41 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. What lends credence to the supposition that this portion is eschatological is that the prophet again refers to this time as the “time of the end.” Others have sought to apply this to a final invasion of Egypt by Antiochus. Though such an expedition may have occurred, the greater context remains outside details of recorded history. The primary thought remains eschatological.

The phrase “at the time of the end” thus likely is a reference to the seventieth week of Daniel, also known as the Day of the Lord and the Tribulation. At this time, war apparently will break out in the Middle East. The king of the south (Egypt) evidently goes to war with this fellow (the antichrist) who evidently represents the western (Roman) alliance. At the same time, the king of “the north shall come against him like a whirlwind.” Notice how the king of the north shall enter “into the countries and shall overflow and pass over.” The word in Hebrew here for *countries* is (אֶרֶץ) *eretzim*. This is the root word Israelis use to this day to refer to *the land*—the land of

Israel. The fact that it is plural may have to do with the fact that Israel today is a combination of national territory and the ‘occupied territories.’ In any event, the king of the north enters and passes through the land. His invasion is not only by land but also by sea. (Perhaps the description “like a whirlwind” might refer to an airborne assault such as military attack helicopters.) If one were to assume these details pertain to Antiochus Epiphanes and his wars against Egypt, the analogy completely breaks down at this point. There is no historical record of a northern *and* southern king attacking Antiochus in the latter years of his reign and prevailing. Moreover, in this eschatological war, the king of the south (i.e., Egypt) will join forces against the *king* in question. Thus, a king from the north and a king from the south will attack the king as described from 11:36 onward. There is no historical record of such events during the latter reign of Antiochus. Thus, during the Tribulation, Egypt joins in an attack against the antichrist, perhaps for his alliance with Israel.

Ezekiel 38 goes into further detail how that the Russians will invade Israel at the time of the end. There, Meshech and Tubal, Gog and Magog are ancient names for the Russian bear. In Ezekiel 38 it also details the alliance of nations which will come with the Russians against Israel. (Iran, Ethiopia, Libya, Eastern Europeans, the region of Georgia and the Caucasus). These are all essentially Muslim nations. At times in ancient history, parts of what is today Arabia were called Ethiopia. See Ezekiel 38:1-16, 22 and 39:1-12.

Exactly, who starts the war is not clear, but what is clear is the antichrist (perhaps initially in alliance with Israel) winds up in a war against the Russians and the Islamic world. Joel 2:1-10, 20 very well may be a reference to that war from Israel’s perspective.

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the

children of Ammon. The invaders from the north (i.e., the Russians also known as the king of the north) enter into the “glorious land” (literally ‘the beautiful land’) which undoubtedly is Israel. Additionally, many other countries will be overrun by the advancing Russian bear. However, Edom, Moab, and Ammon are bypassed. The latter ancient nations are the essence of the modern State of Jordan. Interestingly, modern-day Jordan seemingly will be spared. In recent wars with Israel, Jordan has not interfered with the Israelis. Also, the valley of Petra is in modern day Jordan.

11:42-43 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. Evidently the advancing Russian juggernaut moves right down into Egypt and occupies it.

43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. In this war during the middle of the Tribulation, the Russians will appropriate to themselves the treasury of Egypt. Moreover, Libya and Ethiopia will ally themselves with the Russians, if for no other reason than to avoid destruction at their hand.

11:44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. But suddenly bad news from the northeast comes to the Russian bear. (Remember by now, he has advanced into Egypt.) North and east from Egypt is none other than the land of Israel. In as much as the Russians have moved violently right through Israel into Egypt, the assumption is that the antichrist had been seemingly eliminated in Israel. Could it be that the tidings out of the northeast, for the Russians, is that the antichrist has arisen from the dead? Revelation 13:3,12,14, and 17:8 clearly indicate that

the antichrist is killed by a sword (warfare) and yet comes to life again. (Of course, Satan mimics the work of Christ.) Imagine the consternation of the Russians. They have killed this man we call the antichrist and yet he has come back to life. This may be the tidings from the northeast that causes the Russians to return to the land of Israel. They thus return “with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.” The latter phrase essentially refers to destroy many. It is repetition of thought for emphasis. The Russians therefore do an about face and storm back toward Israel determined to wreak havoc and destruction against their supposed champion the antichrist.

11:45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. The Russians return and occupy the mountains of Judea between the seas—the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. They there set up their military command tents (i.e., tabernacles) on the mountains of Israel, near Jerusalem. There God destroys them. See Ezekiel 38:18 to 39:1-12. This supernatural destruction of the Russians apparently allows the antichrist to now assume complete control of the world. (He, to this point, has risen to power from the western world with its military might.) There is no country left strong enough to oppose him. From Daniel 12:1, which is within the immediate context of these events, the indication is that this takes place at about the middle of the Tribulation. The “time of trouble” spoken of there is undoubtedly the last half of the Tribulation.

Hence, the events spoken of here evidently take place just prior to or at the middle of the Tribulation. After prevailing in that middle-eastern war, the antichrist assumes leadership of the world for the next forty-two months. It is at this time he turns against Israel, defiles the temple at Jerusalem, and institutes his world wide system of the mark of the beast. (See Revelation 13.)

Overview of Daniel 12: *Daniel 12 is the conclusion of the book of Daniel. It is a direct continuation of the context of chapter 11. It gives several specific markers of chronology that indicate the when and the length of the events prophesied. And, it gets into other events such as the resurrections and the specific time the Millennium will commence.*

12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

The time is noted as “at that time”—the same time as the events in that latter part of chapter 11. Verse 7 indicates that these final events will take a “time, times and half a time” which is a Hebrew idiom for three-and-one-half years. Moreover, this time frame is used to refer to the separate halves of the seven-year Tribulation period. See Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6, 14; and 13:5. Because events have already raged during the Tribulation period as noted in the previous chapter, the time therefore must refer to the middle of the Tribulation.

At this time *Michael* the archangel (which literally means, ‘Who is like God?’) stands up for the children of Israel. Evidently, God has designated that Michael (the great prince) be the Archangel who watches over the nation of Israel. As the world war at the middle of the Tribulation rages in and about Israel and as the antichrist turns his wrath against Israel, Michael stands to protect them.

In that day, there will be “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.” Seemingly, Israel is on the verge of being exterminated. The last half of the Tribulation will be a time when the wrath of Satan is focused against Israel such as no other time in human history. (See Revelation 12:5-17)

God, through Michael, providentially intervenes and delivers Israel—at least, those “written in the book.” This may at least be a reference to the preaching of the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 as they preach Christ to the Jew first. Evidently, many Jews are converted to Christ at this time. More likely, this likely refers to the multitude of Jews who receive Christ during the first half of the Tribulation. The latter undoubtedly are a result of the preaching of the 144,000. There may also be connection here with Revelation 7:9-17 which is in the context of the 144,000.

In any event, God providentially protects and preserves (at the very least) the redeemed of the nation of Israel during the Tribulation. Interestingly, in Romans 11:26, we are told that someday all Israel will be saved. The events described here likely are a part of that greater process.

12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. The focus now turns to the resurrections. At the Rapture, the New Testament church is resurrected. However, at the end of the Tribulation and just before the Millennium, there will be a resurrection of all Old Testament saints. This likely is the reference to “some to everlasting life.” However, the unsaved of all time (“some to shame *and* everlasting contempt”) will later be resurrected at the end of the Millennium to stand at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Daniel therefore sets forth the first and general resurrections. Though the dead in Christ will rise first, the greater scope of the first resurrection also likely includes the first group described in this verse—Old Testament saints. The difference is the seven years later for the latter.

12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness

as the stars for ever and ever. Those truly wise before God by their faith in Christ, obedience to God, and godly living will someday (in the resurrection) shine as the brightness of the firmament. The thought is that in the coming Kingdom of God, these will shine with heavenly glory and brightness. The “brightness of the firmament” literally refers to the brightness of the sky above. Specifically, this promise is made to those who “turn many to righteousness.” The thought likely is to those who, in their life times, have been wise in winning souls to Jesus Christ and turning many to righteousness (Proverbs 11:30). They will shine as the brightness of the heavens and as the stars forever. There is eternal reward for serving God and specifically for winning others to Christ and true righteousness.

12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. From verse 4 onward, comes the final thoughts of the chapter. Jews, to this today, are blind to the prophecy herein. It has been sealed to the Jew. (See Isaiah 6:9-11, 29:10,18 Matthew 13:13,). However, during the Tribulation (the time of the end), the spiritual understanding of the Jewish people will be opened and there will be mass conversions of Jews to Christ.

The latter portion of verse 4 presents how at this time (during the Day of the Lord) the Jews will go back and forth throughout the entire Bible, including the New Testament, searching the Scriptures. For the first time in history, their knowledge of Christ will be increased. Some have sought to apply this verse to the explosion of secular knowledge and technology which has taken place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, the context clearly is of Israel in the end time. See verse 1. Israel is presently blind to the truths of Christ and end-time events. It is shut up and sealed from them. However, the day is coming when they will begin to search the

Scriptures and their knowledge of Christ and things to come shall be increased. Notice that this revealing of truth and increase of knowledge will be at the time of the end. That time is consistently described throughout the Bible as during the Day of the Lord.

12:5-7 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. The extensive vision and its explanation begun in chapter 10 is essentially over. Now, the text turns to final concluding details. Daniel thence sees two other individuals who evidently are angelic messengers. They each stood on one side of the River Hiddekel (see Daniel 10:4).

6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? One of the angels spoke to the original angelic messenger clothed in linen. His question was simple. “How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders?” The angel asked, perhaps rhetorically and for Daniel’s benefit, when these astonishing events would be accomplished.

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. The original angelic messenger in preparing to answer therefore lifted up his hands and swore by the eternal God. The time unto the conclusion of these astonishing events (“the end of these wonders”) was for “a time, times and half a time.” The latter expression was a Hebrew idiom for three-and-one-half years. The starting time is that

time when Michael the great prince will stand up (verse 1). This likely also is when the daily sacrifice and “the abomination which maketh desolate” is set up (verse 11). From Daniel 9:27 and other prophetic sources, we know that this all takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Therefore, these final events take place in the last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation. See also comments for Daniel 12:1. The astonishing wonders viewed by Daniel will end at the conclusion of the Tribulation.

12:8-9 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? Though Daniel heard what was said, he evidently did not understand it.

9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. In response to Daniel’s question about when the end of it all would be, he was told the following. The words (the understanding thereof) would be closed and sealed till the time of the end. In other words, the Jewish people would not understand these things until the time of the end. We know that to be the Tribulation and the beginning of the Day of the Lord. In that day, the eyes of the Jews, long blinded by the veil of their hardness of hearts, will be opened. When they in that day turn to Christ (see II Corinthians 4:15-18), the veil of spiritual blindness will be lifted.

12:10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. At that time, the wise (i.e., the godly converted Jew) will understand these things. They will be purified by the precious blood of Christ and made white before God. Their understanding of things spiritual, long darkened, will be enlightened. Sadly, at the same time, those who continue to harden their hearts against Christ will continue in wickedness and will remain in their spiritual darkness.

12:11-12 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. The starting date for the events of Daniel 11:36 to the end is noted: “the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up.” The cessation of the daily sacrifice in the Tribulation Temple is at the exact midpoint thereof. However, 1,290 days from the middle of the Tribulation will be 30 days more than the final three-and-one-half years (based upon the Hebrew lunar calendar). There thus are an extra thirty days (one month) attached after the end of the Tribulation.

12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. Then there is mention of 1,335 days which is an additional 45 days beyond three-and-one-half years and the thirty days already mentioned in the preceding verse. (These are all based upon the Hebrew lunar calendar of twelve thirty-day months for a total of 360 days.)

Some have suggested that these additional intervals are when the resurrection of the Old Testament saints will take place, along with the judgment of resurrected Israel. Also Matthew 25 mentions the judgement of the sheep and goat nations (which amongst the gentile nations have been converted during the Tribulation and will be allowed into the Millennium). This apparently will take place during one of these intervals. And, there no doubt will need to clean up of the mess of the battle of Armageddon. Furthermore, this may be the time when the Jerusalem is renovated or at least made ready for the reign of Jesus Christ. We know from Isaiah and Ezekiel that there will be major topographical and geographical alterations to the land of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium—maybe to the entire earth. All these special events likely will take place during this seventy-five days from the end of the Tribulation to the official beginning of the Millennium.

12:13 But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. The implication here from the angel to Daniel is that he will soon die and then will stand in his appointed order (i.e., lot) at the end of the days—the resurrection of Old Testament Israel after Christ’s return and just before the beginning of the Millennium. Thus ends the most detailed blueprint of end-time events in the Bible.

