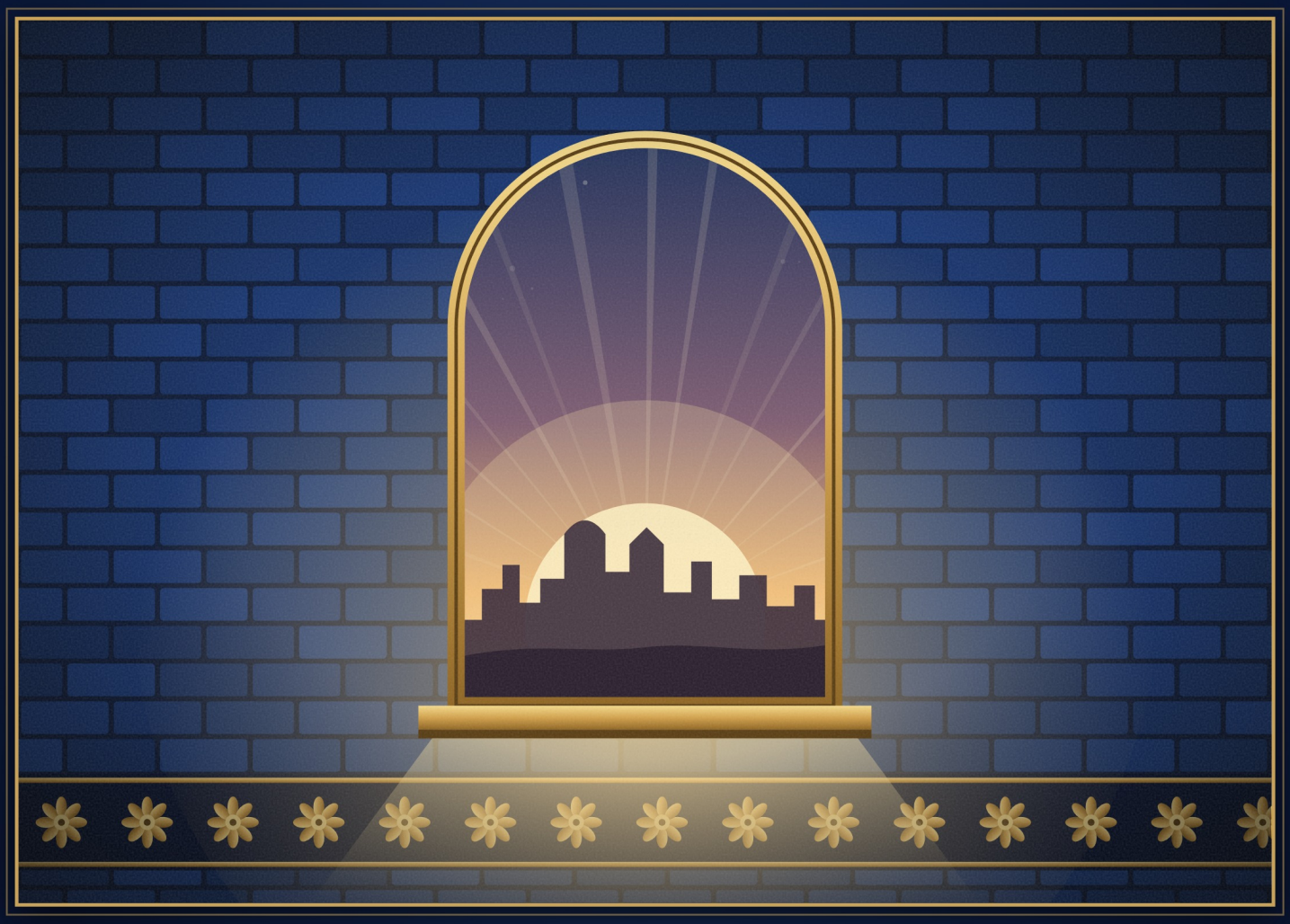
DANIEL

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



Faith under pressure, and the God who rules over every kingdom of the earth

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Daniel Bible Study

A Verse-by-Verse Study

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Daniel Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the Book of Daniel and Biblical prophecy. My purpose in writing this Study Guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

At 16 I tried to join the Air Force. I aced the testing, but they would not give me the computer job they had promised, so I walked away. I did not see God's hand in it then. Looking back over about 40 years of work since, I can see He was guiding my steps the whole time. Daniel lived far from home and trusted God with his future. God is often at work where we think we are walking alone.

There are many books available on Daniel, and some of them teach things the text does not say. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Daniel. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and see what He has planned for my future and my eternity. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's Kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters even more in Daniel than in most books, because Daniel is two kinds of book in one. The first half is mostly history: real events in the lives of real men who stayed faithful to God while living in a foreign land. The second half is mostly prophecy: visions of kingdoms rising and falling, all the way to the end of the age. If we pull a verse out of either half without knowing where it sits, we can easily get it wrong.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods. **Exegesis** means explaining a text by drawing out what it is actually saying. **Eisegesis** means reading your own ideas into a text,

finding something that really isn't there. **Hermeneutics** is the study of the principles we use to interpret a text such as the Bible. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read at face value unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (SLB)

"20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation; 21 for prophecy was never borne by ***the*** will of man, but being borne by ***the*** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word, at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(Dr. David L. Cooper, Biblical Research Society; quoted from
http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

Daniel gives us a big help here. Many of its visions are full of symbols: a great statue, four beasts, a ram and a goat, horns that grow and speak. But in almost every case, God sends an angel to explain what the symbols mean. When the text explains its own picture, we take that explanation at face value. When it does not, we read the words in their plain, ordinary sense. This study of Daniel will take a literal approach unless I say otherwise.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew and Aramaic, I also used The Interlinear Bible (J.P. Green, ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

Since Daniel is a book of prophecy, we need to understand that prophecy which isn't fulfilled exactly as spoken isn't true prophecy at all. God gave Israel this test for every prophet:

Deuteronomy 18:22 (SLB)

"22 When the prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, and the word does not happen and does not come, that ***is*** the word which the LORD has not spoken; with presumption the prophet has spoken it; you shall not be afraid of him."

Daniel passes this test like few other books in the Bible. Kingdom after kingdom that he described came and went exactly as God told him they would. That gives us every reason to trust that the parts still waiting to happen will come true the same way.

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern:

- **Scripture:** the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first. Words in bold italics were added by the translator for sense; they are not in the Hebrew or Aramaic.
- **Preview:** a short look at what the chapter covers.
- **Study:** the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- **Summary:** the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- **Feature:** in most chapters, a chart or list that pulls a big subject together, such as the four kingdoms or the Seventy Weeks.
- **Study Questions:** ten questions for personal study or a small group. The first one opens the conversation, the middle ones go back to the text, and the last ones ask how we live it out.
- **Old and New Testament links:** after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

In the Overview you will find a list of Daniel's chapters in the order they happened, and near the back of the book there is a list of Key Terms in Daniel, so you can look up a word like "Tribulation" or "little horn" without hunting for it. Where Christians hold different views, I lay out the main ones and then tell you which one I hold.

If you are using this study with a group, one chapter a week makes it a twelve-week study. Ask everyone to read the Scripture section before you meet. Chapters 2, 7, 9 and 11 are long, and a group may want to take two weeks on any of them. You do not need to answer every question. Pick the ones that fit your group, and leave time to pray together, as Daniel did with his friends (Daniel 2:17-18).

If you are new to faith, or not sure where you stand with God, you may want to start by reading the Conclusion and the prayer at the end of this book. Daniel's whole message points to the Son of Man and His kingdom, and that kingdom is open to you.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Daniel. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Daniel

The book of Daniel is the 27th book of the Protestant Christian Bible. In our English Bibles it sits with the Major Prophets, after Ezekiel. It tells the story of a young Jewish man who was carried off to Babylon as a teenager and served the kings of two world empires for about seventy years, without ever giving up his faith in the God of Israel.

The message of Daniel boils down to one truth: God is in control. Kings rise, and kings fall. Empires look unbeatable for a while, and then they are gone. Through it all, "the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind" (Daniel 4:17). Daniel shows us that truth in two ways. In the stories, we see God protect and honor people who stay faithful to Him under pressure. In the visions, we see God lay out the whole sweep of world history, from Daniel's day to the return of Christ and His everlasting kingdom.

- When this study uses the word "man," it means all of mankind, men, women, and children, not just one gender, unless stated otherwise.

Daniel connects closely to many other books in the Bible, especially:

- Revelation
- Ezekiel
- Matthew (the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24-25)
- 2 Thessalonians
- Ezra and Nehemiah

Jesus Himself pointed His disciples to Daniel when He taught about the end of the age:

Matthew 24:15 (SLB)

"15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in ***the*** holy place (let the ***one*** reading understand),"

Notice that Jesus calls him "Daniel the prophet," and tells us to understand what Daniel wrote. If Jesus thought Daniel was worth understanding, so should we. You can't fully understand Revelation without Daniel, and you can't fully understand Daniel without Revelation. Daniel was told to seal up his book until the end time (Daniel 12:4); John was told not to seal up his (Revelation 22:10). The two books fit together like two halves of one message.

Daniel has 12 chapters and 357 verses. It was written in two languages. Daniel 1:1-2:4a and chapters 8-12 are in Hebrew, the language of God's people. Daniel 2:4b-7:28 is in Aramaic, the common language of the Babylonian and Persian empires. That middle section is about the nations of the world, so God gave it in the world's language. The Hebrew sections focus more on God's people.

Here is the structure of the book:

Part One: Daniel's Life in Babylon (Chapters 1-6)

- Chapter 1: Daniel and his friends stay faithful in the king's court
- Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue (four kingdoms and the coming kingdom of God)
- Chapter 3: The golden image and the fiery furnace
- Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great tree, his pride, and his humbling
- Chapter 5: Belshazzar's feast, the handwriting on the wall, and the fall of Babylon
- Chapter 6: Daniel in the lions' den

Part Two: Daniel's Visions of the Future (Chapters 7-12)

- Chapter 7: Four beasts, the little horn, and the Son of Man
- Chapter 8: The ram, the goat, and the little horn
- Chapter 9: Daniel's prayer and the Seventy Weeks
- Chapter 10: The heavenly messenger and the unseen war
- Chapter 11: The kings of the North and the South, and the willful king
- Chapter 12: The time of the end and the resurrection

Background of the Book

Author: Daniel. The book speaks of him in the third person in chapters 1-6 and in the first person ("I, Daniel") in chapters 7-12 (see 7:2, 7:15, 8:1, 9:2, 10:2, 12:5). His name means "God is my Judge." He came from the royal family or the nobles of Judah (1:3). Ezekiel, who lived in the same period, names Daniel alongside Noah and Job as an example of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20).

Where it was written: Babylon, in what is now Iraq.

When it was written: The events run from 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar first took captives from Jerusalem (1:1), to the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, about 536 B.C. (10:1). Daniel most likely finished the book near the end of his life, around 530 B.C.

- Some critics date the book to about 165 B.C., during the Maccabean period. Their main reason is that its predictions, especially in chapter 11, match history so closely up to the 160s B.C. that they believe the book was written after those events. They also point to its language and to its place among the Writings rather than the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. I reject that view. Jesus called him "Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15), and a God who knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) has no trouble telling Daniel what is coming. The accuracy of Daniel is not a problem to explain away. It is evidence that God is real.

Purpose: To show that the God of Israel rules over every kingdom of men, to encourage God's people to stay faithful when they live under ungodly rulers, and to reveal God's plan for the nations and for Israel all the way to the end of the age.

Daniel's Life and Visions in Time Order

The chapters of Daniel are not all in time order. The stories come first (chapters 1-6) and the visions second (chapters 7-12), and each vision carries its own date. Here is the order in which things happened, with the dates this study uses:

- **605 B.C.:** Daniel and his friends are taken to Babylon (chapter 1).
- **About 603 B.C.:** Nebuchadnezzar dreams of the great statue (chapter 2).
- **Some years later:** the golden image and the fiery furnace (chapter 3). The text gives no date.
- **Late in Nebuchadnezzar's reign:** the dream of the great tree and the king's humbling (chapter 4). Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C.
- **About 553 B.C.:** in the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel sees the four beasts (chapter 7).
- **About 551 B.C.:** in the third year of Belshazzar, Daniel sees the ram and the goat (chapter 8).
- **October 539 B.C.:** Belshazzar's feast, the writing on the wall, and the fall of Babylon (chapter 5).
- **About 539-538 B.C.:** in the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel prays and Gabriel brings the Seventy Weeks (chapter 9). The lions' den (chapter 6) also took place under Darius, in the first years after Babylon fell.
- **538 B.C.:** Cyrus issues his decree letting the Jews go home (Ezra 1:1-4).
- **About 536 B.C.:** in the third year of Cyrus, Daniel receives his final vision (chapters 10-12).

Why Study Prophecy?

What is prophecy? Prophecy is history written in advance.

Daniel may be the clearest example of that in the whole Bible. Here are six reasons why studying Bible prophecy matters:

1. **Prophecy shows us God's plan for mankind.** God has a plan for you and me, laid out in His Book, the Bible. Daniel shows that plan across thousands of years of history.

2. **Studying Bible prophecy confirms that God is real.** Only God can tell us the future. Daniel named the empires that would follow Babylon before they came to power, and described Greece's breakup after its first great king centuries ahead of time.

3. **Since prophecy comes true exactly as written, we should read it at face value.** Prophecy from the past has come to pass exactly as God's Word said, and will continue to in the future. We should take God's Word at face value, not twist it to fit our own ideas.

4. **Studying prophecy helps us watch for false prophets and false messiahs.** Daniel warns of a coming ruler who will speak great boasts against God and deceive many (Daniel 7:25; 8:25; 11:36). Knowing what God has said keeps us from being fooled.

5. **Studying prophecy builds God's Word into our lives and draws us closer to Him.** Daniel did not only receive visions. He prayed three times a day, studied the Scriptures (Daniel 9:2), and confessed his people's sins. Prophecy should drive us to our knees, not just to our charts.

6. **Prophecy gives us hope in a hopeless age.** Every vision in Daniel ends the same way: God's kingdom wins and lasts forever (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27; 12:2-3).

A Word of Caution: Setting Dates

Daniel is full of numbers: seventy weeks, 1,290 days, 1,335 days. Over the centuries, many people have used those numbers to calculate the exact date of Christ's return. Every one of them has been wrong. Jesus told us plainly: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13). I take the numbers in Daniel seriously, and I believe they mean what they say. But they were given to help God's people recognize the season and endure it, not to let us circle a day on the calendar.

Daniel and Revelation

If you have worked through my Revelation study, you will see many of the same pictures again in Daniel: the beast with ten horns, a ruler who speaks arrogant words against God, a period of three and a half years, the archangel Michael, books opened in heaven, and the Son of Man coming with the clouds. Daniel lays the foundation, and Revelation builds the house on top of it.

I won't repeat the full discussion of the Millennium, the Rapture, and the Great Tribulation here. Those sections are in the Revelation study. Here is where I stand, so you know where I'm coming from as you read:

- **The Millennium:** I hold the dispensational premillennial view. Christ returns before His literal 1,000-year reign on earth (Revelation 20:1-6).
- **The Rapture:** I hold the Pre-Tribulation view. Before the Tribulation begins, Christ will come for His church, and believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). At the end of the Tribulation He returns to the earth with His saints to reign.
- **The Tribulation:** In this study, "the Tribulation" means the seven years of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27). "The Great Tribulation" means its last three and a half years, a future period of intense persecution led by the Antichrist (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 13:5).

Many faithful Christians see these things differently, and I note the main views as we go. As I said in the Revelation study, your view on the timing of the Rapture won't affect your salvation either way. What matters most is that we know Jesus and stay faithful to Him, just like Daniel did.

Here is how the main prophetic passages of Daniel line up with Revelation:

- Daniel 2 and 7 (four kingdoms, ten horns) with Revelation 13:1-2 and 17:12
- Daniel 7:8, 20-25 (the little horn) with Revelation 13:5-7
- Daniel 7:9-10 (the Ancient of Days on His throne, the books opened) with Revelation 4-5 and 20:4, 11-12
- Daniel 7:13-14 (one like the Son of Man) with Revelation 1:7, 13 and 14:14
- Daniel 9:27 (the seventieth week) with Revelation 11:2-3 and 12:6, 14
- Daniel 10:5-9 (the man dressed in linen) with Revelation 1:13-17
- Daniel 10:13 and 12:1 (Michael) with Revelation 12:7
- Daniel 12:4, 9 (seal up the book) with Revelation 22:10
- Daniel 12:7 (the oath of the man in linen) with Revelation 10:5-6

You will find these passages and more laid next to each other in "Daniel and Revelation Side by Side" at the back of this book.

Chapter 1: Faithful in a Foreign Land

Scripture: Daniel and His Friends Stay Faithful

1:1-7 (Taken to Babylon) In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came ***to*** Jerusalem, and he laid siege against it. And ***the*** Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, and some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them ***to*** the land of Shinar, ***to*** the house of his god, and he brought the vessels ***into*** the treasure house of his god. And the king said to Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring ***some*** of the sons of Israel, and of the offspring of the kingship, and of the nobles, youths in whom ***was*** not any blemish, and good of appearance, and having insight in all wisdom, and knowing knowledge, and understanding learning, and in whom ***was*** ability to stand in the palace of the king, and to teach them the writing and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king assigned to them a day's portion in its day from the delicacies of the king and from the wine of his drinking, and ***he said*** to bring them up three years, and at the end of them they should stand before the king. And ***there*** were among them, from the sons of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And the chief of the officials set names for them; and he set for Daniel ***the name*** Belteshazzar, and for Hananiah Shadrach, and for Mishael Meshach, and for Azariah Abednego.

1:8-16 (Daniel's Resolve) And Daniel set on his heart that he would not defile himself with the delicacies of the king and with the wine of his drinking; and he sought from the chief of the officials that he might not defile himself. And God gave Daniel favor and compassion before the chief of the officials. And the chief of the officials said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces more dejected than the youths who ***are*** of your age? And you would endanger my head to the king." And Daniel said to the guardian whom the chief of the officials had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants ***for*** ten days, and let them give us some of the vegetables, and let us eat, and water, and let us drink. And let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the delicacies of the king be seen before you; and as you see, deal with your servants." And he listened to them in this matter, and he tested them ***for*** ten days. And at the end of ten days their appearance was seen ***to be*** good, and ***they were*** fat of flesh more than all the youths who were eating the delicacies of the king. And the guardian was taking away their delicacies and the wine of their drinking, and giving them vegetables.

1:17-21 (God Gives Wisdom) And these youths, the four of them, God gave them learning and insight in all writing and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in every vision and dreams. And at the end of the days that the king had said to bring them in, the chief of the officials brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and not ***one*** was found among all of them like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and they stood before the king. And ***in*** every matter of wisdom of understanding that the king sought from them, he found them ten times above all the magicians, the conjurers who ***were*** in all his kingdom. And Daniel was ***there*** until the first year of Cyrus the king.

Chapter 1 Preview

The Book of Daniel opens with a disaster. Jerusalem has been conquered, the temple has been robbed, and some of the brightest young men of Judah have been carried away to Babylon to be trained as servants of a pagan king. Daniel and three of his friends are among them.

Before we ever see a vision or a prophecy, God shows us the kind of man He will use to deliver them. Daniel decides, quietly and firmly, that he will not defile himself, and God honors that decision. This chapter sets the tone for the whole book: God is in control of the nations, and He keeps His faithful people even in the heart of a hostile world.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came **to** Jerusalem, and he laid siege against it.*

Daniel begins with a date, which tells us right away that he is writing history, not myth. The third year of Jehoiakim is 605 B.C. That same year, Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian army at the Battle of Carchemish and became the dominant power in the region. He then came south and took Jerusalem under his control.

You may notice that Jeremiah 25:1 calls this same period the fourth year of Jehoiakim. This is not a contradiction. Babylon counted a king's first partial year as his "accession year" and began numbering from the next full year, while Judah usually counted the partial year as year one. Daniel, writing from Babylon, uses the Babylonian method. Jeremiah, writing in Judah, uses the Judean method.

Daniel himself is the writer of this book. As I explained in the Overview, some critics date it to about 165 B.C., but Jesus called him *"Daniel the prophet"* (Matthew 24:15), and I believe Daniel was a real man who lived through the exile in the 6th century B.C. and wrote down what God showed him. When we come to the visions, we will see how precisely God told the future through him.

This was the first of three deportations from Judah to Babylon. The second came in 597 B.C., when King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel were taken, and the third came in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (2 Kings 24-25).

1:2 *And **the** Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, and some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them **to** the land of Shinar, **to** the house of his god, and he brought the vessels **into** the treasure house of his god.*

This is one of the most important lines in the chapter. Nebuchadnezzar did not win because his gods were stronger. *"The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand."* God had warned His people for generations, through prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, that if they kept turning to idols He would send them into exile (Jeremiah 25:8-11). Babylon was the tool of His discipline, not the master of His people.

Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the vessels from the house of God and placed them in the treasury of his own god in the land of Shinar. Shinar is the old name for the region of Babylon, the same place where men built the tower of Babel in rebellion against God (Genesis 11:2). Putting the temple vessels in a pagan temple was a way of saying, "My god defeated yours." The rest of Daniel will answer that claim, and in chapter 5 those very vessels will come back into the story.

You might ask, "If God is in control, why would He let this happen to His own people?" It's simple: God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). The exile was painful, but it was also how God cured Israel of idol worship and preserved a faithful remnant.

1:3 *And the king said to Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring **some** of the sons of Israel, and of the offspring of the kingship, and of the nobles,*

Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring in young men from the royal family and from the nobles of Israel. This fulfilled a prophecy Isaiah gave about a hundred years earlier to King Hezekiah: some of his descendants would be taken away to serve in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 39:7).

The Hebrew word for "officials" can also mean eunuchs. Some believe Daniel and his friends were made eunuchs, since this was a common practice for men serving in a royal court. Others point out that the word was often used for court officers in general, and that the text never says these young men were castrated. Scripture does not settle it, and I do not think we should be dogmatic either way. What we do know is that Daniel never mentions a wife or children.

1:4 *youths in whom **was** not any blemish, and good of appearance, and having insight in all wisdom, and knowing knowledge, and understanding learning, and in whom **was** ability to stand in the palace of the king, and to teach them the writing and the tongue of the Chaldeans.*

The king wanted the best: young men with no physical defect, good-looking, wise, quick to learn and able to serve in the palace. They were probably in their teens. They would be taught *"the writing and the tongue of the Chaldeans."*

The Chaldeans were the ruling people of Babylon in this period, and the word also came to mean a class of learned men who studied astrology, omens and ancient texts. Daniel and his friends would be trained in all of it. The goal was plain: take the best minds of a conquered nation, reshape them, and use them to serve the empire.

1:5 *And the king assigned to them a day's portion in its day from the delicacies of the king and from the wine of his drinking, and **he said** to bring them up three years, and at the end of them they should stand before the king.*

The king gave them food and wine from his own table, and they were to be trained for three years before entering his service. This looks like a generous gift, and in one sense it was. But it also tied them to the king. Eating at a king's table meant depending on him and being loyal to him.

1:6 *And **there** were among them, from the sons of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.*

Among the young men from Judah were these four. Each of their Hebrew names honored the God of Israel. Daniel means "God is my judge." Hananiah means "the LORD has been gracious." Mishael is usually understood as "Who is what God is?" Azariah means "the LORD has helped." Their names were a daily reminder of who they belonged to.

1:7 *And the chief of the officials set names for them; and he set for Daniel* ***the name*** *Belteshazzar, and for Hananiah Shadrach, and for Mishael Meshach, and for Azariah Abednego.*

The Babylonians gave them new names: Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego. The exact meanings of these names are debated, but they appear to honor Babylonian gods. Belteshazzar likely calls on a god to protect the king's life (Daniel 4:8 connects it to Nebuchadnezzar's god), and Abednego is commonly taken to mean "servant of Nego," probably a form of Nabu, a Babylonian god.

The plan was to change their language, their education, their diet and even their names, until nothing of Judah was left in them. The world still works this way. It rarely asks believers to deny God all at once. It simply surrounds us with its own values until we slowly forget whose we are.

Notice what Daniel did not do. He did not refuse the new name or the Babylonian education. He seems to have accepted what he could accept without sin. He saved his stand for the point where obedience to God was at stake.

1:8 *And Daniel set on his heart that he would not defile himself with the delicacies of the king and with the wine of his drinking; and he sought from the chief of the officials that he might not defile himself.*

This is the turning point of the chapter, and maybe the key to Daniel's whole life. Daniel *"set on his heart,"* which means he made up his mind. The decision came before the pressure, not during it.

Why was the king's food defiling? The text does not say exactly, so we have to be careful. The most common explanations are that the food included meat that was unclean under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11), that the meat was not drained of blood (Leviticus 17:10-12), or that the food and wine had first been offered to Babylonian gods. Some also believe Daniel saw that eating from the king's table would make him feel indebted to Nebuchadnezzar. I believe the main issue was the Law of God and the link to idol worship, but any of these reasons makes the point: Daniel would not cross a line God had drawn.

Daniel was probably still a teenager. He was far from home, his parents were not watching, and no one in Babylon would have known or cared what he ate. That is often where faith is really tested: not on the stage, but in private choices no one else will see. The great acts of faith we will read about later in this book grew out of small decisions like this one.

Daniel also handled it with grace. He did not stage a protest. He *"sought from the chief of the officials that he might not defile himself."* Standing firm and being respectful are not opposites. Daniel shows us how to do both.

1:9 *And God gave Daniel favor and compassion before the chief of the officials.*

God was working behind the scenes. Daniel made the decision, but God opened the door. When we choose to honor God, we can trust Him with the results, even when we cannot see how things will work out (Proverbs 16:7).

1:10 *And the chief of the officials said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces more dejected than the youths who **are** of your age? And you would endanger my head to the king."*

The commander liked Daniel, but he was honestly afraid. If these young men looked worse than the others, Nebuchadnezzar could have him executed. Ancient kings could and did kill officials for much less, as chapter 2 will show. His fear was reasonable, and Daniel did not dismiss it.

1:11-12 *And Daniel said to the guardian whom the chief of the officials had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants **for** ten days, and let them give us some of the vegetables, and let us eat, and water, and let us drink.*

Daniel went to the overseer who had direct charge of the four of them and offered a simple test: give us vegetables to eat and water to drink for ten days. The word for vegetables likely refers to food grown from seed, which could include grains and legumes, not only what we would call vegetables.

Daniel's approach was wise. He did not ask the man to break the king's command outright. He offered a short trial that would protect the overseer while letting Daniel stay faithful. Faith does not mean being careless about other people's risk.

New Testament links: Revelation 2:10 (alluded to)

1:13-14 *And let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the delicacies of the king be seen before you; and as you see, deal with your servants." And he listened to them in this matter, and he tested them **for** ten days.*

Daniel was willing to let the results speak. After ten days, the overseer could compare them with the young men who ate the king's food and decide for himself. The overseer agreed and tested them for ten days.

New Testament links: Revelation 2:10 (alluded to)

1:15 *And at the end of ten days their appearance was seen **to be** good, and **they were** fat of flesh more than all the youths who were eating the delicacies of the king.*

At the end of ten days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than all the others. In a time when food was not always plentiful, being "fat of flesh" was a sign of good health.

Some have used this verse to teach that a vegetarian diet is the biblical ideal. I don't believe that is the point. Elsewhere in Scripture God's people eat meat with His blessing, and Jesus declared all

foods clean (Mark 7:19). The point is that God honored their faithfulness. A ten-day difference this clear was God's doing, not just a better menu.

1:16 *And the guardian was taking away their delicacies and the wine of their drinking, and giving them vegetables.*

The test was settled. The overseer kept giving them vegetables instead of the king's food and wine, and they continued through their training without compromising.

1:17 *And these youths, the four of them, God gave them learning and insight in all writing and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in every vision and dreams.*

Again the text says plainly that God was the giver. These four young men studied hard, but their knowledge and skill came from God. Daniel also received a special gift: he *"had understanding in every vision and dreams."*

This matters for the rest of the book. Babylon was full of men who claimed to read dreams and omens. God prepared Daniel to be the one man in the empire who could interpret what God Himself revealed, and chapter 2 will show it.

Notice also that learning about Babylonian literature did not ruin them. Knowing what the world believes is not the same as believing it. Their hearts were set on God, so they could study the culture without being captured by it.

1:18-19 *And at the end of the days that the king had said to bring them in, the chief of the officials brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and not* ***one*** *was found among all of them like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and they stood before the king.*

At the end of the three years, all the young men were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. The king himself examined them, and among all of them no one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. So they entered the king's personal service.

The three years here and the "second year" of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:1 can look like a conflict. Using the Babylonian accession-year method from 1:1, the training would have run through the accession year and the first two years of the king's reign, so the dates fit. I believe this is the best explanation, though some suggest the events of chapter 2 happened before the training was fully complete.

1:20 *And* ***in*** *every matter of wisdom of understanding that the king sought from them, he found them ten times above all the magicians, the conjurers who* ***were*** *in all his kingdom.*

Whenever the king asked them about matters that required wisdom and understanding, he found them *"ten times above"* all the magicians and conjurers in his kingdom. This is a way of saying they were far superior. The best of Babylon's pagan wisdom could not compare with the wisdom God gave His servants.

This is a comfort for believers who live and work among people who do not know God. You do not have to become like the world to be useful in it. God can make His people excellent right where He has placed them (Colossians 3:23).

1:21 *And Daniel was **there** until the first year of Cyrus the king.*

This verse jumps ahead about seventy years. The first year of Cyrus over Babylon was 539/538 B.C., after Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. Daniel outlasted Nebuchadnezzar, outlasted the Babylonian Empire itself, and was still serving when Cyrus issued the decree that allowed the Jews to return home (Ezra 1:1-4).

This does not mean Daniel died that year. Daniel 10:1 records a vision in the third year of Cyrus. The point is that Daniel remained faithful and in service through the entire exile, from its first year to the year it ended. Empires rose and fell, but God kept His servant.

Chapter 1 Summary

In 605 B.C., God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to take Jerusalem, and Daniel and his friends were carried to Babylon to be trained for the king's service. They received new names and a Babylonian education, but Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's food. God gave him favor, blessed a ten-day test, and gave the four young men wisdom far beyond all the wise men of Babylon.

The chapter shows us that God is sovereign even in defeat and exile, and that He honors those who honor Him. Daniel's faithfulness in small things prepared him for the great things God would reveal to him later.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been in a place where you felt like a stranger because of your faith? How did you handle it?

2. Who really gave Jerusalem into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, and why? (1:2)

3. What kind of young men did Nebuchadnezzar want for his service? (1:3-4)

4. Why do you think the Babylonians changed the names of Daniel and his friends? (1:6-7)

5. What did Daniel decide, and how did he go about asking for permission? (1:8)

6. What role did God play in how the commander and the overseer treated Daniel? (1:9, 1:17)

7. What was the result of the ten-day test? (1:15-16)

8. What are some ways the world tries to reshape believers today, little by little?

9. Is there an area of your life where you need to "make up your mind" before the pressure comes?

10. How does knowing that Daniel served faithfully through the whole exile encourage you in a long season of difficulty? (1:21)

Chapter 2: The King's Dream

Scripture: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the Kingdom of God

2:1-13 (The Impossible Demand) And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep was finished on him. And the king said to call the magicians and the conjurers and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams; and they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." And the Chaldeans spoke to the king ***in*** Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me ***is*** firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be made ***into*** pieces, and your houses will be made a refuse heap. And if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from before me gifts and a reward and great honor. Therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you are buying time, because you have seen that the word from me ***is*** firm, that if you do not make known to me the dream, one ***is*** the decree for you; and you have agreed together to speak a lying and corrupt word before me until the time is changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I will know that you can declare to me its interpretation." The Chaldeans answered before the king and said, "There is not a man on the earth who is able to declare the matter of the king, because no king, great and powerful, has asked a matter like this of any magician and conjurer and Chaldean. And the matter that the king is asking ***is*** difficult, and there is not another who can declare it before the king except gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and he said to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went out, and the wise men were being killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be killed.

2:14-23 (Daniel Prays and God Answers) Then Daniel returned counsel and discretion to Arioch, the chief of the executioners of the king, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He answered and said to Arioch, the captain of the king, "Why ***is*** the decree from before the king ***so*** harsh?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. And Daniel went in and asked from the king that he would give him time, and to declare the interpretation to the king. Then Daniel went to his house, and he made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and to ask compassion from before the God of the heavens concerning this mystery, that they would not destroy Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in the vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of the heavens. Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed from everlasting and to everlasting, for the wisdom and the might, they ***are*** His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding. He reveals the deep things and the hidden things; He knows what ***is*** in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me the wisdom and the might; and now You have made known to me what we asked from You, for You have made known to us the matter of the king."

2:24-35 (Daniel Tells the Dream) Because of this Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus to him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." Then Arioch in haste brought Daniel in before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man from the sons of the exile of Judah who will make known the interpretation to the king." The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name ***was*** Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I saw, and its interpretation?" Daniel answered before the king and said, "The mystery that the king is asking, wise men, conjurers, magicians, ***and*** diviners are not able to declare to the king. But there is a God in the heavens ***who*** reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter part of the days. Your dream and the visions of your head on your bed, this ***is*** it: You, O king, your thoughts came up on your bed ***about*** what will be after this; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will be. And ***as for*** me, not by wisdom that is in me more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but for the purpose that they may make known the interpretation to the king, and ***that*** you may know the thoughts of your heart. You, O king, were seeing, and look, one great image! This image ***was*** large, and its splendor ***was*** extraordinary; ***it was*** standing before you, and its appearance ***was*** terrifying. That image, its head ***was*** of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet, some of them of iron and some of them of clay. You were seeing until a stone was cut out, which ***was*** not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and shattered them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were shattered as one, and they became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled all the earth.

2:36-45 (The Interpretation) This ***is*** the dream; and its interpretation we will tell before the king. You, O king, ***are*** the king of kings, to whom the God of the heavens has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the honor; and wherever the sons of mankind dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens He has given into your hand, and He has made you ruler over all of them. You ***are*** the head of gold. And after you will arise another kingdom lower than you, and another third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. And a fourth kingdom will be strong as iron, because iron shatters and crushes everything; and like iron that breaks, all these it will shatter and break. And that you saw the feet and the toes, some of them of potter's clay and some of them of iron: it will be a divided kingdom, and some of the firmness of the iron will be in it, because you saw the iron mixed with the clay of the mud. And the toes of the feet, some of them of iron and some of them of clay: part of the kingdom will be strong, and part of it will be brittle. And that you saw the iron mixed with the clay of the mud: they will be mixing with the seed of mankind, and they will not be clinging this with this, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and the kingdom will not be left to another people; it will shatter and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever, because you saw that from the mountain a stone was cut out which ***was*** not by hands, and it shattered the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what will be after this; and the dream ***is*** certain, and its interpretation ***is*** trustworthy."

2:46-49 (Daniel Is Promoted) Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and paid homage to Daniel, and he said to offer to him an offering and soothing ***aromas***. The king answered Daniel and said, "Truly your God, He ***is*** the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." Then the king made Daniel great and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over all the province of Babylon and chief of prefects over all the wise men of Babylon. And Daniel asked from the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon; and Daniel ***was*** in the gate of the king.

Chapter 2 Preview

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that terrifies him, and he demands that his wise men tell him both the dream and its meaning. When they cannot, he orders every wise man in Babylon to be killed, including Daniel and his friends. Daniel asks for time, prays with his friends, and God reveals the mystery to him in the night.

The dream is of a great statue made of four metals, which is struck down by a stone cut out without hands. This is the first great prophecy in Daniel, and it lays out the course of world history from Babylon to the second coming of Christ. Four human kingdoms will rise and fall, and then the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7 will cover the same ground again with four beasts, and Revelation 13 and 17 will pick up where Daniel leaves off.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1 *And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep was finished on him.*

This happened in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, around 603 B.C. As we saw in 1:18-19, the Babylonian way of counting a king's years allows this to fit with Daniel's three years of training.

The most powerful man in the world could not sleep. In the ancient world, people believed dreams could carry messages from the gods, especially dreams given to kings. Nebuchadnezzar sensed this one was important, and it frightened him. No amount of power can protect a man from a troubled conscience or from the hand of God.

2:2 *And the king said to call the magicians and the conjurers and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams; and they came and stood before the king.*

The king called for every kind of expert in his court. Magicians, conjurers and sorcerers practiced different kinds of occult arts, and the Chaldeans here are a class of learned men who studied the stars and omens. Babylon kept large collections of written dream interpretations and omens, so these men had a whole system to work from. All they needed was the dream.

2:3 *And the king said to them, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream."*

The king told them he had a dream and was anxious to know what it meant. So far, this was a normal request.

2:4 *And the Chaldeans spoke to the king **in** Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."*

The Chaldeans answered with the usual royal greeting and asked the king to tell them the dream so they could interpret it.

Something important happens in the middle of this verse. The original text switches from Hebrew to Aramaic, the common language of the Babylonian and Persian empires, and it stays in Aramaic until the end of chapter 7. I believe this is because 2:4 through 7:28 deals mainly with the Gentile world empires, so God recorded it in the language those nations used. When the book turns back to Israel's future in chapter 8, it returns to Hebrew.

2:5 *The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me **is** firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be made **into** pieces, and your houses will be made a refuse heap.*

Now the king made his shocking demand. If they could not tell him both the dream and its meaning, they would be torn limb from limb and their houses made a rubbish heap. Many believe the king had not forgotten the dream at all. He was testing them. If they could truly receive messages from the gods, they should be able to tell him what he dreamed. If they could not, he could not trust their interpretation either.

2:6 *And if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from before me gifts and a reward and great honor. Therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."*

The king offered the carrot along with the stick. If they could tell him the dream and its meaning, they would be richly rewarded.

2:7 *They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."*

The wise men simply repeated their request. Their whole system depended on knowing the dream first.

2:8-9 *The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you are buying time, because you have seen that the word from me **is** firm, that if you do not make known to me the dream, one **is** the decree for you; and you have agreed together to speak a lying and corrupt word before me until the time is changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I will know that you can declare to me its interpretation."*

Nebuchadnezzar saw through them. He accused them of stalling and of agreeing together to tell him *"a lying and corrupt word"* until the situation changed. His reasoning was sharp: *"tell me the dream, and I will know that you can declare to me its interpretation."* If they could do the first, he would believe the second.

2:10-11 *The Chaldeans answered before the king and said, "There is not a man on the earth who is able to declare the matter of the king, because no king, great and powerful, has asked a matter like this of any magician and conjurer and Chaldean. And the matter that the king is asking* ***is*** *difficult, and there is not another who can declare it before the king except gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."*

The Chaldeans admitted that no one on earth could do what the king asked, and that no king had ever asked such a thing. Only the gods could reveal it, and they said the gods do not dwell with mortal flesh.

Without meaning to, they confessed the emptiness of their own religion. Their gods were distant and silent. This sets the stage perfectly. The God of Israel is not far away. He speaks, He reveals, and one day He would come to dwell with mortal flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

2:12-13 *Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and he said to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went out, and the wise men were being killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be killed.*

The king flew into a rage and ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be killed. Daniel and his friends were now counted among the wise men, so the executioners came looking for them too. They had not even been called before the king, yet their lives were on the line.

2:14-15 *Then Daniel returned counsel and discretion to Arioch, the chief of the executioners of the king, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He answered and said to Arioch, the captain of the king, "Why* ***is*** *the decree from before the king* ***so*** *harsh?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel.*

Arioch was the captain of the king's bodyguard, the man sent to carry out the executions. Daniel did not panic or lash out. He spoke with *"counsel and discretion"* and asked why the decree was so urgent. Arioch explained the situation.

This is a good example for us. When fear and danger come suddenly, a calm and respectful answer can open doors that anger would slam shut (Proverbs 15:1).

2:16 *And Daniel went in and asked from the king that he would give him time, and to declare the interpretation to the king.*

Daniel went to the king and asked for time, promising to give him the interpretation. This is remarkable. The king had just accused the other wise men of stalling, yet he gave Daniel time. Daniel had faith that God would answer before he had any answer to give.

2:17-18 *Then Daniel went to his house, and he made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and to ask compassion from before the God of the heavens concerning this mystery, that they would not destroy Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.*

Daniel went home and told his three friends, and together they asked for mercy from *"the God of the heavens."* This title appears often in Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. In a land full of gods of the sun, moon and stars, it reminds us that Israel's God is above the heavens Babylon worshiped.

Notice what Daniel did first. Before he went to work, he went to prayer, and he did not pray alone. He gathered his friends. When we face something too big for us, God gives us the gift of praying together (Matthew 18:19-20).

2:19 *Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in the vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of the heavens.*

God answered. The word "mystery" here means a secret that cannot be known unless God reveals it. Daniel's first response was not to run to the king. It was to bless the God of heaven.

2:20 *Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed from everlasting and to everlasting, for the wisdom and the might, they **are** His.*

Daniel's prayer of praise in verses 20-23 is one of the great prayers of the Bible. He begins by praising God's name, because *"the wisdom and the might, they are His."* Babylon thought wisdom belonged to its experts and power belonged to its king. Daniel knew better.

2:21 *And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding.*

This verse is the theme of the whole book in one sentence. God *"removes kings and sets up kings."* Nebuchadnezzar did not rise by his own strength, and he would not stay by his own strength either. Every ruler in history holds power only as long as God allows it (Romans 13:1).

God also *"gives wisdom to the wise."* Even the wisdom people have comes from Him. This is a great comfort when the news of the world feels out of control. History is not random. It is moving according to God's plan.

2:22 *He reveals the deep things and the hidden things; He knows what **is** in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.*

God knows what is in the darkness, and *"light dwells with Him."* Nothing is hidden from Him, whether a king's dream or the future of the world.

2:23 *To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me the wisdom and the might; and now You have made known to me what we asked from You, for You have made known to us the matter of the king."*

Daniel thanked the *"God of my fathers,"* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the same God who had been faithful to Israel for centuries. He also said God had answered *"what we asked from You,"* including his friends in the credit. Daniel never took the glory for himself.

2:24 *Because of this Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus to him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."*

Daniel went to Arioch and asked him not to kill the wise men. Daniel's faith did not just save himself and his friends. It saved the very men who practiced the occult arts God condemns. God's people are often a blessing to the world around them, even to people who do not deserve it.

2:25 *Then Arioch in haste brought Daniel in before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man from the sons of the exile of Judah who will make known the interpretation to the king."*

Arioch hurried Daniel to the king and took the credit: *"I have found a man."* Of course, Daniel had come to him. People will often try to share in the credit when God works. Daniel did not argue. He was more interested in God's glory than in his own.

2:26 *The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name **was** Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I saw, and its interpretation?"*

The king asked Daniel, using his Babylonian name Belteshazzar, whether he could really tell him the dream and its meaning. It was a direct question, and Daniel's answer would put the spotlight exactly where it belonged.

2:27-28 *Daniel answered before the king and said, "The mystery that the king is asking, wise men, conjurers, magicians, **and** diviners are not able to declare to the king. But there is a God in the heavens **who** reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter part of the days. Your dream and the visions of your head on your bed, this **is** it:*

Daniel first agreed with the Chaldeans: no wise man, conjurer, magician or diviner could do this. Then he gave the answer they could not: *"there is a God in the heavens who reveals mysteries."*

Daniel told the king that God had shown him *"what will be in the latter part of the days."* This phrase points to the far future, and in the Old Testament it often reaches all the way to the time of the Messiah's kingdom. So this dream is not only about Babylon. It stretches from Nebuchadnezzar's day to the end of human history.

2:29-30 *You, O king, your thoughts came up on your bed **about** what will be after this; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will be. And **as for** me, not by wisdom that is in me more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but for the purpose that they may make known the interpretation to the king, and **that** you may know the thoughts of your heart.*

Daniel explained that while the king lay in bed, he had been thinking about what would happen after him, and God answered those thoughts with this dream. Then Daniel made sure the king understood that this revelation did not come because Daniel was wiser than anyone else. It was given so the king would understand.

This is true humility. Daniel had every chance to make himself look great. Instead he pointed away from himself and toward God.

2:31 *You, O king, were seeing, and look, one great image! This image **was** large, and its splendor **was** extraordinary; **it was** standing before you, and its appearance **was** terrifying.*

Daniel described the dream. The king saw a single enormous statue, extremely bright and awesome to look at. Its size and splendor showed the glory of human power as the world sees it.

2:32-33 *That image, its head **was** of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet, some of them of iron and some of them of clay.*

The statue was made of different materials from top to bottom: a head of fine gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Notice two patterns. As you go down the statue, the metals become less valuable but harder, from gold to silver to bronze to iron. And at the bottom, the feet are made of iron mixed with clay, which does not hold together. The kingdoms would become stronger in military power but weaker in unity and glory.

2:34 *You were seeing until a stone was cut out, which **was** not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and shattered them.*

While the king watched, a stone was cut out *"which was not by hands,"* meaning no human being made it or cut it out. This stone struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

I believe this stone is Jesus Christ and the kingdom He will set up when He returns. Scripture calls the Messiah a stone many times: the stone the builders rejected (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42), the precious cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6), and the stone that crushes those it falls on (Luke 20:18). The fact that the stone is not cut by human hands shows that this kingdom is God's work, not man's.

New Testament links: Matthew 21:44 (alluded to); Luke 20:18 (alluded to)

2:35 *Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were shattered as one, and they became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled all the earth.*

The whole statue was crushed, all at once, and became like chaff blown away by the wind. Not a trace of it was left. Then the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Notice the timing. The stone strikes the feet, the final stage of the statue, and destroys every part of it in one blow. It does not slowly grow inside the kingdoms over many centuries. It comes from outside and replaces them completely. I believe this points to the second coming of Christ, when He will destroy the kingdoms of the world and establish His own kingdom on earth (Revelation 11:15; 19:11-16).

New Testament links: Revelation 20:11 (alluded to); Matthew 21:44 (alluded to); Luke 20:18 (alluded to)

2:36-37 *This **is** the dream; and its interpretation we will tell before the king. You, O king, **are** the king of kings, to whom the God of the heavens has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the honor;*

Now Daniel gave the interpretation, saying *"we will tell"* it, again including his friends. He called Nebuchadnezzar *"the king of kings,"* meaning the greatest king of his day. But Daniel was careful to say that the God of heaven had given him the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory. Nebuchadnezzar had not earned it. It was a gift from God, and it could be taken away, as chapter 4 will show.

2:38 *and wherever the sons of mankind dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens He has given into your hand, and He has made you ruler over all of them. You **are** the head of gold.*

God had given Nebuchadnezzar rule over people, beasts and birds wherever they lived. Then Daniel said plainly, *"You are the head of gold."* Here no one needs to guess at the symbol. Daniel himself tells us the head is Nebuchadnezzar, standing for the Babylonian Empire he led. Babylon was famous for its wealth and splendor, and gold fits it well.

2:39 *And after you will arise another kingdom lower than you, and another third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.*

After Babylon would come a second kingdom, the chest and arms of silver, inferior to Babylon. Then a third kingdom of bronze would rule over all the earth.

Daniel does not name these kingdoms here, but the book does later. Daniel 5:28 says Babylon would be given to the Medes and Persians, and Daniel 8:20-21 names Media and Persia and then Greece. So I believe the silver is the Medo-Persian Empire, which took Babylon in 539 B.C., and the bronze is the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, who defeated Persia in 331 B.C.

The two arms of silver fit the two peoples, the Medes and the Persians, joined in one empire. Persia was "lower" not in size, since it was larger than Babylon, but likely in the absolute power of its king, who was bound by laws he could not change (Daniel 6:8, 15).

2:40 *And a fourth kingdom will be strong as iron, because iron shatters and crushes everything; and like iron that breaks, all these it will shatter and break.*

The fourth kingdom is described more than any other. It would be strong like iron, which crushes and shatters all things. I believe this is the Roman Empire, which took over the lands of the Greek kingdoms and conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. Rome was famous for its military power and its iron discipline, and it crushed every nation that resisted it.

Why two legs? One possibility is that they picture the later split of the Roman Empire into an eastern half, ruled from Constantinople, and a western half, ruled from Rome. The text itself doesn't explain the legs, so I offer this as a possibility, not a certainty.

2:41 *And that you saw the feet and the toes, some of them of potter's clay and some of them of iron: it will be a divided kingdom, and some of the firmness of the iron will be in it, because you saw the iron mixed with the clay of the mud.*

The feet and toes are part iron and part clay, and Daniel says this means it will be a divided kingdom. It will have some of the strength of iron, but it will be mixed with brittle clay. The fourth kingdom is not replaced by a fifth human kingdom. Instead, it continues in a different, weaker, divided form.

2:42 *And the toes of the feet, some of them of iron and some of them of clay: part of the kingdom will be strong, and part of it will be brittle.*

Daniel mentions the toes specifically. A statue has ten toes, and Daniel 7:7, 24 will tell us that the fourth beast has ten horns, which are ten kings. I believe the ten toes and the ten horns are the same thing: ten kings who will rule together in the final form of the fourth kingdom.

This final stage has never yet existed in history. The stone strikes the statue on its feet, and the kingdom of God is set up *"in the days of those kings"* (2:44). Since Christ has not yet returned to crush the kingdoms of the world, I believe this points to a future, revived form of the Roman Empire made up of ten rulers who give their power to the Antichrist. As we saw in the Revelation study, Revelation 17:12-13 describes exactly this: ten kings who receive authority with the beast for *"one hour"* and give their power to him.

2:43 *And that you saw the iron mixed with the clay of the mud: they will be mixing with the seed of mankind, and they will not be clinging this with this, just as iron does not mix with clay.*

The iron and clay will try to combine, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. The meaning of *"they will be mixing with the seed of mankind"* is debated. Some see intermarriage between ruling families, as happened between the Greek kingdoms (Daniel 11:6). Others see a mix of different peoples and nations trying to form one union. One possibility, and the one I lean toward, is that the final kingdom will be a forced union of strong and weak nations that will never truly be one. Whichever reading is right, the main point is clear: it will look powerful, but it will be brittle.

2:44 *And in the days of those kings the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and the kingdom will not be left to another people; it will shatter and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever,*

This is the high point of the chapter. *"In the days of those kings,"* the ten kings of the final stage, the God of heaven will set up His own kingdom. It will never be destroyed, it will never be handed to another people, it will crush all the other kingdoms, and it will stand forever.

There are different views on when this happens. Some believe the stone is the church, and that Christ's kingdom began at His first coming and has been slowly filling the earth ever since. I respect that view, but I don't believe it fits the text. The stone does not grow alongside the kingdoms. It destroys them suddenly and completely, and it strikes the final stage, the ten kings,

which has not yet appeared. Christ's first coming did not end the Roman Empire. I hold that this is His second coming, when He will rule the earth in a literal kingdom (Revelation 19:15; 20:4-6).

This is also why the church can have hope in a dark world. Every human kingdom, no matter how great, is temporary. Only one kingdom lasts forever, and if you belong to Christ, you belong to that kingdom.

New Testament links: Revelation 11:15 (alluded to)

2:45 *because you saw that from the mountain a stone was cut out which **was** not by hands, and it shattered the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what will be after this; and the dream **is** certain, and its interpretation **is** trustworthy."*

Daniel ended by repeating the key image, the stone cut from the mountain without hands crushing all the metals, and then gave the king assurance: *"the dream is certain, and its interpretation is trustworthy."*

Everything Daniel said about the first three kingdoms came true exactly as he said. Babylon fell to Medo-Persia, Medo-Persia fell to Greece, and the Greek kingdoms fell to Rome. That record gives us every reason to trust that the rest, the final kingdom and the coming stone, will come true as well.

This is also why some critics date the Book of Daniel to around 165 B.C., after many of these events. Many of them do not accept that God foretells the future in such detail, so they conclude the book must have been written after the fact. But Jesus called him *"Daniel the prophet"* (Matthew 24:15), and I take Jesus at His word. Daniel wrote in the 6th century B.C., and the God of heaven really did reveal what would take place. And if the fourth kingdom is Rome, as I believe, even a 165 B.C. date would not explain it, since Rome did not take Jerusalem until 63 B.C.

2:46 *Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and paid homage to Daniel, and he said to offer to him an offering and soothing **aromas**.*

The proud king fell on his face before a young Jewish exile and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. This is surprising, and some have asked why Daniel allowed it. The text does not say Daniel accepted worship. The next verse shows that the king understood the honor really belonged to Daniel's God. He was honoring God's messenger the only way he knew how, in the way of his own culture.

2:47 *The king answered Daniel and said, "Truly your God, He **is** the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."*

The king confessed that Daniel's God is *"the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries."* This was a big step, but it was not yet true faith. Nebuchadnezzar saw Daniel's God as the greatest of the gods, not the only God. He would soon build a golden image (chapter 3). It would take years and a hard humbling before he would truly praise the Most High (chapter 4).

2:48 *Then the king made Daniel great and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over all the province of Babylon and chief of prefects over all the wise men of Babylon.*

Daniel was given many great gifts, made ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and made chief over all the wise men. The young exile from chapter 1 was now one of the most powerful men in the empire. God had kept His promise to honor those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

2:49 *And Daniel asked from the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon; and Daniel* ***was*** *in the gate of the king.*

Daniel did not forget his friends. At his request, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel stayed at the king's court. This sets the stage for chapter 3, where these three men will face their own test without Daniel at their side.

Chapter 2 Summary

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a troubling dream and demanded that his wise men tell him both the dream and its meaning. When they could not, he ordered them all killed. Daniel and his friends prayed, God revealed the mystery, and Daniel told the king of a great statue of four metals destroyed by a stone cut out without hands.

The statue shows four world kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, with a final divided stage of ten kings. The stone is Christ, who will return to crush every human kingdom and set up God's kingdom, which will never be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel's God and promoted Daniel and his friends to high positions in Babylon.

The Four Kingdoms of Daniel

Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 describe the same four kingdoms in two different ways. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar sees human kingdoms the way the world sees them: a glorious statue of precious metals. In chapter 7, Daniel sees them the way God sees them: wild beasts that devour. The chart below shows how the two visions line up. Revelation 13:1-2 and 17:12 continue the picture.

Gold Head (Daniel 2:32, 37-38) / Lion with Eagle's Wings (7:4): Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, from 605 B.C. until it fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. Daniel names it directly: *"You are the head of gold."*

Silver Chest and Arms (2:32, 39) / Bear (7:5): Medo-Persia, from 539 B.C. until Alexander the Great defeated Darius III in 331 B.C. Daniel 5:28 and 8:20 name the Medes and Persians. The two arms picture the two peoples joined in one empire, and the bear raised up on one side (7:5) pictures Persia becoming the stronger partner.

Bronze Belly and Thighs (2:32, 39) / Leopard with Four Heads (7:6): Greece, beginning with Alexander's rapid conquest. After he died in 323 B.C., his empire was divided among his generals, which fits the leopard's four heads and the four horns of Daniel 8:8, 22. Daniel 8:21 names Greece.

Iron Legs (2:33, 40) / Terrible Fourth Beast with Iron Teeth (7:7, 19, 23): Rome, which crushed the Greek kingdoms and ruled Jerusalem from 63 B.C. Daniel does not name it, but it is the kingdom that followed Greece and ruled in the time of Christ.

Feet and Ten Toes of Iron and Clay (2:33, 41-43) / Ten Horns (7:7-8, 24): A final, future form of the fourth kingdom, made up of ten kings who rule at the same time. Out of them rises the little horn, the Antichrist (7:8, 24-25), and they give their authority to him (Revelation 17:12-13).

The Stone Cut Without Hands (2:34-35, 44-45) / The Son of Man and the Saints Receive the Kingdom (7:13-14, 18, 22, 27): Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, set up at His second coming. It crushes all the kingdoms before it, fills the whole earth, and lasts forever (Revelation 11:15).

A Note on Other Views: Scholars who date Daniel to the 2nd century B.C. usually count the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece, so that the prophecy ends with Antiochus IV. I reject that reading because Daniel treats the Medes and Persians as one kingdom (5:28; 6:8; 8:20, where they are one ram with two horns), and because the stone's kingdom did not come in the days of the Greek kings.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What do you do when something is keeping you awake at night with worry?

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar demand from his wise men, and why was it impossible for them? (2:5-11)

3. How did Daniel respond when his life was suddenly threatened? (2:14-18)

4. What do Daniel's words of praise teach us about who controls history? (2:20-23)

5. How did Daniel make sure the king knew where the interpretation really came from? (2:27-30)

6. What were the four parts of the statue made of, and what do they represent? (2:32-33, 37-40)

7. What happens to the statue when the stone strikes it, and what does that tell us about Christ's coming kingdom? (2:34-35, 44)

8. Why do you think Daniel prayed together with his friends instead of alone?

9. How does knowing that God "removes kings and sets up kings" change the way you look at world events?

10. Daniel gave God the credit even when others took it for themselves. Where is God calling you to point others to Him instead of yourself?

Chapter 3: Faith in the Fire

Scripture: The Golden Image and the Fiery Furnace

3:1-7 (The Golden Image) Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold; its height ***was*** approximately 90 feet (sixty cubits), ***and*** its width approximately 9 feet (six cubits). He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. And Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the authorities of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the authorities of the provinces were gathered for the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they were standing before the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And the herald was proclaiming with strength, "To you they say, O peoples, nations, and languages, at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you shall fall down and pay homage to the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoever does not fall down and pay homage, in that very moment he will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire." Because of this, at that time, as all the peoples were hearing the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages were falling down, paying homage to the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3:8-18 (The Three Refuse) Because of this, at that time Chaldean men approached and denounced the Jews. They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, "O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and pay homage to the image of gold; and whoever does not fall down and pay homage will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire. There are Jewish men whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men have not set regard on you, O king; they are not serving your god, and they are not paying homage to the image of gold which you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and fury said to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then these men were brought before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "***Is it*** on purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ***that*** you are not serving my gods, and you are not paying homage to the image of gold which I have set up? Now if you are ready, at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and pay homage to the image which I have made—and if you do not pay homage, in that very moment you will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire; and who ***is*** the god who will deliver you from my hands?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "We have no need to answer you concerning this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of the burning fire, and from your hand, O king, He will deliver ***us***. And if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not serving your god, and we will not pay homage to the image of gold which you have set up."

3:19-27 (The Fiery Furnace) Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled ***with*** fury, and the image of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He answered and said to heat the furnace seven times more than it was proper to heat it. And to certain mighty men of strength who ***were*** in his army he said to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to throw ***them*** into the furnace of the burning fire. Then these men were bound in their mantles, their trousers, and their caps, and their garments, and they were thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire. Because of this, since the word of the king ***was*** harsh and the furnace was heated exceedingly, those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the flame of the fire killed them. And these men, the three of them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was alarmed, and he rose up in haste. He answered and said to his counselors, "Did we not throw three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." He answered and said, "Look, I see four men loosed, walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no harm on them; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of ***the*** gods." Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace of the burning fire. He answered and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come ***here***!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, and the counselors of the king were gathered, seeing these men, that the fire had not had power over their bodies, and the hair of their head was not singed, and their mantles were not changed, and the smell of fire had not passed onto them.

3:28-30 (The King Blesses God) Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed ***be*** the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and has delivered His servants, who trusted in Him; and they changed the word of the king, and gave their bodies, so that they would not serve and would not pay homage to any god except their own God. And from me a decree is made that any people, nation, and language that says ***anything*** negligent against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be made ***into*** pieces, and his house shall be made a refuse heap, because there is not another god who is able to rescue like this." Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

Chapter 3 Preview

In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that he was the head of gold and confessed that Daniel's God is a God of gods. In chapter 3, he builds a statue of gold from head to foot and orders the whole empire to bow down to it. Whoever refuses will be thrown into a blazing furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse. They do not know whether God will rescue them, but they know they will not worship anything but Him. God meets them in the fire, and a fourth figure is seen walking with them. This chapter is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of faith under pressure, and it also points ahead to the day when the Antichrist will demand that the whole world worship an image (Revelation 13:14-15).

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold; its height **was** approximately 90 feet (sixty cubits), **and** its width approximately 9 feet (six cubits). He set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.*

The text does not give a date, though the Greek translation of the Old Testament adds one that is not in the Hebrew and Aramaic, so we should not rely on it. Many believe this took place some years after the dream of chapter 2, once Nebuchadnezzar's power was secure.

The image was sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, about ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. Those proportions are tall and thin, which has led many to think it stood on a large base or pillar, or that it was an obelisk with a figure on top. It was probably made of wood or another material overlaid with gold rather than solid gold. It was set up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. The exact location of Dura is not known for sure.

Why gold from head to foot? In chapter 2, God told Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom was only the head of gold, and that others would follow. This statue looks like his answer: "My kingdom will not be replaced. It will be gold all the way down." Pride does not like to hear that it is temporary.

The text does not say whom the image represented. It may have been one of Babylon's gods, or Nebuchadnezzar himself, or both. Either way, bowing to it was a test of loyalty to the king and his gods, and for the Jews it was idolatry (Exodus 20:3-5).

3:2 *And Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the authorities of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

The king summoned every level of government to the dedication: satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces. Every official who mattered was required to come. This was a public display of loyalty, and no one in the government would be able to hide.

3:3 *Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the authorities of the provinces were gathered for the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they were standing before the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

They all came and stood before the image. Notice how often this chapter repeats the phrase *"the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."* The repetition seems to make a point. This was a god made and set up by a man. It could not move or speak or save. The God of Israel is not set up by anyone.

3:4-5 *And the herald was proclaiming with strength, "To you they say, O peoples, nations, and languages, at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp,*

the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you shall fall down and pay homage to the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

A herald announced the king's command to people of every nation and language. As soon as they heard the music of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, they were to fall down and worship the golden image.

Some of these instrument names are Greek words, and critics once claimed this proves Daniel was written late. But Greek trade and Greek soldiers were already present in the ancient Near East in the 6th century B.C., so a few borrowed words for musical instruments are no surprise. The music itself was meant to move the crowd. Worship of the false god was set to a soundtrack, and everyone would bow together at the same signal.

3:6 *And whoever does not fall down and pay homage, in that very moment he will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire."*

Anyone who would not bow would be thrown into a blazing furnace at once. Large kilns and furnaces were common in Babylon, since the city was built with fired brick. Jeremiah 29:22 even mentions two men whom the king of Babylon *"roasted in the fire."* So this was not an empty threat.

This is how false worship has often worked. It is enforced by fear. The same pattern will appear in the last days, when the False Prophet causes everyone who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed (Revelation 13:15).

New Testament links: Revelation 13:15 (alluded to)

3:7 *Because of this, at that time, as all the peoples were hearing the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages were falling down, paying homage to the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

When the music played, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped. The pressure worked on almost everyone. It is easy to stand when no one is watching. It is much harder when the whole crowd goes down at once and you are the only one left standing.

3:8 *Because of this, at that time Chaldean men approached and denounced the Jews.*

Some Chaldeans came forward to accuse the Jews. The original wording is strong, something like "ate their pieces," an Aramaic way of saying they slandered them. Jealousy was probably part of it. These three foreign young men had been given high positions over the province (2:49), and their enemies saw a chance to bring them down.

Many ask, "Where was Daniel?" The text does not say. He may have been away on the king's business, or his position at the king's court may have excused him from standing with the provincial officials. One thing we can be sure of from the rest of the book is that Daniel would not have bowed. Since Scripture is silent, we should not build too much on the question.

3:9-11 *They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, "O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and pay homage to the image of gold; and whoever does not fall down and pay homage will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire.*

The accusers began with the usual flattery, *"O king, live forever!"* Then they reminded the king of his own decree, repeating it back to him word for word, including the punishment of the furnace. They were setting the trap so the king could not back down.

3:12 *There are Jewish men whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men have not set regard on you, O king; they are not serving your god, and they are not paying homage to the image of gold which you have set up."*

Then came the charge. They named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, reminded the king that he himself had appointed them over the province, and accused them of three things: they *"have not set regard on"* the king, they did not serve his gods, and they did not worship the golden image. The accusation was framed as disloyalty to the king, but the real issue was worship.

3:13 *Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and fury said to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then these men were brought before the king.*

The king exploded in rage and had the three men brought before him. We saw this same temper in 2:12. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world, but he could not rule his own anger (Proverbs 16:32).

3:14 *Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "**Is it** on purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **that** you are not serving my gods, and you are not paying homage to the image of gold which I have set up?*

Even in his anger, the king asked whether the charge was true. He seems to have valued these men and was willing to give them one more chance.

3:15 *Now if you are ready, at the time that you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the lyre, the trigon, the harp, and the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and pay homage to the image which I have made—and if you do not pay homage, in that very moment you will be thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire; and who **is** the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*

The king offered them a second chance. If they would bow when the music played, all would be well. If not, they would be thrown into the furnace immediately. Then he ended with a challenge straight at God: *"who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*

That question is the heart of the chapter. Nebuchadnezzar had already said Daniel's God is *"the God of gods"* (2:47), but now in his pride he put himself above every god. He was about to get his answer.

3:16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "We have no need to answer you concerning this matter.*

Their reply was calm and firm. They did not need to defend themselves or argue. This was not rudeness. They answered "King Nebuchadnezzar" with respect. They simply had nothing to discuss. The question of whom they would worship had been settled long before that day, just as Daniel had settled his question in 1:8.

3:17 *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of the burning fire, and from your hand, O king, He will deliver* ***us****.*

They answered the king's challenge directly. Yes, there is a God who can deliver, and He is the God they serve. They were confident in God's power to rescue them from the furnace and from the king's hand.

3:18 *And if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not serving your god, and we will not pay homage to the image of gold which you have set up."*

These are some of the most important words of faith in the whole Bible. They believed God could save them, but they did not presume that He would. Either way, they would not serve the king's gods or worship the golden image.

This is what mature faith looks like. Their faith was not in a particular outcome. It was in God Himself. They trusted His power, and they trusted His will, even if His will meant death. Many believers through history have been thrown into the fire and not been rescued from it, from the martyrs of the early church to believers in many countries today. Their faith was no weaker than the faith of these three men. God's answer to them was simply different (Hebrews 11:32-38).

This is also why I believe those who come to Christ during the Tribulation can face it without fear. The Antichrist will be given power to make war with the holy ones and overcome them for a time (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7). As I explained in the Revelation study, I believe the church will be gathered to Christ before that time begins, and I respect those who see it differently. But many will turn to Christ during those years, and God will keep them as He kept these three men, sometimes by delivering them from death and sometimes by delivering them through death into His presence. The same is true for believers who face persecution today. Either way, the answer is the same: *"we are not serving your god."*

3:19 *Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled* ***with*** *fury, and the image of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He answered and said to heat the furnace seven times more than it was proper to heat it.*

The king was so furious that his face changed toward them. He ordered the furnace heated *"seven times more than it was proper to heat it."* Seven here is likely a way of saying "as hot as possible." It was an act of pure rage, and it made no sense. A hotter fire would only kill them faster. Anger rarely thinks clearly.

3:20 *And to certain mighty men of strength who **were** in his army he said to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to throw **them** into the furnace of the burning fire.*

He commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie the three men up and throw them into the blazing furnace. Using his best warriors shows how seriously he took their defiance.

3:21 *Then these men were bound in their mantles, their trousers, and their caps, and their garments, and they were thrown into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire.*

The three were tied up fully dressed in their trousers, coats, caps and other clothes, and thrown in. This detail is mentioned for a reason. Clothing burns quickly, so when they later come out with their clothes untouched, there will be no doubt that a miracle has happened.

3:22 *Because of this, since the word of the king **was** harsh and the furnace was heated exceedingly, those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the flame of the fire killed them.*

The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw the three men in. The fire was real and deadly. No one could later say the furnace had gone cold.

3:23 *And these men, the three of them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the midst of the furnace of the burning fire.*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fell into the middle of the fire, still bound. As far as anyone could see, it was over. Sometimes God lets His people go all the way into the fire before He shows His hand.

3:24 *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was alarmed, and he rose up in haste. He answered and said to his counselors, "Did we not throw three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king."*

Suddenly the king jumped up in astonishment and asked his advisers whether they had not thrown three bound men into the fire. They answered, *"Certainly, O king."* He had seen something that did not make sense.

3:25 *He answered and said, "Look, I see four men loosed, walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no harm on them; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of **the** gods."*

The king saw four men, loosed and walking around in the middle of the fire, unharmed, and the fourth looked like *"a son of the gods."* The only thing the fire burned was the ropes that bound them.

Who was the fourth man? Christians have held two main views. Some believe he was an angel, which is how Nebuchadnezzar himself describes him in 3:28: God *"sent His angel."* This view takes the king's words at face value and fits other places where God sends an angel to protect His people (Daniel 6:22). Others believe this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, meaning the Son of God appearing before He was born as a man in Bethlehem. In the Old Testament, the Angel

of the LORD sometimes speaks as God Himself (Genesis 16:7-13; Exodus 3:2-6; Judges 13:18-22), and many believe these appearances were the Son.

I lean toward the second view. I believe the fourth man was the Son of God Himself, standing with His servants in the fire. Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan, described what he saw in the words he had: a divine being, a "son of the gods," a messenger from God. That fits either view, so I would not divide with anyone over it. Note that the King James Version translates this phrase *"the Son of God,"* but the Aramaic wording is better rendered *"a son of the gods,"* as the translation in this study has it, because it is a pagan king speaking.

Whichever view you hold, the comfort is the same. God did not keep them out of the fire, but He met them in it. Isaiah 43:2 promises that when you walk through the fire you will not be scorched. Jesus promised, *"I am with you all the days"* (Matthew 28:20). The fire is never the end of the story for those who belong to Him.

3:26 *Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace of the burning fire. He answered and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come* ***here****!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the midst of the fire.*

The king came near the door of the furnace and called them by name, calling them *"servants of the Most High God."* This is a big change from the man who asked, *"who is the god who will deliver you?"* The three men walked out of the fire. The fourth man is not mentioned again.

3:27 *And the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, and the counselors of the king were gathered, seeing these men, that the fire had not had power over their bodies, and the hair of their head was not singed, and their mantles were not changed, and the smell of fire had not passed onto them.*

All the officials gathered around and saw it for themselves: the fire had not harmed their bodies, not a hair was singed, their clothes were unchanged, and they did not even smell of smoke. The same rulers who had bowed to the golden image were now witnesses to the power of the true God.

God's deliverance was complete. He did not just save their lives. He left no trace of the fire on them at all.

New Testament links: Hebrews 11:34 (alluded to)

3:28 *Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed* ***be*** *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and has delivered His servants, who trusted in Him; and they changed the word of the king, and gave their bodies, so that they would not serve and would not pay homage to any god except their own God.*

Nebuchadnezzar blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent His angel and delivered His servants. He even praised them for defying his own command and giving up their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

This is an amazing turnaround. The king who demanded worship now honored the men who refused him. Faithfulness under pressure often speaks more loudly than any sermon. People who will not listen to our words may still see our faith.

3:29 *And from me a decree is made that any people, nation, and language that says **anything** negligent against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be made **into** pieces, and his house shall be made a refuse heap, because there is not another god who is able to rescue like this."*

The king issued a new decree: anyone of any nation or language who spoke anything offensive against this God would be torn limb from limb and his house made a rubbish heap. The reason he gave was simple: *"there is not another god who is able to rescue like this."*

Notice that Nebuchadnezzar still did not fully understand. He honored Israel's God as the greatest god, but he still spoke of other gods, and he still used threats and violence to enforce religion. He was moving in the right direction, but he had not yet bowed his own heart. That will come in chapter 4.

3:30 *Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to prosper in the province of Babylon.*

The king promoted the three men in the province of Babylon. The plan of their enemies backfired completely. They came out of the fire with greater honor than they had before.

This is the last time these three men are mentioned in the book. Their story ends here, but their example has strengthened believers for over two thousand years. Hebrews 11:34 likely remembers them among the heroes of faith who *"quenched the power of fire."*

Chapter 3 Summary

Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge golden image and commanded everyone in his empire to bow down to it or be thrown into a blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused, trusting that God could save them, and resolving to stay faithful even if He did not. The king threw them into a furnace so hot it killed the soldiers who carried them, but God met them in the fire.

A fourth figure, like a son of the gods, walked with them, and they came out without even the smell of smoke. Nebuchadnezzar praised their God, made a decree protecting His honor, and promoted the three men. The chapter shows that God is with His people in the fire, and it previews the day when the world will again be commanded to worship an image.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been the only one in a group who would not go along with something? What was that like?

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar build, and what did he command everyone to do? (3:1-6)

3. Why do you think the king made the image gold from head to foot, after his dream in chapter 2? (2:38; 3:1)

4. What did the Chaldeans accuse Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of? (3:8-12)

5. What question did the king ask that challenged God directly? (3:15)

6. How did the three men answer the king, and what does "And if not" teach us about faith? (3:16-18)

7. What did the king see in the furnace, and who do you believe the fourth man was? (3:24-25, 28)

8. What evidence showed that God had fully delivered them? (3:27)

9. Where do you feel pressure today to "bow down" to something other than God?

10. How does this chapter help you prepare for times of persecution, whether now or in the last days? (Revelation 13:15)

Chapter 4: The King Who Learned Who Rules

Scripture: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Great Tree

4:1-3 (The King's Testimony) Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and languages who dwell in all the earth: May your peace increase! The signs and the wonders which the Most High God has done with me, it has seemed good before me to declare. His signs, how great! And His wonders, how strong! His kingdom ***is*** an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion ***is*** with generation and generation.

4:4-18 (The Dream of the Great Tree) I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream, and it made me afraid; and the imaginings on my bed and the visions of my head alarmed me. And a decree was made from me to bring in before me all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in; and I told the dream before them, and they did not make known to me its interpretation. And at last Daniel came in before me, whose name ***is*** Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom ***is*** a spirit of holy gods; and I told the dream before him: "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that a spirit of holy gods ***is*** in you, and no mystery troubles you, tell the visions of my dream which I saw, and its interpretation. And the visions of my head on my bed: I was seeing, and look, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height ***was*** great. The tree grew great and grew strong, and its height reached to the heavens, and its sight ***was*** to the end of all the earth. Its foliage ***was*** beautiful, and its fruit plentiful, and food for all ***was*** in it. Under it the beasts of the field had shade, and in its branches the birds of the heavens dwelt, and all flesh was fed from it. I was seeing in the visions of my head on my bed, and look, a watcher and a holy one was coming down from the heavens. He was proclaiming with strength, and thus he was saying: 'Cut down the tree and cut off its branches; strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches. Yet leave the stump of its roots in the ground, and with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let it be drenched with the dew of the heavens, and its portion ***be*** with the beasts in the grass of the ground. Let them change its heart from ***that of*** mankind, and let the heart of a beast be given to it; and let seven times pass over it. The edict ***is*** by the decree of the watchers, and the matter ***is*** by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it, and He sets up over it the lowly of men.' This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell its interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of holy gods ***is*** in you."

4:19-27 (Daniel Interprets the Dream) Then Daniel, whose name ***was*** Belteshazzar, was appalled for about one moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream and its interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, ***may*** the dream ***be*** for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your adversaries! The tree that you saw, which grew great and grew strong, and whose height reached to the heavens, and its sight to all the earth, and whose foliage ***was*** beautiful and its fruit plentiful, and food for all ***was*** in it; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose

branches the birds of the heavens settled, it ***is*** you, O king, who have grown great and grown strong; and your greatness has grown great and has reached to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. And that the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from the heavens and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump of its roots in the ground, and with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let it be drenched with the dew of the heavens, and its portion ***be*** with the beasts of the field, until seven times pass over it,' this ***is*** the interpretation, O king, and it ***is*** the decree of the Most High which has reached my lord the king: and they will drive you away from mankind, and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field; and they will feed you grass like oxen, and they will drench you with the dew of the heavens; and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it. And that they said to leave the stump of the roots of the tree: your kingdom ***will be*** enduring for you from ***the time*** that you know that the heavens rule. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your sin by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the afflicted; perhaps there will be a lengthening of your prosperity."

4:28-37 (The King Humbled and Restored) All ***this*** reached Nebuchadnezzar the king. At the end of twelve months he was walking about on the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king answered and said, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built for a house of the kingdom by the strength of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word ***was*** still in the mouth of the king, a voice fell from the heavens: "To you they say, O King Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom has passed from you. And they will drive you away from mankind, and your dwelling ***will be*** with the beasts of the field; they will feed you grass like oxen, and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it." In that very moment the word was fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven away from mankind, and he ate grass like oxen, and his body was drenched with the dew of the heavens, until his hair grew long like eagles' ***feathers*** and his nails like birds' ***claws***. And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to the heavens, and my knowledge returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and glorified Him who lives forever, for His dominion ***is*** an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom ***is*** with generation and generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth ***are*** counted as nothing, and He does according to His will with the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth; and there is no one who can strike on His hand and say to Him, "What have You done?" At that time my knowledge returned to me, and for the honor of my kingdom my majesty and my splendor returned to me; and my counselors and my nobles sought me, and I was established over my kingdom, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of the heavens, for all His works ***are*** truth and His ways ***are*** justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to bring low.

Chapter 4 Preview

Chapter 4 is unlike any other chapter in the Bible. It is written, for the most part, by a pagan king. Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful man on earth, tells the story of how God humbled him. He had a second troubling dream, this time of a great tree that was cut down. Daniel explained that the tree was the king himself, and he warned him to turn from his sins. A year later, as

Nebuchadnezzar stood on his palace roof boasting about the city he had built, God took away his mind. He lived like an animal in the fields until he recognized that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men.

The whole chapter turns on one sentence, repeated several times: the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind. Chapter 2 showed God's control over the rise and fall of whole empires. Chapter 4 shows the same truth in the life of one proud man. It is a lesson every one of us needs, because pride is not just a king's sin.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and languages who dwell in all the earth: May your peace increase!*

The chapter opens like an official royal letter, the kind kings sent across their empire. Nebuchadnezzar addresses it to everyone in his vast kingdom, and he begins with a greeting of peace. What is remarkable is not the form of the letter but its subject. The king is about to tell the whole world a story that does not flatter him at all.

Most scholars place these events late in Nebuchadnezzar's long reign, which ran from 605 B.C. to 562 B.C. By this time his great building projects in Babylon were largely finished, which fits what he says in verse 30. Daniel had been in Babylon for decades by now.

4:2-3 *The signs and the wonders which the Most High God has done with me, it has seemed good before me to declare. His signs, how great! And His wonders, how strong! His kingdom* ***is*** *an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion* ***is*** *with generation and generation.*

Before he tells the story, the king tells us the point of it. He wants to declare the *"signs and wonders"* that the Most High God has done for him. Then he bursts into praise: God's kingdom is everlasting, and His dominion lasts from generation to generation.

Think about who is saying this. In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. In chapter 3, he built a golden image and demanded that everyone bow to it. Now he confesses that his own kingdom is temporary, and God's is the only one that lasts forever. That is the same message as the stone that became a great mountain in Daniel 2:44. God taught this king the lesson of his own dream, the hard way.

You might ask, "Why does the king start with the ending?" It's simple: he wants us to read the whole story through the lens of what he finally learned. A good testimony does the same. It points to God first and to ourselves second.

4:4-5 *I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream, and it made me afraid; and the imaginings on my bed and the visions of my head alarmed me.*

The king was *"at ease"* and *"flourishing"* in his palace. His wars were over, his enemies were defeated, and his city was magnificent. This is often when pride does its quiet work. Trouble drives many people to God; comfort drives many away from Him. Moses warned Israel of this

very danger: when you have eaten and are satisfied and your house is built, be careful not to forget the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:11-14).

Into that comfort came a dream that frightened him. God has a way of breaking into our ease when we are drifting away from Him.

4:6-7 *And a decree was made from me to bring in before me all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in; and I told the dream before them, and they did not make known to me its interpretation.*

Nebuchadnezzar called in all the wise men of Babylon. This time, unlike in chapter 2, he told them the dream. Even so, they could not interpret it. Their failure was not a lack of effort or training. Human wisdom simply cannot read what God has written unless God reveals it.

Some have wondered why the king did not call Daniel first, given what happened in chapter 2. We are not told. It may be that Daniel was busy with other duties, or the king may have suspected the dream was bad news and hoped someone would tell him something softer. Either way, God's man was saved for last, and that brought God the most glory.

4:8-9 *And at last Daniel came in before me, whose name **is** Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom **is** a spirit of holy gods; and I told the dream before him: "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that a spirit of holy gods **is** in you, and no mystery troubles you, tell the visions of my dream which I saw, and its interpretation.*

Finally Daniel came in. Nebuchadnezzar mentions both of Daniel's names. Belteshazzar was the Babylonian name given to him in Daniel 1:7, and the king tells us it was connected to the name of his own god, most likely Bel, the title of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon.

Notice how the king describes Daniel: a man *"in whom is a spirit of holy gods."* Nebuchadnezzar was still thinking as a polytheist, someone who believes in many gods. He knew something supernatural was at work in Daniel, but he did not yet understand that it was the one true God. This tells us that his praise in verses 2-3 came after the events of this chapter, not before.

He also calls Daniel *"chief of the magicians."* That was Daniel's office from Daniel 2:48, not a description of his practice. Daniel never used magic or divination. He prayed, and God answered.

4:10-12 *And the visions of my head on my bed: I was seeing, and look, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height **was** great. The tree grew great and grew strong, and its height reached to the heavens, and its sight **was** to the end of all the earth. Its foliage **was** beautiful, and its fruit plentiful, and food for all **was** in it. Under it the beasts of the field had shade, and in its branches the birds of the heavens dwelt, and all flesh was fed from it.*

The king describes the dream. He saw an enormous tree standing at the center of the earth. It grew until its top reached the sky and it could be seen from the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit was plentiful, and it fed everyone. Animals rested in its shade, and birds nested in its branches.

A great tree was a common picture of a great king or kingdom in the ancient world, and the Bible uses it the same way. Ezekiel 31 describes Assyria as a towering cedar of Lebanon, with birds in its branches and beasts under it, which was then cut down because of its pride. Jesus also used the picture of birds nesting in branches in His parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), there describing the growth of God's kingdom.

New Testament links: Matthew 13:32 (alluded to); Luke 13:19 (alluded to); Mark 4:32 (alluded to)

4:13-14 *I was seeing in the visions of my head on my bed, and look, a watcher and a holy one was coming down from the heavens. He was proclaiming with strength, and thus he was saying: 'Cut down the tree and cut off its branches; strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches.*

Then a heavenly messenger came down. The Aramaic word translated *"watcher"* describes one who stays awake and keeps watch. The text also calls him *"a holy one,"* which makes clear this is an angel. Daniel 4 is the only chapter in the Bible where angels are called watchers.

The watcher shouted a command: chop down the tree, cut off its branches, strip its leaves and scatter its fruit. Every creature that depended on the tree would scatter. One loud word from heaven was enough to bring down the greatest tree on earth.

4:15-16 *Yet leave the stump of its roots in the ground, and with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let it be drenched with the dew of the heavens, and its portion **be** with the beasts in the grass of the ground. Let them change its heart from **that of** mankind, and let the heart of a beast be given to it; and let seven times pass over it.*

Yet the stump and roots were to be left in the ground, held by a band of iron and bronze. Notice that in the middle of this verse the language shifts from *"it"* to *"him."* The tree is a person. He would be wet with the dew of heaven and would live among the animals in the grass. His mind would be changed from a man's mind to a beast's mind.

The band around the stump has been understood in a few ways. Some see it as a sign of protection, keeping the stump safe until it could grow again. Others see it as a sign of restraint, like a chain on a madman. Both ideas fit the story: God both restrained and preserved the king.

The judgment would last until *"seven times pass over it."* Most interpreters, ancient and modern, understand this as seven years, and I agree. The same Aramaic word for "time" is used in Daniel 7:25 for a period of a year. Some suggest seven seasons or seven months, but seven years is the plain and most natural reading. Seven is also the number of completeness in Scripture. The king's humbling would be full and complete, and it would last exactly as long as God decided.

4:17 *The edict **is** by the decree of the watchers, and the matter **is** by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it, and He sets up over it the lowly of men.'*

Here is the key verse of the chapter. The sentence was decreed in heaven so that everyone living would know that *"the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind,"* that He gives it to whomever He wishes, and that He can set over it *"the lowly of men."*

This verse pulls back the curtain on how the world really works. Kings think they rise by their own strength, but God gives authority and God takes it away. Paul taught the same thing in Romans 13:1: there is no authority except from God. That includes kings we admire and kings we fear. It will include even the Antichrist, who will be *"given"* authority for a set time (Revelation 13:5), and not one day more.

The phrase *"the lowly of men"* is striking. God sometimes places very humble people in high positions, and sometimes He puts unworthy people there to accomplish His purposes. Either way, He remains in control.

This is a comfort for us. When we look at the leaders of our own day, we can pray for them and respect the office, but we do not have to live in fear. No ruler is beyond God's reach.

4:18 *This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell its interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of holy gods **is** in you."*

The king finished describing the dream and turned to Daniel. He admitted again that none of his wise men could help him. But he had confidence in Daniel, because of what he had seen in chapter 2. Daniel's faithfulness over many years had earned him a reputation, even with a pagan king.

4:19 *Then Daniel, whose name **was** Belteshazzar, was appalled for about one moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream and its interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, **may** the dream **be** for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your adversaries!*

Daniel understood the dream immediately, and it troubled him. For a time he was *"perplexed."* He did not rush in with bad news. The king saw his distress and told him not to be afraid to speak.

Daniel's reply shows his heart. He wished the dream were about the king's enemies instead of the king. This is the same Nebuchadnezzar who had destroyed Jerusalem and carried Daniel's people into exile. Yet Daniel genuinely cared about him. Daniel lived out what Jeremiah told the exiles to do: seek the welfare of the city where God had sent them and pray for it (Jeremiah 29:7). It is a picture of what Jesus taught centuries later about loving our enemies and praying for those who mistreat us.

4:20-22 *The tree that you saw, which grew great and grew strong, and whose height reached to the heavens, and its sight to all the earth, and whose foliage **was** beautiful and its fruit plentiful, and food for all **was** in it; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens settled, it **is** you, O king, who have grown great and grown strong; and your greatness has grown great and has reached to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.*

Daniel spoke plainly. The great tree that reached to the sky, that everyone could see, that fed and sheltered all creatures, was Nebuchadnezzar himself. His greatness and his rule reached to the ends of the earth.

Daniel did not flatter him, and he did not insult him. He simply told the truth. Nebuchadnezzar really was great, and his empire really did provide for a vast number of people. The problem was not that he was great. The problem was that he believed his greatness was his own doing.

4:23-24 *And that the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from the heavens and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump of its roots in the ground, and with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let it be drenched with the dew of the heavens, and its portion **be** with the beasts of the field, until seven times pass over it,' this **is** the interpretation, O king, and it **is** the decree of the Most High which has reached my lord the king:*

Daniel repeated the watcher's command and then gave its source. In verse 17 the sentence was called the decree of the watchers. Here Daniel calls it *"the decree of the Most High."* There is no contradiction. The angels announced it and carried it out, but the decision came from God. The angels are His servants, not independent rulers.

4:25 *and they will drive you away from mankind, and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field; and they will feed you grass like oxen, and they will drench you with the dew of the heavens; and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it.*

Daniel told the king exactly what would happen. He would be driven away from people and would live with the animals. He would eat grass like cattle and be wet with the dew of heaven. This would continue until seven times passed and he recognized that the Most High rules and gives kingdoms to whomever He wishes.

The purpose of the judgment was not destruction. It was recognition. God was not trying to end Nebuchadnezzar; He was trying to teach him. The word *"until"* shows us that the judgment had a goal, and once the goal was reached, it would end.

The condition described here has been compared to a rare mental illness, sometimes called boanthropy, in which a person believes he is an animal and behaves like one. Whether or not that label fits, the point of the text is that this was a judgment from God, not a random sickness.

4:26 *And that they said to leave the stump of the roots of the tree: your kingdom **will be** enduring for you from **the time** that you know that the heavens rule.*

The stump left in the ground meant that the kingdom would be given back to the king once he learned his lesson. Daniel says *"the heavens rule"* here as a respectful way to refer to God Himself. This is one of the first places in Scripture where "the heavens" is used this way, and it became common later among the Jewish people. Jesus' phrase "the kingdom of the heavens" in Matthew uses the same kind of respectful language.

It also tells us that God kept the king's throne for him during those years. Ancient kingdoms did not usually wait seven years for a mad king to recover. That Nebuchadnezzar's throne was still there when he returned is itself evidence of God's hand.

4:27 *Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your sin by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the afflicted; perhaps there will be a lengthening of your prosperity."*

Daniel did not stop at interpretation. Like a true prophet, he called the king to repent. He urged him to turn away from his sins by doing what was right, and to turn from his wrongdoing by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps then his prosperity would last longer.

This tells us something about Nebuchadnezzar's sins. His pride showed itself in how he treated people. Great building projects in the ancient world were often built on the backs of the poor and of captive peoples. Daniel told the king that true greatness would show up in righteousness and mercy, not in walls and palaces.

Notice also the word *"Perhaps."* Daniel did not promise that repentance would cancel the judgment, but he held out hope that God might delay it. God's warnings are often an invitation. Jonah's message to Nineveh is a good example: when the city repented, God relented (Jonah 3:10). God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9).

4:28-29 *All **this** reached Nebuchadnezzar the king. At the end of twelve months he was walking about on the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.*

"All this reached Nebuchadnezzar the king." The king's own letter admits that every word came true. But not right away. God gave him a full year. Twelve months of grace, twelve months to take Daniel's advice to heart.

It seems the king did not. A year later he was walking on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon, looking out over his city. The flat palace roofs of the ancient Near East were a common place to walk and look out, and from Nebuchadnezzar's roof he would have seen one of the most magnificent cities in the world.

God's patience is real, but it is not endless. When God gives us time after a warning, that time is a gift to be used, not a sign that the warning was empty.

4:30 *The king answered and said, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built for a house of the kingdom by the strength of my power and for the honor of my majesty?"*

Here is the moment of pride. Nebuchadnezzar looked out and said, in effect, "Look what I have built, by my power, for my glory." Notice how often he uses "I" and "my" in one sentence.

Babylon truly was great. Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt and expanded the city with enormous walls, palaces, temples and the famous Ishtar Gate, decorated with glazed brick figures of animals. Archaeologists have found many bricks stamped with his name, and his own building

inscriptions boast of his work on the city. The boast in this verse fits exactly what we know of the man.

The phrase *"the great Babylon"* should catch our attention. In Revelation 14:8 and 18:2, the cry goes out that great Babylon has fallen. As we saw in the Revelation study, the final Babylon will be marked by the same pride: a world system that glorifies itself and says in its heart that it sits as a queen and will never see mourning (Revelation 18:7). God's answer to human pride has not changed.

New Testament links: Revelation 14:8 (alluded to)

4:31-32 *While the word **was** still in the mouth of the king, a voice fell from the heavens: "To you they say, O King Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom has passed from you. And they will drive you away from mankind, and your dwelling **will be** with the beasts of the field; they will feed you grass like oxen, and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind, and to whomever He wills He gives it."*

The words were still in his mouth when a voice spoke from heaven. There was no delay this time. The kingdom was taken from him, and the voice announced the same judgment Daniel had described a year earlier.

This is a sobering verse. Nebuchadnezzar had a year to repent, but when the moment of judgment came, it came in an instant. Proverbs 16:18 says that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Nebuchadnezzar's fall came the very moment he took credit for what God had given.

4:33 *In that very moment the word was fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven away from mankind, and he ate grass like oxen, and his body was drenched with the dew of the heavens, until his hair grew long like eagles' **feathers** and his nails like birds' **claws**.*

Immediately the word came true. The king was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was wet with the dew of heaven, and he went so long without care that his hair grew long and matted like feathers and his nails like the claws of a bird.

The man who had compared himself to a great tree, reaching to the sky, now lived lower than any of his subjects. God brought him down to the level of the animals. It is a vivid picture of what happens to us when we try to take God's place: we do not rise to be like God, we fall below what we were made to be.

Critics sometimes say there is no Babylonian record of Nebuchadnezzar's madness. That should not surprise us. Kings did not usually record their humiliations, and the records of his later reign are incomplete. Some also point to a Dead Sea Scrolls fragment called the Prayer of Nabonidus, which tells of a later king's long illness, and argue that Daniel borrowed and changed that story. I don't find that convincing. The fragment is short and differs in many details, and I take Daniel's account as true history, written by the prophet Jesus Himself named (Matthew 24:15).

4:34 *And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to the heavens, and my knowledge returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and glorified Him who lives forever, for His dominion* ***is*** *an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom* ***is*** *with generation and generation.*

At the end of the seven times, Nebuchadnezzar says, *"I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to the heavens, and my knowledge returned to me."* Notice the order. He looked up first, then his mind returned. Animals look down at the ground; the first sign of the king's recovery was that he looked up to God.

Then he praised and honored the One *"who lives forever."* He confessed again that God's dominion is everlasting and His kingdom lasts from generation to generation. Nebuchadnezzar's reign would end, as every human reign does. God's never will.

4:35 *And all the inhabitants of the earth* ***are*** *counted as nothing, and He does according to His will with the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth; and there is no one who can strike on His hand and say to Him, "What have You done?"*

The king now saw himself and every other person in the right light. Compared to God, all the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing. God does as He pleases in heaven and on earth, and no one can stop Him or demand an explanation from Him.

This is not a bitter statement. It is the honest worship of a man who finally understood the difference between the Creator and the creature. Isaiah 40:15-17 says something very similar: the nations are like a drop in a bucket before Him. When we see God this way, our own worries shrink to their proper size, and so does our pride.

4:36 *At that time my knowledge returned to me, and for the honor of my kingdom my majesty and my splendor returned to me; and my counselors and my nobles sought me, and I was established over my kingdom, and surpassing greatness was added to me.*

Just as Daniel had promised in verse 26, the kingdom was restored. His advisers and nobles came looking for him, his throne was given back, and he became even greater than before.

God's discipline is not meant to destroy His creatures but to restore them. Hebrews 12:11 reminds us that discipline seems painful at the time, but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Nebuchadnezzar came out of his seven years a wiser man than he went in.

4:37 *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of the heavens, for all His works* ***are*** *truth and His ways* ***are*** *justice; and those who walk in pride He is able to bring low.*

The king ends his letter with praise. He exalts and honors the King of heaven, whose works are true and whose ways are just. And then he closes with the lesson of his whole life: God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Was Nebuchadnezzar truly converted? Christians disagree. Some believe this chapter shows a genuine saving faith, and they point to his personal praise, his public letter, and his confession that God's ways are just. Others believe he simply acknowledged the God of Israel as the greatest God, without turning away from his other gods. I lean toward believing that his change of heart was real. The chapter reads like the testimony of a man who met the living God, and the fact that God preserved this letter in Scripture is meaningful. But we cannot be certain, and I hold that view humbly.

Either way, the lesson for us is clear. James 4:6 tells us that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. We can learn humility the easy way, by listening to God's Word, or the hard way, like Nebuchadnezzar. God is able to humble any of us.

Chapter 4 Summary

Nebuchadnezzar writes to his whole kingdom to tell how God humbled him. He dreamed of a great tree that was cut down, leaving only a stump bound with iron and bronze. Daniel explained that the tree was the king, who would be driven from people to live like an animal until seven times had passed over him and he recognized that the Most High rules over mankind. Daniel urged him to repent, but a year later the king boasted over Babylon, and the judgment fell at once.

At the end of that time, the king looked up to heaven, his reason returned, and he praised God. His kingdom was restored, and he closed his letter with the lesson he had learned: God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. When have you seen comfort or success pull someone, maybe yourself, away from God?

2. How does Nebuchadnezzar describe God's kingdom at the start of his letter? (4:3)

3. What did the great tree in the king's dream represent? (4:20-22)

4. According to the watcher, what was the purpose of the king's judgment? (4:17)

5. How did Daniel respond when he understood the dream, and what does that show about his heart toward the king? (4:19)

6. What advice did Daniel give the king, and what does it tell us about the king's sins? (4:27)

7. What did Nebuchadnezzar say on the palace roof that brought the judgment on him? (4:30)

8. What was the first thing the king did before his reason returned to him? (4:34)

9. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to take credit for what God has given you?

10. How does knowing that "the Most High rules over the kingdom of mankind" change the way you think about the leaders and events of our day?

Chapter 5: The Writing on the Wall

Scripture: Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon

5:1-4 (Belshazzar's Feast) Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking the wine before the thousand. Belshazzar said, at the tasting of the wine, to bring the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar his father had brought out from the temple which ***was*** in Jerusalem, that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the vessels of gold which they had brought out from the temple which ***was*** the house of God which ***was*** in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine, and they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5:5-12 (The Hand and the Writing) In that very moment fingers of a man's hand came out, and they were writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king; and the king was seeing the palm of the hand that was writing. Then the king's brightness changed on him, and his thoughts alarmed him; and the joints of his loins were loosened, and his knees were knocking this against this. The king called with strength to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners. The king answered and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who reads this writing and declares to me its interpretation will be clothed ***with*** purple, and the necklace of gold ***will be*** on his neck, and he will rule ***as*** third in the kingdom." Then all the wise men of the king were coming in, and they were not able to read the writing and to make known its interpretation to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his brightness was changing on him, and his nobles were perplexed. The queen, because of the words of the king and his nobles, came into the house of the feast. The queen answered and said, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you, and let not your brightness be changed. There is a man in your kingdom in whom ***is*** a spirit of holy gods; and in the days of your father illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of gods were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, ***and*** diviners, your father the king, because an extraordinary spirit, and knowledge and insight, interpreting dreams and declaring riddles and loosening knots, were found in him, in Daniel, whose name the king made Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will declare the interpretation."

5:13-29 (Daniel Reads the Writing) Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You ***are*** that Daniel who ***is*** of the sons of the exile of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. And I have heard concerning you that a spirit of gods ***is*** in you, and illumination and insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. And now the wise men, the conjurers, have been brought in before me, that they might read this writing and make known to me its interpretation; and they were not able to declare the interpretation of the matter. And I have heard concerning you that you are able to interpret interpretations and to loosen knots. Now if you are able to read the writing and to make known to me its interpretation, you will be clothed ***with*** purple, and the necklace of gold ***will be*** on your neck, and you will rule ***as*** the third in the kingdom." Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king, and I will make known to him the interpretation. You, O king: the Most High God gave the

kingdom and the greatness and the honor and the majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages were trembling and fearing before him. Whom he wished, he was killing; and whom he wished, he was keeping alive; and whom he wished, he was lifting up; and whom he wished, he was bringing low. And when his heart was lifted up and his spirit grew strong to act proudly, he was brought down from the throne of his kingdom, and they removed the honor from him. And he was driven away from the sons of mankind, and they made his heart like ***that of*** the beasts, and his dwelling ***was*** with the wild donkeys; they fed him grass like oxen, and his body was drenched with the dew of the heavens, until he knew that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of mankind, and whomever He wills He sets up over it. And you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not brought low your heart, inasmuch as you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of the heavens; and the vessels of His house they have brought before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines, are drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see and do not hear and do not know; and the God in whose hand ***is*** your breath, and whose ***are*** all your ways, you have not glorified. Then from before Him the palm of the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. And this ***is*** the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. This ***is*** the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered your kingdom and has finished it. TEKEL, you have been weighed in the scales and have been found lacking. PERES, your kingdom has been divided and has been given to Media and Persia." Then Belshazzar spoke, and they clothed Daniel ***with*** purple, and the necklace of gold ***was*** on his neck; and they proclaimed concerning him that he would be ruling ***as*** the third in the kingdom.

5:30-31 (The Fall of Babylon) In that night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, ***being*** about sixty-two years old.

Chapter 5 Preview

More than twenty years have passed since Nebuchadnezzar died. Belshazzar, a later king who sees himself as Nebuchadnezzar's heir, now rules in Babylon while the armies of the Medes and Persians are outside the walls. Instead of preparing for war, Belshazzar throws a drunken feast and makes a point of drinking from the sacred vessels taken from God's temple in Jerusalem. In the middle of the party, the fingers of a hand appear and write on the palace wall. No one can read it until Daniel, now an old man, is called in.

Daniel reads God's verdict: Belshazzar's kingdom has been numbered, weighed and divided. That same night Belshazzar is killed and Babylon falls. The head of gold from Daniel 2 gives way to the chest and arms of silver, exactly as God said it would. Chapter 4 showed a proud king who was humbled and restored. Chapter 5 shows a proud king who refused to learn, and who ran out of time.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking the wine before the thousand.*

The story jumps forward many years. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., and several kings followed him in quick succession. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus, who reigned from 556 B.C. to 539 B.C. His son Belshazzar ruled as co-regent in Babylon while Nabonidus spent about ten years away in the Arabian desert, at the oasis of Tayma. So when Daniel calls Belshazzar "the king," he is describing the man who was actually ruling the city.

For a long time, critics pointed to Belshazzar as proof that Daniel was full of errors, because no known ancient record outside the Bible mentioned him, apart from later writers who drew on Daniel itself. Then in the 1800s, Babylonian clay cylinders and other records were discovered that name Belshazzar as the eldest son of Nabonidus and show him exercising royal authority. The Bible had been right all along. This is a good reminder to be patient when someone claims the Bible got history wrong. The spade has a way of catching up to the Scriptures.

The feast itself was enormous: a thousand nobles, with the king drinking wine in front of them all. What makes it shocking is the timing. As we will see in the feature at the end of this chapter, the Persian army was already in the land, and Nabonidus's forces had recently been defeated. Belshazzar partied while his kingdom was collapsing around him.

5:2 *Belshazzar said, at the tasting of the wine, to bring the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar his father had brought out from the temple which **was** in Jerusalem, that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.*

Once the wine was flowing, Belshazzar gave an order that went far beyond a party. He called for the gold and silver vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 1:2). He wanted his nobles, his wives and his concubines to drink from them.

Belshazzar calls Nebuchadnezzar his *"father."* In the languages of the Bible, "father" can mean grandfather, ancestor or even predecessor on the throne, just as Jesus is called the son of David. Nabonidus was not Nebuchadnezzar's son. Some suggest that Belshazzar's mother was a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, which would make him a grandson, but we do not know that for certain. Either way, Belshazzar saw himself as the heir of Nebuchadnezzar's throne and glory.

Why bring out the temple vessels at all? It seems to have been a deliberate act of defiance. Nebuchadnezzar had kept those vessels in the treasury of his god as trophies. Belshazzar took them out and used them for a drunken celebration. It was a way of saying that the God of Israel was just another defeated god.

5:3-4 *Then they brought the vessels of gold which they had brought out from the temple which **was** the house of God which **was** in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine, and they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*

The vessels were brought, and the king and his guests drank from them. Then, with the cups of the holy God in their hands, they praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Notice the list of materials. It reminds us of the statue in Daniel 2, made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Babylon worshiped what it could make with its own hands, and it is about to learn that the God of heaven decides how long any kingdom stands.

This is a picture of what sin often looks like. It takes what belongs to God and uses it for selfish pleasure, and then praises something else for it. Our bodies, our gifts, our time and our money all belong to God. When we take them and use them to honor anything other than Him, we are not so different from Belshazzar's guests.

5:5 *In that very moment fingers of a man's hand came out, and they were writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king; and the king was seeing the palm of the hand that was writing.*

Suddenly fingers appeared and began writing on the plaster of the palace wall, right across from the lampstand where the light was brightest. The king saw the hand as it wrote.

Archaeologists have uncovered a large throne room in Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon, with walls coated in white plaster. Many believe this was the kind of room where the feast took place. We cannot say for certain that this was the exact room, but the description in Daniel fits what has been found.

God did not send an army into the room. He sent a hand, and that was enough to stop the party cold.

5:6 *Then the king's brightness changed on him, and his thoughts alarmed him; and the joints of his loins were loosened, and his knees were knocking this against this.*

The king's face went pale, and his thoughts terrified him. His legs gave way and his knees knocked together. The proud king who had just mocked the God of Israel was now shaking with fear.

Belshazzar's body told the truth his words had hidden. Underneath the boasting was a man with no real security at all. Proverbs 28:1 says the wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion. Belshazzar had no peace, because he had no peace with God.

5:7 *The king called with strength to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners. The king answered and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who reads this writing and declares to me its interpretation will be clothed **with** purple, and the necklace of gold **will be** on his neck, and he will rule **as** third in the kingdom."*

The king shouted for his wise men. He promised that whoever could read the writing and explain it would be clothed in purple, the color of royalty, receive a gold chain, and *"rule as third in the kingdom."*

Why third, and not second? This detail is one of the quiet proofs of Daniel's accuracy. Nabonidus was the first ruler, and Belshazzar was the second. The highest honor Belshazzar could give was

the position right after himself. A writer making up the story centuries later would not likely have known this. Daniel, who was there, did.

5:8-9 *Then all the wise men of the king were coming in, and they were not able to read the writing and to make known its interpretation to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his brightness was changing on him, and his nobles were perplexed.*

All the wise men came, and once again they failed. They could not read the writing or explain it. Belshazzar grew even more terrified, and his nobles were confused.

Some have asked why they could not even read it. Perhaps the letters were written in a way they did not recognize, or perhaps they could read the words but could not make sense of them. The text does not tell us. What matters is that God's message could only be understood by God's servant.

5:10 *The queen, because of the words of the king and his nobles, came into the house of the feast. The queen answered and said, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you, and let not your brightness be changed.*

The queen came into the banquet hall when she heard the commotion. Since the king's wives were already at the feast (verses 2-3), this was most likely the queen mother, a respected older woman of the royal family. Some believe she was a widow or daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Her name is not given, but she remembered what everyone else had forgotten.

She spoke calmly. She told the king not to be alarmed. She had a solution.

5:11-12 *There is a man in your kingdom in whom **is** a spirit of holy gods; and in the days of your father illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of gods were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, **and** diviners, your father the king, because an extraordinary spirit, and knowledge and insight, interpreting dreams and declaring riddles and loosening knots, were found in him, in Daniel, whose name the king made Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will declare the interpretation."*

She reminded Belshazzar about a man in his kingdom with *"a spirit of holy gods,"* whom Nebuchadnezzar had made chief of all the wise men. She described his wisdom, his insight, and his ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve hard problems. *"Now let Daniel be called,"* she said, and he will explain the writing.

It is striking that Belshazzar did not seem to know Daniel. The man who had been so important under Nebuchadnezzar had apparently been set aside under the later kings. Daniel was probably around eighty years old by now. He had been faithful for decades, much of that time in obscurity. When God needed him, he was ready.

That is an encouragement for anyone who feels forgotten or overlooked. Faithfulness in the quiet years is never wasted. God knows where His servants are.

5:13-14 *Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You **are** that Daniel who **is** of the sons of the exile of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. And I have heard concerning you that a spirit of gods **is** in you, and illumination and insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.*

Daniel was brought in, and the king spoke to him. He called him *"that Daniel who is of the sons of the exile of Judah,"* which may have been meant to put him in his place. Belshazzar repeated what he had heard about Daniel's wisdom and the spirit that was in him.

Notice that Belshazzar says *"a spirit of gods,"* without the word "holy" that Nebuchadnezzar and the queen had used. It may be a small detail, but it fits a king who had no respect for anything holy.

5:15-16 *And now the wise men, the conjurers, have been brought in before me, that they might read this writing and make known to me its interpretation; and they were not able to declare the interpretation of the matter. And I have heard concerning you that you are able to interpret interpretations and to loosen knots. Now if you are able to read the writing and to make known to me its interpretation, you will be clothed **with** purple, and the necklace of gold **will be** on your neck, and you will rule **as** the third in the kingdom."*

The king told Daniel how his wise men had failed and repeated his offer of purple clothing, a gold chain and the position of third ruler.

Belshazzar thought he could buy what he needed. He still did not understand that the message on the wall was not something for sale.

5:17 *Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing to the king, and I will make known to him the interpretation.*

Daniel's answer was blunt: keep your gifts, or give your rewards to someone else. But he would read the writing and explain it anyway.

Daniel was not being rude. He was making it clear that God's word could not be bought, and that his interpretation would not be shaped by what the king offered. A true prophet speaks the truth whether it is rewarded or not. Paul said much the same thing when he refused to peddle the word of God (2 Corinthians 2:17).

In verse 29, Daniel does receive the gifts. You might ask, "Did he change his mind?" It's simple: the king insisted, and by then it made no difference. Daniel had already spoken the truth without any promise of reward. The honor lasted only a few hours anyway.

5:18-19 *You, O king: the Most High God gave the kingdom and the greatness and the honor and the majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages were trembling and fearing before him. Whom he wished, he was killing; and whom he wished, he was keeping alive; and whom he wished, he was lifting up; and whom he wished, he was bringing low.*

Before reading the writing, Daniel gave the king a history lesson. The Most High God had given Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom and his greatness. Everyone trembled before him. He had the power of life and death, raising up and putting down whomever he wanted.

Daniel's point was that all of that power came from God. Nebuchadnezzar did not earn it; it was given.

5:20-21 *And when his heart was lifted up and his spirit grew strong to act proudly, he was brought down from the throne of his kingdom, and they removed the honor from him. And he was driven away from the sons of mankind, and they made his heart like **that of** the beasts, and his dwelling **was** with the wild donkeys; they fed him grass like oxen, and his body was drenched with the dew of the heavens, until he knew that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of mankind, and whomever He wills He sets up over it.*

Then Daniel told the story of chapter 4. When Nebuchadnezzar's heart became proud, he was removed from his throne. He was driven from people, his mind became like an animal's, and he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle. This lasted until he recognized that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of men.

Daniel was describing the most important lesson of Nebuchadnezzar's life, a lesson the king had published to his whole empire.

5:22 *And you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not brought low your heart, inasmuch as you knew all this.*

Here is the heart of Belshazzar's guilt. *"You knew all this."* He had heard the story. He knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. He knew that the God of Israel humbles the proud. And he did it anyway.

Ignorance is one thing; knowing better and doing it anyway is far more serious. Jesus taught that the servant who knew his master's will and did not do it would receive the greater punishment (Luke 12:47-48). Many people today are not like Nebuchadnezzar at the start of chapter 4, who did not know God. They are like Belshazzar. They have heard the truth, maybe grown up around it, and they have chosen to ignore it.

5:23 *And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of the heavens; and the vessels of His house they have brought before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines, are drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see and do not hear and do not know; and the God in whose hand **is** your breath, and whose **are** all your ways, you have not glorified.*

Daniel spelled out the charges. Belshazzar had lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven. He had used God's holy vessels for a drunken party. He had praised idols of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, gods that cannot see, hear or understand.

Then came the sharpest line of all. The God who held Belshazzar's very breath in His hand, the God who controlled every step of his life, was the One Belshazzar had refused to honor. It is foolish to praise a god who cannot see you, and ignore the God who keeps you breathing.

New Testament links: Revelation 9:20 (alluded to)

5:24-25 *Then from before Him the palm of the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. And this **is** the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.*

That is why the hand was sent. Then Daniel read the words: *"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN."*

These words are Aramaic, and on the surface they are terms for weights or money. A mene (mina) was a large weight. A tekel is related to the shekel, a smaller weight. Peres (the singular of parsin) means a half or a part. Read as a list, they might have sounded like a strange line from a merchant's scale. That may be why the wise men could not make sense of them. God gave Daniel the meaning behind each word.

5:26 *This **is** the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered your kingdom and has finished it.*

MENE means "numbered." God had counted the days of Belshazzar's kingdom, and the count was finished. The word is written twice, which seems to emphasize that the matter was settled and certain.

Every kingdom, and every life, has days numbered by God. Psalm 90:12 asks God to teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Belshazzar never learned to number his days, so God numbered them for him.

5:27 *TEKEL, you have been weighed in the scales and have been found lacking.*

TEKEL means "weighed." God had placed Belshazzar on His scales, and he did not measure up.

This is perhaps the most famous line in the chapter. We often measure ourselves against other people and feel fine. But God does not grade us on a curve. He weighs us against His own holiness, and on that scale every one of us comes up short (Romans 3:23). The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ was weighed and found perfect, and those who trust in Him are counted righteous in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Belshazzar stood on the scale alone. We do not have to.

5:28 *PERES, your kingdom has been divided and has been given to Media and Persia."*

PERES means "divided." Belshazzar's kingdom had been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. There is also a play on words here, because the same Aramaic letters can point to "Persia." The very word announced who would take the kingdom.

This was not a new prophecy. Isaiah, writing long before, had foretold that the Medes would be stirred up against Babylon (Isaiah 13:17-19), and he even named Cyrus as God's chosen instrument (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon's rule would last seventy years and then be judged (Jeremiah 25:11-12). God's timetable was running exactly on schedule.

5:29 *Then Belshazzar spoke, and they clothed Daniel **with** purple, and the necklace of gold **was** on his neck; and they proclaimed concerning him that he would be ruling **as** the third in the kingdom.*

Belshazzar kept his word. Daniel was dressed in purple, given the gold chain, and proclaimed the third ruler in the kingdom.

It is strange that the king did not repent, or even argue. He simply handed out the reward as if it were the end of a party game. Perhaps he did not believe the judgment would come so quickly. It came within hours.

5:30 *In that night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed.*

"In that night" Belshazzar was killed. The Bible gives the whole fall of the greatest city on earth in one short sentence. No long battle, no siege, no last stand. The kingdom had been numbered, weighed and divided, and it was over.

This happened in October of 539 B.C. Babylon fell to the forces of Cyrus the Great of Persia, as described in the feature below. The head of gold had given way to the silver, just as Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar some sixty years earlier (Daniel 2:39).

There is a sobering parallel in Revelation. The final Babylon will also be partying and boasting when her judgment comes, and her fall will come *"in one day"* and *"in one hour"* (Revelation 18:8, 10). The pattern of history repeats: the proud feast, God's verdict, and sudden collapse.

5:31 *And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, **being** about sixty-two years old.*

Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two. (In the Aramaic text, this verse is the first verse of chapter 6, which is why some Bibles number it differently.)

Who was Darius the Mede? He is not named in any record outside the Bible yet found, and Bible-believing scholars have offered different answers. One view is that he was a governor named Gubaru, whom Cyrus placed over Babylon after its capture. Another view is that "Darius the Mede" is another name or title for Cyrus himself; in Daniel 6:28, the word "and" can also be read "even," giving "in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Both views take the text seriously, and I do not think we need to pick a firm side. What we do know is that Daniel presents him as a real ruler, with a real age, and that the Bible has been proven right before when critics said it was wrong, as it was with Belshazzar.

Chapter 5 Summary

Belshazzar, co-regent of Babylon, throws a great feast and drinks from the holy vessels taken from God's temple while praising idols. A hand appears and writes on the palace wall, and none of the wise men can read it. On the queen's advice, Daniel is called in. He refuses the king's rewards, reminds Belshazzar of how God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, and charges him with knowing all this and still exalting himself against the Lord of heaven.

Daniel reads the writing: God has numbered the kingdom and ended it, weighed the king and found him lacking, and divided the kingdom to the Medes and Persians. That same night Belshazzar is killed, and Darius the Mede receives the kingdom. Babylon, the head of gold, gives way to Medo-Persia, exactly as God foretold.

Belshazzar and the Fall of Babylon

The last king: Nabonidus reigned over Babylon from 556 B.C. to 539 B.C. He was not a son of Nebuchadnezzar; he came to the throne after a short series of kings who followed Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 B.C.

The co-regent: Belshazzar was Nabonidus's eldest son. While his father stayed for about ten years at the desert oasis of Tayma in Arabia, Belshazzar ruled in Babylon. Babylonian records show him with royal authority. That is why the highest honor he could offer Daniel was that he would "rule as the third in the kingdom."

The critics corrected: For centuries, Belshazzar's name appeared in no known record outside Daniel, and some scholars treated him as an invention. Cuneiform texts discovered in the 1800s named him as the son of Nabonidus, confirming Daniel's account.

The Persian advance: Cyrus the Great had united the Medes and Persians into one empire. In 539 B.C. his army defeated the Babylonian forces in battle at Opis, on the Tigris River, shortly before Babylon fell.

The fall of the city: A Babylonian record known as the Nabonidus Chronicle states that Cyrus's army entered Babylon without a battle in October of 539 B.C., and that Cyrus himself entered the city some days later. The Greek historian Herodotus, writing about a century later, says the Persians lowered the level of the Euphrates River, which ran through the city, and entered along the riverbed while the Babylonians were celebrating a festival. Historians debate some of the details of his account, but it fits well with Daniel's picture of a city partying on the night it fell.

The prophecies fulfilled: Isaiah foretold the Medes rising against Babylon (Isaiah 13:17-19), named Cyrus as God's servant (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), and described a feast interrupted by the call to arms (Isaiah 21:5, 9). Jeremiah foretold that Babylon's princes and wise men would be made drunk and sleep a perpetual sleep (Jeremiah 51:39, 57).

The temple vessels: The vessels Belshazzar defiled were not lost. Under Cyrus, they were returned to the Jewish exiles to be carried back to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7-11). Belshazzar's mockery could not stop God's plan to restore His people.

The silver kingdom: With the fall of Babylon, the head of gold of Daniel 2 and the lion of Daniel 7 gave way to the chest and arms of silver and the bear: the empire of the Medes and Persians.

The final Babylon: Revelation 17-18 describes a future Babylon the great, proud and self-indulgent, that will fall suddenly under God's judgment. The fall of Belshazzar's Babylon is a preview of that coming day.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. Why do you think people often celebrate or distract themselves when danger is near instead of facing it?

2. What did Belshazzar order to be brought to his feast, and why was that so offensive to God? (5:2-4)

3. How did Belshazzar react when he saw the hand writing on the wall? (5:6)

4. Why could Belshazzar only offer to make the interpreter "third in the kingdom"? (5:7, 16)

5. Who reminded the king about Daniel, and what did she say about him? (5:10-12)

6. Why did Daniel refuse the king's rewards before reading the writing? (5:17)

7. What did Daniel say was Belshazzar's greatest guilt? (5:22-23)

8. What do the words MENE, TEKEL and PERES mean? (5:26-28)

9. In what ways are people today like Belshazzar, knowing the truth about God but choosing to ignore it?

10. If God weighed your life on His scales today, what would you be trusting in to make you acceptable to Him?

Chapter 6: Faithful in the Lions' Den

Scripture: Daniel in the Lions' Den

6:1-9 (The Plot Against Daniel) It seemed good before Darius, and he appointed over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, who would be over all the kingdom; and above them three overseers, of whom Daniel ***was*** one, that these satraps might be giving them account, and the king would not be suffering loss. Then this Daniel was distinguishing himself above the overseers and the satraps, because an extraordinary spirit ***was*** in him; and the king was planning to appoint him over all the kingdom. Then the overseers and the satraps were seeking to find an occasion against Daniel from the side of the kingdom; and they were not able to find any occasion or corruption, because he ***was*** trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him. Then these men were saying, "We will not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we have found ***it*** against him in the law of his God." Then these overseers and satraps came thronging to the king, and thus they were saying to him, "Darius the king, live forever! All the overseers of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors, have taken counsel together to establish a statute of the king and to make strong a prohibition, that whoever asks a petition from any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of the lions. Now, O king, establish the prohibition and sign the writing, which is not to be changed, according to the law of Media and Persia, which does not pass away." Because of this King Darius signed the writing and the prohibition.

6:10-17 (Daniel Keeps Praying) And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and windows ***were*** opened for him in his upper room toward Jerusalem; and three times in the day he was kneeling on his knees and praying and giving thanks before his God, just as he had been doing from before this. Then these men came thronging and found Daniel asking and imploring favor before his God. Then they approached and were saying before the king concerning the prohibition of the king, "Did you not sign a prohibition that any man who asks from any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of the lions?" The king answered and said, "The word ***is*** certain, according to the law of Media and Persia, which does not pass away." Then they answered and were saying before the king, "Daniel, who ***is*** of the sons of the exile of Judah, has not set regard on you, O king, or on the prohibition which you signed; and three times in the day he is asking his petition." Then the king, when he heard the word, was greatly displeased, and he set ***his*** mind on Daniel to deliver him; and until the going down of the sun he was striving to rescue him. Then these men came thronging to the king and were saying to the king, "Know, O king, that ***it is*** a law of Media and Persia that any prohibition and statute which the king establishes is not to be changed." Then the king spoke, and they brought Daniel and threw ***him*** into the den of the lions. The king answered and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you serve continually, may He deliver you." And one stone was brought and set on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

6:18-24 (Delivered from the Lions) Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting, and diversions were not brought in before him, and his sleep fled from him. Then the king arose at dawn, at daylight, and went in haste to the den of the lions. And as he approached the

den, he cried out to Daniel with a pained voice. The king answered and said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel spoke with the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the mouth of the lions, and they have not harmed me, because before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O king, I have done no crime." Then the king was very glad, and he said to take Daniel up from the den. And Daniel was taken up from the den, and no harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. And the king spoke, and they brought those men who had denounced Daniel, and they threw them, their sons and their wives, into the den of the lions; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and shattered all their bones.

6:25-28 (Darius Honors the Living God) Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages who dwell in all the earth: "May your peace increase! From before me a decree is made, that in all the dominion of my kingdom they shall be trembling and fearing before the God of Daniel; for He ***is*** the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom ***is one*** which will not be destroyed, and His dominion ***will be*** to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He does signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, who has delivered Daniel from the hand of the lions." And this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Chapter 6 Preview

Babylon has fallen, and a new empire rules. Darius the Mede organizes the kingdom and plans to put Daniel, now an old man, over the whole thing. Jealous officials cannot find anything wrong with Daniel's work, so they set a trap around his faith. They persuade the king to sign a law that no one may pray to any god or man except the king for thirty days. Daniel keeps praying as he always has, three times a day, with his windows open toward Jerusalem.

The king is forced by his own law to throw Daniel into the lions' den, but God sends His angel to shut the lions' mouths. Daniel comes out without a scratch, his accusers are destroyed, and Darius sends out a decree honoring the living God. This is one of the best-known stories in the Bible, and for good reason. It shows us what quiet, steady faith looks like when the world makes it illegal.

Chapter 6 Study

6:1-2 *It seemed good before Darius, and he appointed over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, who would be over all the kingdom; and above them three overseers, of whom Daniel* ***was*** *one, that these satraps might be giving them account, and the king would not be suffering loss.*

Darius set up a government for his new territory. He appointed 120 satraps, regional governors, and over them three commissioners. Daniel was one of those three. Their job was to keep the satraps accountable so that the king would not lose money or power.

The Persian Empire was famous for this kind of organized government, divided into provinces with officials over each one. The book of Esther mentions 127 provinces in the time of King Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1). The numbers changed over time, and the 120 here fits that kind of system.

Notice that Daniel survived the fall of Babylon and was immediately given a high position in the new government. He had just been named third ruler of Babylon by Belshazzar (Daniel 5:29), on the very night Babylon fell. It seems the new rulers recognized his integrity and ability.

6:3 *Then this Daniel was distinguishing himself above the overseers and the satraps, because an extraordinary spirit **was** in him; and the king was planning to appoint him over all the kingdom.*

Daniel quickly stood out above the other commissioners and the satraps. The reason given is that he had *"an extraordinary spirit."* The king planned to put him over the entire kingdom.

Daniel was probably in his early eighties by now. He had been taken to Babylon as a teenager in 605 B.C., and Babylon fell in 539 B.C. Yet he was still working, still excellent at what he did, and still trusted. God does not retire His servants just because they grow old. There is no age limit on faithfulness.

6:4 *Then the overseers and the satraps were seeking to find an occasion against Daniel from the side of the kingdom; and they were not able to find any occasion or corruption, because he **was** trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him.*

Promotion stirred up jealousy. The other commissioners and satraps began looking for a reason to accuse Daniel in his government work. They searched for corruption or carelessness, and found none. He was *"trustworthy,"* and there was no negligence or corruption in him at all.

Think about what that means. These men were looking for anything they could use against him: bribes, mistakes, laziness, favoritism. They came up empty. Daniel had served under several kings for more than sixty years, and his record was clean.

This is a challenge for every believer in the workplace. Our faith should make us better workers, not worse ones. Paul told the Colossians to work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men (Colossians 3:23). When people look closely at our work, they should find honesty and diligence.

6:5 *Then these men were saying, "We will not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we have found **it** against him in the law of his God."*

The plotters finally admitted it: the only way to catch Daniel would be through his relationship with God. That is quite a testimony. His enemies were certain of two things. He was blameless in his work, and he would never compromise his faith.

Would people who know you be able to say the same? Would they know exactly where you stand with God, and know that no law or pressure would move you from it?

6:6-7 *Then these overseers and satraps came thronging to the king, and thus they were saying to him, "Darius the king, live forever! All the overseers of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors, have taken counsel together to establish a statute of the king and to make strong a prohibition, that whoever asks a petition from any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of the lions.*

The officials *"came thronging to the king,"* as a group, perhaps with some commotion. They claimed that all the officials of the kingdom had agreed on a new law. That was a lie, since Daniel, one of the three commissioners, had certainly not agreed.

The law they proposed was that for thirty days, anyone who made a request to any god or man except the king would be thrown into the lions' den. It flattered the king by making him the only one people could pray to. For a new ruler over a conquered people, it may have seemed like a clever way to establish his authority.

This is a preview of things to come. In the last days, the Antichrist will demand worship for himself, and those who refuse will face death (Revelation 13:15). Paul says the man of sin will exalt himself above every so-called god and take his seat in the temple of God, presenting himself as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Darius's law lasted thirty days, and Darius himself was not evil in the way the Antichrist will be. But the pattern is the same: a government demanding what belongs to God alone.

6:8-9 *Now, O king, establish the prohibition and sign the writing, which is not to be changed, according to the law of Media and Persia, which does not pass away." Because of this King Darius signed the writing and the prohibition.*

The officials asked the king to sign the decree so that it could not be changed. Under the law of the Medes and Persians, once a royal decree was signed, it could not be revoked. Esther 8:8 describes the same rule in a later Persian king's court. Darius signed it.

It seems Darius did not stop to think about who this law would affect. Pride and flattery are a dangerous combination. They can lead even a well-meaning leader into a trap.

6:10 *And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and windows* ***were*** *opened for him in his upper room toward Jerusalem; and three times in the day he was kneeling on his knees and praying and giving thanks before his God, just as he had been doing from before this.*

Daniel knew the decree had been signed. He went home, to his upstairs room where the windows were open toward Jerusalem, and he knelt down to pray three times a day, giving thanks to God, *"as he had been doing from before."*

This verse is one of my favorites in the book of Daniel. Daniel did not panic, and he did not make a show of defiance. He simply kept doing what he had always done. His prayer life was not something he started in a crisis; it was the habit of a lifetime. That is why it held firm when the pressure came.

Why did he pray toward Jerusalem? When Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed that if Israel was ever carried into captivity and prayed toward the land, the city and the temple, God would hear them and forgive them (1 Kings 8:46-50). The temple was in ruins, but Daniel still trusted that promise. Praying three times a day also echoes David, who said he would pray evening, morning and noon (Psalm 55:17).

Notice also that Daniel gave thanks. With a death sentence hanging over him, he still found reasons to thank God. That is not denial; it is trust.

You might ask, "Couldn't Daniel have just closed his windows, or prayed silently for thirty days?" He could have. But that would have sent a message that his faith could be hidden whenever it became dangerous. Daniel was not looking for a fight, but he was not going to pretend he had stopped praying either. Peter and the apostles faced a similar choice centuries later and said they must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

6:11 *Then these men came thronging and found Daniel asking and imploring favor before his God.*

The plotters came, again as a group, and found Daniel exactly where they expected: praying to his God. They did not have to search for him. Everyone knew Daniel's habits.

Is your faith that predictable? Not in a dull way, but in a steady way, so that people know where to find you when it's time to pray?

6:12 *Then they approached and were saying before the king concerning the prohibition of the king, "Did you not sign a prohibition that any man who asks from any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of the lions?" The king answered and said, "The word **is** certain, according to the law of Media and Persia, which does not pass away."*

The officials went to the king and reminded him of the law he had signed. They asked him to confirm it before they mentioned Daniel's name. The king agreed: the law was in force, and it could not be revoked. The trap was set before the king knew who was inside it.

6:13 *Then they answered and were saying before the king, "Daniel, who **is** of the sons of the exile of Judah, has not set regard on you, O king, or on the prohibition which you signed; and three times in the day he is asking his petition."*

Then they sprang it. They told the king that Daniel, *"who is of the sons of the exile of Judah,"* was ignoring the king and his law and kept praying three times a day.

Their words were twisted. Daniel was not ignoring the king. He had served the king faithfully. He simply would not let the king take the place of God. The accusers made a man's devotion to God sound like rebellion against the government. Believers have faced that same charge throughout history.

6:14 *Then the king, when he heard the word, was greatly displeased, and he set **his** mind on Daniel to deliver him; and until the going down of the sun he was striving to rescue him.*

When the king heard it, he was deeply troubled. He realized he had been tricked, and he worked until sunset trying to find a way to rescue Daniel.

Darius respected Daniel, and possibly cared for him as a friend. But he was trapped by his own law. A king who seemed to have absolute power could not undo his own word. Human authority, even at its highest, has limits.

6:15 *Then these men came thronging to the king and were saying to the king, "Know, O king, that* ***it is*** *a law of Media and Persia that any prohibition and statute which the king establishes is not to be changed."*

The plotters came back at sunset to press the king. They reminded him again that no law of the Medes and Persians could be changed. They would not let the matter go.

6:16 *Then the king spoke, and they brought Daniel and threw* ***him*** *into the den of the lions. The king answered and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you serve continually, may He deliver you."*

The king gave the order, and Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. But before the den was closed, Darius spoke to him: *"Your God whom you serve continually, may He deliver you."*

This may have been a hope more than a firm belief, but it is still remarkable. A pagan king had watched Daniel's life closely enough to know that he served his God *"continually."* Daniel's faithfulness had preached a sermon to the king long before this night.

Lions' dens in the ancient world were pits or enclosures where lions were kept, sometimes for royal hunts. The text describes Daniel being taken up out of the den in verse 23, and the accusers not reaching the bottom in verse 24, which suggests a pit with an opening at the top.

6:17 *And one stone was brought and set on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.*

A stone was rolled over the opening of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and the rings of his nobles. That way no one could change anything about Daniel's situation. No one could secretly rescue him, and no one could harm him further.

Many Christians have noticed the picture here. Centuries later, another stone was placed over the mouth of a tomb and sealed by the authorities to make sure nothing would change (Matthew 27:66). In both cases, men sealed the stone, and in both cases God brought His servant out alive. Daniel was not raised from the dead, of course, but his deliverance is a small picture of the far greater victory of Christ over death.

6:18 *Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting, and diversions were not brought in before him, and his sleep fled from him.*

The king went back to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused the usual entertainment, and he could not sleep.

Here is an interesting contrast. The man in the lions' den seems to have had a more peaceful night than the king in the palace. Peace does not come from our circumstances. It comes from our relationship with God.

6:19-20 *Then the king arose at dawn, at daylight, and went in haste to the den of the lions. And as he approached the den, he cried out to Daniel with a pained voice. The king answered and said to*

Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

At dawn the king hurried to the den. As he came near, he called out with a troubled voice. *"Daniel, servant of the living God,"* he called, and he asked whether Daniel's God had been *"able to deliver you from the lions."*

Notice the king's title for God: *"the living God."* The gods of Babylon and Persia were idols of wood, stone and metal. Darius had begun to see that Daniel's God was different. He is alive, and He acts.

6:21-22 *Then Daniel spoke with the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the mouth of the lions, and they have not harmed me, because before Him innocence was found in me; and also before you, O king, I have done no crime."*

Then a voice came up from the den. Daniel answered with the respectful greeting of the court, *"O king, live forever!"* He explained that God had sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they had not hurt him. He had been found innocent before God, and he had done no wrong against the king either.

Daniel did not boast about his own courage. He gave the credit to God and His angel. He also affirmed his loyalty to the king. Daniel had broken the king's law, but he had not wronged the king. There is a difference between rebellion and faithful obedience to a higher authority.

Hebrews 11:33 remembers those who by faith *"shut the mouths of lions,"* almost certainly pointing to Daniel. In chapter 3, God's servants were kept safe in the fire. Here, God's servant is kept safe among the lions. In both cases, God did not keep them from the trial. He kept them in it.

New Testament links: Hebrews 11:33 (alluded to)

6:23 *Then the king was very glad, and he said to take Daniel up from the den. And Daniel was taken up from the den, and no harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.*

The king was overjoyed and ordered Daniel brought up from the den. There was not a single injury on him, *"because he had trusted in his God."*

That last phrase is the point of the story. Daniel's protection came through his trust in God. Faith is not a magic shield; it is reliance on the One who has the power to protect.

At the same time, we need to be honest. Not every faithful believer is delivered from death in this life. Hebrews 11, right after mentioning the shutting of lions' mouths, speaks of others who were tortured, stoned and put to death, and who will receive a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35-37). Daniel's three friends said it best in Daniel 3:18: even if God does not deliver us, we still will not bow. Sometimes God delivers His people from death, and sometimes He delivers them through death into His presence. Either way, He keeps them.

This matters for how we look at the last days. As I explained in the Revelation study, I hold that Christ will gather His church to Himself before the Tribulation begins. Other Christians believe the church will go through part or all of it, and I respect brothers and sisters who hold those

views. But Daniel 6 gives us a pattern I see throughout Scripture, for believers in every age and for those who come to Christ during the Tribulation: God's people may be thrown into the den, but they are never out of God's hand (Daniel 7:21-22; Revelation 13:7-10).

6:24 *And the king spoke, and they brought those men who had denounced Daniel, and they threw them, their sons and their wives, into the den of the lions; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and shattered all their bones.*

Then the king ordered that the men who had maliciously accused Daniel be thrown into the den, along with their wives and children. Before they even reached the bottom, the lions overpowered them and crushed their bones.

This is a hard verse, and it should be. Throwing the families in with the guilty men was the king's decision, following a harsh Persian practice, not a command from God. God's own law for Israel said that children should not be put to death for the sins of their fathers (Deuteronomy 24:16). The Bible records what happened without approving all of it.

The verse also proves something. The lions were not tame or full. They attacked the accusers at once. Daniel's survival was not because the lions were harmless. It was because God shut their mouths. The men who set a trap for Daniel fell into it themselves, as Psalm 7:15-16 and Proverbs 26:27 describe: the one who digs a pit will fall into it.

6:25-27 *Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages who dwell in all the earth: "May your peace increase! From before me a decree is made, that in all the dominion of my kingdom they shall be trembling and fearing before the God of Daniel; for He **is** the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom **is one** which will not be destroyed, and His dominion **will be** to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He does signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, who has delivered Daniel from the hand of the lions."*

Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and languages in his kingdom, much like Nebuchadnezzar did in chapter 4. He commanded everyone to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel.

Then he praised God in words that sound like the rest of the book. God is the living God who endures forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and His dominion will never end. He rescues and delivers, and He does signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. He delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Notice the irony. The plotters wanted a decree that no one could pray to any god but the king for thirty days. Instead, they got a decree commanding the whole empire to honor Daniel's God. God turned their plan completely around. What they meant for evil, God meant for good (Genesis 50:20).

The theme of an everlasting kingdom ties the first half of Daniel together. Nebuchadnezzar confessed it (4:3, 34). Darius confesses it here. And in the next chapter, Daniel will see the kingdom given to One like the Son of Man, a kingdom that will never be destroyed (7:13-14). Every earthly king in this book is temporary. Only God's kingdom lasts.

6:28 *And this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

The chapter, and the historical half of the book, ends with a simple summary. Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

As mentioned in chapter 5, some read this verse as "in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," taking Darius and Cyrus as the same man. Others take them as two rulers, with Darius as a governor under Cyrus. Either way, Daniel lived to see the beginning of Cyrus's reign. That is significant, because Cyrus issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4), fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years. Daniel was taken captive as a youth at the very start of the exile, and he lived to see God open the door for his people to go home.

Chapter 6 Summary

Darius the Mede organizes his kingdom and plans to put Daniel over all of it. The jealous officials can find nothing wrong with Daniel's work, so they trick the king into signing an unchangeable law forbidding prayer to anyone but the king for thirty days. Daniel keeps praying three times a day, as he always had. The king, trapped by his own law, has Daniel thrown into the lions' den and seals it with a stone.

At dawn the king rushes to the den and finds Daniel alive, because God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths. Daniel's accusers are thrown to the lions and destroyed. Darius sends a decree to his whole kingdom commanding everyone to honor the living God, whose kingdom will never be destroyed. Daniel continues to prosper into the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your faith, or watched it happen to someone else? How did you respond?

2. Why did Daniel stand out among the other officials? (6:3)

3. What did Daniel's enemies find when they searched his work for faults? (6:4-5)

4. What law did the officials persuade Darius to sign, and why could it not be changed? (6:7-9)

5. What did Daniel do when he learned the law had been signed? (6:10)

6. What did Darius say to Daniel before the den was sealed? (6:16)

7. Who shut the lions' mouths, and why was Daniel unharmed? (6:22-23)

8. How did Darius describe Daniel's God in his decree to the kingdom? (6:26-27)

9. Is your prayer life a steady habit that would hold firm under pressure, or something you mostly turn to in a crisis? What would help it become steadier?

10. How does Daniel's story prepare believers to stay faithful if obeying God is ever made illegal?

Chapter 7: The Four Beasts and the Son of Man

Scripture: Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

7:1-8 (The Four Beasts) In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head on his bed. Then he wrote the dream; he told the sum of the matters. Daniel answered and said, "I was seeing in my vision by night, and look, the four winds of the heavens were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different this from this. The first ***was*** like a lion, and it had wings of an eagle. I was seeing until its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. And look, another beast, a second, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs ***were*** in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they were saying to it, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I was seeing, and look, another, like a leopard, and it had four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I was seeing in the visions of the night, and look, a fourth beast, fearful and terrible and exceedingly strong; and it had great teeth of iron; it was devouring and shattering, and it was trampling the rest with its feet; and it ***was*** different from all the beasts that ***were*** before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and look, another horn, a small ***one***, came up between them, and three of the first horns were uprooted from before it; and look, eyes like the eyes of man ***were*** in this horn, and a mouth speaking great ***things***.

7:9-14 (The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man) I was seeing until thrones were placed, and ***the*** Ancient of Days sat; His clothing ***was*** white like snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne ***was*** flames of fire, its wheels burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; a thousand thousands were ministering to Him, and a myriad of myriads were standing before Him. The court sat, and books were opened. I was seeing then, because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking; I was seeing until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning of fire. And ***as for*** the rest of the beasts, they removed their dominion, and a prolonging of life was given to them until a season and a time. I was seeing in the visions of the night, and look, with the clouds of the heavens ***one*** like a son of man was coming; and He reached the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, and all the peoples, nations, and languages will serve Him. His dominion ***is*** an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and His kingdom ***one*** which will not be destroyed.

7:15-28 (The Vision Explained) ***As for*** me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed in the midst of ***its*** sheath, and the visions of my head alarmed me. I approached one of those standing ***there***, and I was asking from him the truth concerning all this. And he said to me, and he made known to me the interpretation of the matters: 'These great beasts, which are four, ***are*** four kings ***who*** will arise from the earth. And the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and they will possess the kingdom until the age, and until the age of the ages.' Then I desired to make certain concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all of them, exceedingly terrible, its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, devouring, shattering, and trampling the rest with its feet, and concerning the ten horns that ***were*** on its head, and the other ***horn*** which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn which had eyes and a mouth speaking great ***things***, and whose

appearance ***was*** greater than its companions. I was seeing, and that horn was making war with the holy ones and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the season arrived, and the holy ones possessed the kingdom. Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the kingdoms; and it will devour all the earth, and tread it down, and shatter it. And the ten horns: from it, the kingdom, ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the former ***ones***, and he will bring low three kings. And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and he will intend to change seasons and law; and they will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. And the court will sit, and they will remove his dominion, to annihilate and to destroy ***it*** until the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him.' Until here ***is*** the end of the matter. ***As for*** me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my brightness was changed on me; and I kept the matter in my heart."

Chapter 7 Preview

Chapter 7 is the turning point of the Book of Daniel. Up to now, Daniel has mostly been interpreting the dreams of other people. Now God gives Daniel a vision of his own, and from here to the end of the book we are in prophecy. The language also matters: Daniel 2:4 through 7:28 was written in Aramaic, the common language of the empire, because this section is a message to the nations. Chapter 7 closes that section, and it is the bridge between what God showed a pagan king in chapter 2 and what God shows His own prophet in chapters 8 through 12.

Daniel sees four beasts rise out of a churning sea: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a terrifying fourth beast with ten horns and a boastful little horn. Then the scene shifts to heaven. The Ancient of Days takes His seat, the books are opened, and "one like a son of man" comes with the clouds of heaven to receive an everlasting kingdom. This is the same history as Nebuchadnezzar's statue in chapter 2, told from God's point of view. Men saw their empires as a shining statue of precious metals. God sees them as wild animals.

If you have worked through the Revelation study, much of this chapter will feel familiar. The beast of Revelation 13 is built out of the animals of Daniel 7, the ten horns of Revelation 17:12 are the ten horns here, and the thrones of Revelation 20:4 were first set up in Daniel 7:9. Chapter 7 may be the single most important chapter in the Old Testament for understanding the Book of Revelation.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1 *In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head on his bed. Then he wrote the dream; he told the sum of the matters.*

Notice the date. The first year of Belshazzar was most likely about 553 B.C., when his father Nabonidus left Babylon and put Belshazzar in charge of the city. That means chapter 7 happened

before the events of chapter 5, when Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall and Babylon fell in 539 B.C. The chapters of Daniel are not all in time order. The first half (chapters 1-6) is arranged as stories, and the second half (chapters 7-12) as visions, each with its own date.

Daniel is probably in his late sixties here. He has served under Nebuchadnezzar for decades, and now, with a weak and careless king on the throne, God shows him where all of history is headed. Daniel also wrote the dream down. He did not keep it to himself or simply pass it on by word of mouth. God intended this vision to be read by His people for generations, including us.

7:2 *Daniel answered and said, "I was seeing in my vision by night, and look, the four winds of the heavens were stirring up the great sea.*

The "four winds of the heavens" point to the four directions of the compass, meaning God's power moving over the whole earth. The "great sea" was the usual name for the Mediterranean, and the empires Daniel is about to see all ruled around it. In prophecy, the sea is also used as a picture of the restless nations of the world. Revelation 17:15 makes that plain when it explains that "waters" stand for peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.

I take both ideas together here. These kingdoms come up out of the turmoil of the nations, and they come up because God's winds are stirring the sea. Nothing in this chapter happens outside His control.

7:3 *And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different this from this.*

Each beast is different from the others, and each stands for a kingdom (the angel explains this in 7:17 and 7:23). Why beasts? In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar saw these same kingdoms as a magnificent statue, which is how proud men see their own power. Here, God shows Daniel what these empires really are: violent, hungry and driven by appetite. Without God, human government tends toward the animal. Nebuchadnezzar himself learned this in chapter 4, when he lived like an animal until he acknowledged that the Most High rules.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:1 (alluded to)

7:4 *The first **was** like a lion, and it had wings of an eagle. I was seeing until its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.*

The first beast is Babylon, matching the head of gold in Daniel 2:38. The lion was a royal symbol of Babylon, and winged lions decorated its palaces and gates. Jeremiah also pictured Nebuchadnezzar as a lion (Jeremiah 4:7) and his armies as swift as eagles (Jeremiah 4:13). The wings speak of how quickly Babylon conquered.

Then the wings are plucked, the lion is made to stand like a man, and it is given "the heart of a man." I believe this points back to Nebuchadnezzar's experience in chapter 4. His pride was humbled, his beastly years ended, and his reason returned to him. Babylon's swift rise was stopped, and its greatest king learned to think like a man who answers to God.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:2 (alluded to)

7:5 *And look, another beast, a second, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs **were** in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they were saying to it, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'*

The second beast is Medo-Persia, matching the chest and arms of silver in Daniel 2:32. The bear was "raised up on one side," which fits an empire made of two peoples where one side was stronger. Persia rose higher than Media, and Daniel 8:3 says the same thing with a ram whose higher horn came up last.

The three ribs in its mouth are most often understood as three major conquests: Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.) and Egypt (525 B.C.). Then the bear is told, "Arise, devour much flesh." The Persian Empire became the largest the world had yet seen, reaching from India to Egypt and the edge of Greece. Notice that even this is commanded. The bear eats because it is permitted to eat.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:2 (alluded to)

7:6 *After this I was seeing, and look, another, like a leopard, and it had four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.*

The third beast is Greece, matching the belly and thighs of bronze in Daniel 2:32. A leopard is fast, and this one has four wings. That is a fitting picture of Alexander the Great, who broke the Persian Empire in about three years (334-331 B.C.) and died in 323 B.C. at about thirty-two years old.

The four heads are explained by Daniel 8:8 and 8:22. After Alexander died, his empire was eventually divided among four of his generals: Cassander (Macedonia and Greece), Lysimachus (Thrace and Asia Minor), Seleucus (Syria and the East) and Ptolemy (Egypt). Two of those lines, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, will be at the center of Daniel 11. And again Daniel adds, "dominion was given to it." Even Alexander, who thought of himself as unbeatable, held only what God gave him.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:2 (alluded to)

7:7 *After this I was seeing in the visions of the night, and look, a fourth beast, fearful and terrible and exceedingly strong; and it had great teeth of iron; it was devouring and shattering, and it was trampling the rest with its feet; and it **was** different from all the beasts that **were** before it, and it had ten horns.*

The fourth beast is so unlike any animal that Daniel does not even try to name it. It matches the legs of iron in Daniel 2:33 and 2:40, and it is Rome. Its "great teeth of iron" tie it directly to the iron of chapter 2. Rome did not simply conquer nations; it crushed them and absorbed them. It ruled longer than any of the earlier empires, and it was Rome that ruled Judea when Jesus was born, when He was crucified, and when the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

Then Daniel sees that this beast has ten horns. A horn in Scripture is a symbol of power, and especially of a king (the angel says so in 7:24). These ten horns match the ten toes of Daniel 2:41-44. Historic Rome never ruled through ten kings at once, so I believe, along with many students of prophecy, that the ten horns point to a final, future form of the Roman Empire. It will be a union of ten rulers, connected to the old Roman world, who will hand their power to the Antichrist (Revelation 17:12-13).

You might ask, "How can Rome be part of the future when it fell centuries ago?" It's simple: Daniel never sees a fifth kingdom replace the fourth. In chapter 2, the iron runs from the legs straight down into the feet and toes, and the next thing that happens is the stone from heaven. In chapter 7, the fourth beast is still alive when the Ancient of Days judges it. The Roman beast is the last human kingdom, and it will have its final form at the end.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:1 (alluded to); Revelation 12:3 (alluded to)

7:8 *I was considering the horns, and look, another horn, a small **one**, came up between them, and three of the first horns were uprooted from before it; and look, eyes like the eyes of man **were** in this horn, and a mouth speaking great **things**.*

While Daniel is thinking about the ten horns, an eleventh horn comes up. It starts small, but it pulls up three of the first horns by the roots and takes their place. This horn has "eyes like the eyes of man," which speaks of intelligence and insight, and "a mouth speaking great things."

I believe this little horn is the future Antichrist, the same person John calls the beast in Revelation 13. Compare the two: the little horn has "a mouth speaking great things" (7:8), and of the beast in Revelation 13:5 John says, "a mouth was given to it speaking great things and blasphemies." The little horn wars against the saints (7:21), and so does the beast (Revelation 13:7). The little horn has power "until a time and times and half a time" (7:25), and the beast has authority for forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). These are not two people. They are one man, seen by two prophets six hundred years apart.

Do not confuse this little horn with the horn of Daniel 8:9 that came out "from littleness." The horn of chapter 8 comes out of the Greek kingdom and was fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The horn of chapter 7 comes out of the fourth, Roman beast, and he appears at the very end, just before God's judgment.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:5 (alluded to)

7:9 *I was seeing until thrones were placed, and **the** Ancient of Days sat; His clothing **was** white like snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne **was** flames of fire, its wheels burning fire.*

Now the scene changes from earth to heaven. Thrones are set up, and God the Father is called "the Ancient of Days," a name that means He has existed before all days. He is eternal, while the beasts come and go. His clothing is white like snow and His hair like pure wool, which speaks of His purity and His wisdom. His throne is "flames of fire," with wheels of burning fire, a picture of His holiness and His judgment, much like the throne Ezekiel saw (Ezekiel 1:15-28).

When John saw the glorified Jesus in Revelation 1:14, His head and hair were "white, like white wool, like snow." The same description is used of the Father here and of the Son there. I believe that is deliberate. The Son shares the Father's nature and glory.

Notice also that "thrones" is plural. Who sits on them? Daniel does not say here, but Revelation 20:4 does: John sees thrones, and judgment is given to the saints who sit on them. Daniel 7:22 says the same thing in shorter form.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:14 (alluded to); Revelation 20:4 (alluded to)

7:10 *A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; a thousand thousands were ministering to Him, and a myriad of myriads were standing before Him. The court sat, and books were opened.*

A river of fire flows out from before God, and an enormous crowd stands before Him. The phrase "a myriad of myriads" means a number too large to count. John saw the same multitude around the throne in Revelation 5:11.

Then Daniel says, "The court sat, and books were opened." This is a courtroom. The beasts have had their time, and now God judges them by His record. The books of Revelation 20:12 are opened at the end of the age in the same way. Nothing done on earth goes unseen or unrecorded by God.

New Testament links: Revelation 20:12 (alluded to); Revelation 5:11 (alluded to)

7:11 *I was seeing then, because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking; I was seeing until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning of fire.*

Daniel keeps watching because of the boastful words of the little horn. The arrogant voice keeps talking right up to the moment of judgment. Then the fourth beast is killed and thrown into the fire. This lines up with Revelation 19:20, where the beast and the false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire when Christ returns.

I want you to see how sudden this is. The little horn is still speaking great boasts when God ends him. That is how every proud power in history has fallen, and it is how the last one will fall.

New Testament links: Revelation 19:20 (alluded to); Revelation 13:5 (alluded to)

7:12 *And **as for** the rest of the beasts, they removed their dominion, and a prolonging of life was given to them until a season and a time.*

The first three beasts lost their dominion, but they were allowed to live on for a while. That fits history. When Babylon fell, the Babylonian people and culture continued under Persia. When Persia fell, Persian culture continued under Greece, and Greek culture lived on inside Rome. Each empire was absorbed into the next rather than wiped away. The fourth beast, however, is not absorbed into anything. It is destroyed completely, because it will be replaced by the kingdom of God.

7:13 *I was seeing in the visions of the night, and look, with the clouds of the heavens **one** like a son of man was coming; and He reached the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.*

This is one of the most important verses in the Old Testament. Daniel sees someone "like a son of man," which means someone who looks human, in contrast to the beasts. Yet He comes "with the clouds of the heavens," and in Scripture, riding on the clouds is something God does (Psalm 104:3; Isaiah 19:1). This person is fully human and yet divine. He is brought before the Ancient of Days and presented to Him.

I believe, without any doubt, that this is Jesus Christ. "Son of Man" was the title Jesus used for Himself more than any other. At His trial, when the high priest put Him under oath and asked if He was the Christ, Jesus answered that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and "coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). The high priest tore his robes and called it blasphemy, because he understood exactly what Jesus was claiming. Revelation 1:7 opens with the same promise: He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.

New Testament links: Matthew 26:64 (alluded to); Mark 14:62 (alluded to); Matthew 24:30 (alluded to); Revelation 1:7 (alluded to); Revelation 1:13 (alluded to); Revelation 14:14 (alluded to)

7:14 *And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, and all the peoples, nations, and languages will serve Him. His dominion **is** an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and His kingdom **one** which will not be destroyed.*

The beasts were given dominion for a limited time. The Son of Man is given a kingdom that is everlasting and will never be destroyed. All peoples, nations and languages will serve Him. This is the stone of Daniel 2:44-45, cut out without hands, that crushes the statue and becomes a great mountain filling the whole earth.

When does this happen? Some believe this verse describes Christ's ascension, when He went up to the Father after His resurrection, and that the kingdom is fully present now in a spiritual sense. I believe Christ does reign now at the Father's right hand, but that this verse looks to His second coming, when He takes the kingdom from the beasts and rules the earth. In this chapter, the kingdom is given at the same time the fourth beast and its little horn are judged (7:11, 26-27), and that judgment has not happened yet. As a premillennialist, I believe this is fulfilled when Christ returns and reigns on the earth (Revelation 11:15; 20:4-6).

New Testament links: Revelation 11:15 (alluded to); John 5:27 (alluded to); Matthew 28:18 (alluded to)

7:15 ***As for*** *me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed in the midst of **its** sheath, and the visions of my head alarmed me.*

Daniel is shaken. He has seen the whole sweep of history and the final triumph of God, and yet he is troubled. Prophecy is not meant to entertain us or satisfy our curiosity. When it is understood rightly, it humbles us. Daniel is distressed because he sees how much suffering lies ahead for God's people before the kingdom comes.

7:16 *I approached one of those standing **there**, and I was asking from him the truth concerning all this. And he said to me, and he made known to me the interpretation of the matters:*

Daniel does what we should do when we do not understand something in God's Word: he asks. He goes to one of the angels standing near the throne and asks for "the truth concerning all this." Because the angel explains the vision, we are not left to guess. When Daniel's angel interprets a symbol, I take the angel's interpretation as final.

7:17 *'These great beasts, which are four, **are** four kings **who** will arise from the earth.*

The angel gives the short answer first. The four beasts are four kings, and verse 23 makes clear that "king" here stands for the kingdom he leads. They "arise from the earth," which reminds us that these powers are earthly and human, even though God allows them to rise.

7:18 *And the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and they will possess the kingdom until the age, and until the age of the ages.'*

Here is the good news. The beasts will rule for a time, but God's people will receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Who are "the holy ones"? Many translations call them "the saints," and both words mean people set apart to God. In Daniel's day, this meant faithful Israel. I believe that in the full picture of Scripture it includes all of God's redeemed people, Jew and Gentile, who belong to Christ (Revelation 5:9-10).

This is the main point of the whole vision. Earthly kingdoms are temporary, and God's people, however weak they seem, will inherit everything.

New Testament links: Revelation 22:5 (alluded to)

7:19 *Then I desired to make certain concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all of them, exceedingly terrible, its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, devouring, shattering, and trampling the rest with its feet,*

Daniel is most troubled by the fourth beast, and he gives a little more detail about it here. Besides its iron teeth, it had "claws of bronze." The bronze may hint at how Rome took over what Greece had built, but the main point is its crushing power. It devoured and broke what it could not use, and it trampled the rest under its feet.

7:20 *and concerning the ten horns that **were** on its head, and the other **horn** which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn which had eyes and a mouth speaking great **things**, and whose appearance **was** greater than its companions.*

Daniel also wants to understand the ten horns and the eleventh horn that rose up and made three fall. He adds one more detail: this horn was "greater than its companions." It began small but grew to be greater than all the other kings. That is how the Antichrist will rise: not as an obvious tyrant at first, but as a smaller figure who outgrows and replaces the powers around him.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:5 (alluded to); Revelation 17:12 (alluded to); Revelation 17:3 (alluded to); Revelation 12:3 (alluded to)

7:21 *I was seeing, and that horn was making war with the holy ones and prevailing against them,*

This verse matters a great deal for how we understand the end times. The little horn makes war against the saints, and he wins for a time. Revelation 13:7 says the same thing almost word for word about the beast. God does not promise His people that they will never suffer. He promises that the suffering has an end and that the victory is His.

New Testament links: Revelation 13:5-7 (alluded to); Revelation 11:7 (alluded to)

7:22 *until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the season arrived, and the holy ones possessed the kingdom.*

The war against the saints lasts "until" the Ancient of Days comes. The saints are on the earth when the little horn is in power, and they are still there when God comes to judge him. Then judgment is given in their favor, and "the season arrived, and the holy ones possessed the kingdom."

I hold the pre-tribulation view of the Rapture. I believe Christ will gather His church to Himself before the Tribulation begins (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 3:10). I understand the "holy ones" in this verse as the people who come to faith during the Tribulation, Israel among them, after the church has been taken up. They will suffer under the little horn, and God will keep and sustain them until Christ returns at the end and gathers His elect (Matthew 24:29-31). Others hold the post-tribulation view, believing the church itself will be on the earth during this period and that these holy ones are the church. Others believe in a mid-tribulation or pre-wrath rapture. These are sincere brothers and sisters in Christ, and this is not a matter that divides us. What the text plainly shows is holy ones on the earth while the little horn rules, delivered when the Ancient of Days comes.

New Testament links: Revelation 20:4 (alluded to); 1 Corinthians 6:2 (alluded to)

7:23 *Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the kingdoms; and it will devour all the earth, and tread it down, and shatter it.*

The angel now explains the fourth beast in detail. It will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will "devour all the earth," treading it down and crushing it. Rome's power, laws and influence spread across the known world, and its final form at the end of the age will be even more far-reaching, with authority "over every tribe and tongue and nation" (Revelation 13:7).

7:24 *And the ten horns: from it, the kingdom, ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the former* ***ones****, and he will bring low three kings.*

Here the angel interprets the symbol, so we do not have to guess: the ten horns are ten kings. Another king will rise after them, different from them, and he will put down three of those kings. Revelation 17:12 says that the ten horns are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who receive authority with the beast for "one hour." They are kings, not centuries of popes or a list of medieval nations, and they rule at the same time as the beast.

Some have tried to fit these ten kings into the past, for example among the tribes that broke up the Western Roman Empire. I do not believe that works, because those kingdoms were not destroyed by the coming of the Son of Man. The ten kings are still on the scene when Christ returns, so I believe they are still in the future.

New Testament links: Revelation 17:12 (alluded to)

7:25 *And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and he will intend to change seasons and law; and they will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.*

The angel describes four things the little horn will do. He will speak against God. He will "wear out the holy ones." The Aramaic word pictures a slow, grinding pressure, like cloth worn thin. He will try to change "seasons and law," which may mean changing the calendar, religious festivals, or the moral laws God has set. And the saints will be handed over to him "until a time and times and half a time."

A "time" is one year, "times" is two years, and "half a time" is half a year, adding up to three and a half years. Revelation uses the same period in three different ways: "a time and times and half a time" (Revelation 12:14), forty-two months (Revelation 11:2; 13:5), and 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6). Using a 360-day prophetic year, forty-two months and 1,260 days are exactly the same length. I believe this is the second half of the seven-year Tribulation, the period after the Antichrist breaks his covenant (Daniel 9:27), which Jesus called the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-21).

Notice the words "will be given into his hand." Even the Antichrist cannot take what God does not allow, and his time has a fixed limit. God has already set the clock, and it is short.

New Testament links: Revelation 12:14 (alluded to); Revelation 13:5 (alluded to)

7:26 *And the court will sit, and they will remove his dominion, to annihilate and to destroy* ***it*** *until the end.*

The courtroom from verse 10 now sits to deal with the little horn. His dominion is taken away and destroyed forever. Paul describes the same moment in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where the Lord will slay the lawless one by the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of His coming.

7:27 *And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; his kingdom* ***is*** *an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him.'*

The kingdom that is taken from the little horn is given to "the people of the holy ones of the Most High." All the greatness of every kingdom under heaven goes to God's people, and all dominions will serve and obey Him. Notice how the verse moves from the saints to "His kingdom." The saints reign because they belong to the King. They reign with Christ, as Revelation 20:4-6 and 22:5 describe.

I find this verse a great comfort. However hard the world gets, the people of God are not on the losing side. The meek really will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

New Testament links: Revelation 11:15 (alluded to)

7:28 *Until here **is** the end of the matter. **As for** me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my brightness was changed on me; and I kept the matter in my heart."*

Daniel ends by telling us that the vision left him alarmed and pale, but he "kept the matter in my heart." He did not fully understand everything, and he did not pretend to. He held on to it and kept thinking about it.

That is a good model for us. We will not understand every detail of prophecy, and anyone who claims to have it all figured out should be approached with caution. But we can hold on to what God has made plain: the beasts will fall, the Son of Man will come, and the saints will receive the kingdom.

Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Revelation 13 Side by Side

Daniel 2, Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 describe the same kingdoms from three different points of view. Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue, Daniel saw four beasts, and John saw one beast built from the parts of the others. Here is how they line up.

Babylon (605-539 B.C.): In Daniel 2 it is the head of gold (2:32, 38). In Daniel 7 it is the lion with eagle's wings (7:4). In Revelation 13 the beast has "the mouth of a lion" (13:2).

Medo-Persia (539-331 B.C.): In Daniel 2 it is the chest and arms of silver (2:32, 39). In Daniel 7 it is the bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth (7:5). In Revelation 13 the beast has "its feet like those of a bear" (13:2).

Greece (331 B.C. to the Roman conquest): In Daniel 2 it is the belly and thighs of bronze (2:32, 39). In Daniel 7 it is the leopard with four wings and four heads (7:6). In Revelation 13 the beast itself is "like a leopard" (13:2).

Rome: In Daniel 2 it is the legs of iron (2:33, 40). In Daniel 7 it is the dreadful fourth beast with iron teeth (7:7, 23). In Revelation 13, the beast that rises from the sea carries the features of all the earlier empires, the final Gentile world power.

The final form of Rome: In Daniel 2 it is the feet and ten toes of iron mixed with clay (2:41-43). In Daniel 7 it is the ten horns, which are ten kings (7:7, 24). In Revelation 13 the beast has ten horns with ten crowns (13:1), and Revelation 17:12 explains them as ten kings who rule with the beast.

The final ruler: Daniel 2 does not show him. In Daniel 7 he is the little horn with a boastful mouth, who wars against the saints for a time, times, and half a time (7:8, 21, 25). In Revelation 13 he is the beast with a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, who makes war with the saints for forty-two months (13:5-7).

The end of human rule: In Daniel 2 the stone cut out without hands strikes the statue on its feet and becomes a mountain (2:34-35, 44-45). In Daniel 7 the Ancient of Days judges the beast and the Son of Man receives the kingdom (7:11, 13-14, 26-27). In Revelation the beast is thrown into the lake of fire when Christ returns (19:19-20), and the saints reign with Him (20:4).

Notice one more detail. John lists the animals in reverse order: leopard, bear, lion. Daniel was looking forward in time from Babylon, so he saw the lion first. John was looking back from the end of the Roman age, so he saw the most recent empire first. The same history, seen from the two ends.

Chapter 7 Summary

In the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel sees four beasts rise from the sea: a lion, a bear, a leopard and a terrifying fourth beast with ten horns. These are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, the same four kingdoms as Nebuchadnezzar's statue in chapter 2. A little horn rises among the ten horns, speaks great boasts, and wars against the saints for three and a half years. This horn is the future Antichrist, the beast of Revelation 13.

Then the scene moves to heaven. The Ancient of Days sits in judgment, the beast is destroyed, and One like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to receive an everlasting kingdom. Jesus claimed this title for Himself. The chapter ends with the promise that the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever.

I need to remember all the time that God's kingdom, not any earthly power, is the one that lasts. Daniel 7 shows world powers rise and fall. Christ's kingdom does not.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What do you think is the difference between how people see their own power and how God sees it? (2:31-33; 7:3)

2. What are the four beasts Daniel sees, and what does each one look like? (7:4-7)

3. What is unusual about the little horn, and what does it do? (7:8, 20-21)

4. How is the Ancient of Days described, and what do those details tell you about God? (7:9-10)

5. Who is the "one like a son of man," and how did Jesus use this title for Himself? (7:13-14; Matthew 26:64)

6. What does the angel say the ten horns represent, and how does Revelation 17:12 connect to them? (7:24)

7. How long are the saints given into the hand of the little horn, and how does Revelation describe the same period? (7:25)

8. Why do you think Daniel was so distressed by a vision that ends in God's victory? (7:15, 28)

9. How does it change the way you face hard times to know that God has already set a limit on evil?

10. What is one area of your life where you need to remember that God's kingdom, not any earthly power, will last forever?

Chapter 8: The Ram, the Goat, and the Little Horn

Scripture: Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the Goat

8:1-14 (The Vision) In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision appeared to me, I, Daniel, after the ***one*** that appeared to me at the beginning. And I saw in the vision; and it was, when I saw, that I ***was*** in Susa the citadel, which ***is*** in Elam the province; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the canal of Ulai. And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and look, one ram standing before the canal, and it had two horns; and the two horns ***were*** high, and the one ***was*** higher than the second, and the higher ***one*** was coming up last. I saw the ram thrusting westward and northward and southward, and no beasts could stand before it, and there was none delivering from its hand; and it did according to its will, and it magnified itself. And I was observing, and look, the male goat of the goats was coming from the west over the face of all the earth, and not touching the ground; and the goat ***had*** a conspicuous horn between its eyes. And it came to the ram, the owner of the two horns, which I had seen standing before the canal, and it ran at it in the rage of its strength. And I saw it approaching beside the ram, and it was enraged against it, and it struck the ram and broke its two horns; and there was no strength in the ram to stand before it; and it threw it to the ground and trampled it, and there was none delivering the ram from its hand. And the male goat of the goats magnified itself exceedingly; and when it was mighty, the great horn was broken; and four conspicuous ***horns*** came up in its place, toward the four winds of the heavens. And from one of them came out one horn from littleness, and it became exceedingly great toward the south and toward the east and toward the beauty. And it became great up to the host of the heavens, and it caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the ground, and it trampled them. And up to the Commander of the host it magnified itself; and from Him the continual ***offering*** was removed, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And a host will be given over against the continual ***offering*** through transgression; and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. And I heard one holy one speaking, and one holy one said to the certain one who was speaking, "Until when ***will be*** the vision of the continual ***offering***, and the transgression that makes desolate, to give both holy place and host ***to*** trampling?" And he said to me, "Until evening ***and*** morning, two thousand and three hundred; and ***the*** holy place will be vindicated."

8:15-27 (Gabriel Explains the Vision) And it was, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought understanding; and look, standing before me ***was one*** like the appearance of a man. And I heard the voice of a man between ***the banks of*** Ulai, and he called and said, "Gabriel, make this ***one*** understand the vision." And he came beside my standing place; and when he came, I was terrified and fell on my face. And he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision ***is*** for the time of the end." And when he spoke with me, I fell into a deep sleep on my face toward the ground; and he touched me and made me stand on my standing place. And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what will be in the latter part of the indignation; for ***it is*** for the appointed time of the end. The ram which you saw, the owner of the two horns, ***is*** the kings of Media and Persia. And the shaggy male goat ***is*** the king of Greece; and the great horn which ***is*** between its eyes, it ***is*** the first king. And the broken ***horn***, and four arose in its place: four kingdoms will arise from ***the*** nation, and not with its power. And in the latter part of their reign, when the

transgressors have completed ***it***, a king will arise, strong of face and understanding riddles. And his power will be mighty, and not by his own power; and he will destroy wondrously, and he will prosper and act, and he will destroy mighty ones and ***the*** people of ***the*** holy ones. And through his insight he will make deceit prosper by his hand, and in his heart he will magnify himself, and in ease he will destroy many; and he will stand against the Prince of princes, and without hand he will be broken. And the vision of the evening and the morning which has been told, it ***is*** truth; and you, shut up the vision, for ***it is*** for many days." And I, Daniel, was exhausted and was sick ***for*** days; and I arose and did the work of the king. And I was appalled at the vision, and there was none making ***it*** understood.

Chapter 8 Preview

Two years after the vision of the four beasts, God gives Daniel a second vision. This time the focus narrows. Instead of four kingdoms, Daniel sees only two, the second and the third: a ram with two horns, and a goat with one great horn that becomes four. Then a small horn grows out of one of the four and attacks God's people, God's temple and God Himself. The angel Gabriel explains the vision and even names the kingdoms: the ram is Media and Persia, and the goat is Greece.

There is a change in language here too. Starting with 8:1, Daniel goes back to writing in Hebrew, and he stays in Hebrew to the end of the book. Chapters 2-7 were a message for the nations, but chapters 8-12 focus on Daniel's own people, Israel, and what will happen to them, their land and their temple.

This chapter was fulfilled in history with remarkable detail, through Alexander the Great and a Greek king named Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Yet Gabriel twice says the vision points to "the time of the end." I believe Antiochus is a real historical fulfillment and also a preview of the Antichrist, a pattern God set in history so His people would recognize the final enemy when he comes.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1 *In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision appeared to me, I, Daniel, after the* ***one*** *that appeared to me at the beginning.*

The third year of Belshazzar was about 551 B.C., two years after the vision of chapter 7 and roughly twelve years before Babylon fell. Daniel tells us this vision came "after the one that appeared to me at the beginning," so he wants us to read the two together. Chapter 7 gave the big picture. Chapter 8 zooms in on two of those kingdoms and on what they would mean for the Jewish people.

8:2 *And I saw in the vision; and it was, when I saw, that I* ***was*** *in Susa the citadel, which* ***is*** *in Elam the province; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the canal of Ulai.*

In the vision, Daniel finds himself at Susa (also called Shushan), beside the Ulai Canal. Bible students differ on whether Daniel was physically at Susa or was carried there in the vision, as Ezekiel was carried to Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8:3). The wording sounds to me like he saw himself there in the vision, but it makes no difference to the meaning.

What matters is the location. In 551 B.C., Susa was not yet a Persian capital. Later it became one of the royal capitals of the Persian Empire. It is where Nehemiah served the king (Nehemiah 1:1) and where the story of Esther takes place. God placed Daniel, in his vision, in the future capital of the very empire the vision is about.

8:3 *And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and look, one ram standing before the canal, and it had two horns; and the two horns **were** high, and the one **was** higher than the second, and the higher **one** was coming up last.*

Gabriel tells us plainly in 8:20 that this ram is the kings of Media and Persia. The two horns are the two peoples. One horn was higher, "and the higher one was coming up last." That is exactly what happened. Media was the older power, but Persia came up later and became the stronger partner when Cyrus the Great took control of Media around 550 B.C. This is the same idea as the bear raised up on one side in Daniel 7:5.

8:4 *I saw the ram thrusting westward and northward and southward, and no beasts could stand before it, and there was none delivering from its hand; and it did according to its will, and it magnified itself.*

The ram pushes out in three directions and nothing can stand before it. Persia conquered westward to Lydia and Asia Minor, northward toward Armenia and the Caspian region, and southward into Egypt. It does not push east, because Persia's homeland was already in the east. The ram "did according to its will, and it magnified itself." That phrase is a warning sign. In Daniel, a power that magnifies itself is a power that God is about to bring down.

8:5 *And I was observing, and look, the male goat of the goats was coming from the west over the face of all the earth, and not touching the ground; and the goat **had** a conspicuous horn between its eyes.*

While Daniel is watching, a male goat rushes in from the west, crossing the whole earth "and not touching the ground." It has "a conspicuous horn between its eyes." Gabriel says in 8:21 that the goat is Greece and the large horn is its first king.

That first king is Alexander the Great. He crossed into Asia in 334 B.C. and in about three years broke the Persian Empire. His speed was so great that it looked as if his armies never touched the ground. This matches the four-winged leopard of chapter 7. Daniel wrote this around 551 B.C., nearly two hundred years before Alexander was born.

8:6 *And it came to the ram, the owner of the two horns, which I had seen standing before the canal, and it ran at it in the rage of its strength.*

The goat charges the ram with fury. The Greeks had strong reasons for anger against Persia, because Persian kings had invaded Greece in the early 400s B.C. and burned Athens. When Alexander marched east, many Greeks saw it as payback for those wars.

8:7 *And I saw it approaching beside the ram, and it was enraged against it, and it struck the ram and broke its two horns; and there was no strength in the ram to stand before it; and it threw it to the ground and trampled it, and there was none delivering the ram from its hand.*

The goat strikes the ram, breaks both its horns and tramples it, and no one can rescue the ram. Alexander defeated the Persian armies at the Granicus River (334 B.C.), at Issus (333 B.C.) and finally at Gaugamela (331 B.C.). After Gaugamela, the Persian king Darius III fled and was killed by his own men. The Persian Empire, which had seemed unbeatable for two centuries, was gone. Both horns, Media and Persia, were broken together.

8:8 *And the male goat of the goats magnified itself exceedingly; and when it was mighty, the great horn was broken; and four conspicuous **horns** came up in its place, toward the four winds of the heavens.*

The goat grew very great, "and when it was mighty," the great horn was broken. Alexander died in Babylon in 323 B.C., at about thirty-two years old, at the very height of his power. He had conquered from Greece to the edge of India, and then he was gone, almost overnight.

Then "four conspicuous horns came up in its place, toward the four winds of the heavens." After years of fighting among Alexander's generals, the empire settled into four main kingdoms: Cassander in Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor, Seleucus in Syria and the East, and Ptolemy in Egypt. These are the four heads of the leopard in Daniel 7:6.

There is a lesson here for all of us. Alexander had everything the world could give, and it was broken in a moment. Pride and power do not protect anyone from God's timing (James 4:13-15).

8:9 *And from one of them came out one horn from littleness, and it became exceedingly great toward the south and toward the east and toward the beauty.*

Now the vision narrows again, to one horn that comes out of one of the four. This horn came out "from littleness," and "it became exceedingly great toward the south and toward the east and toward the Beauty." The Beauty is the Beautiful Land, Israel (compare Daniel 11:16, 41).

I believe, along with nearly all Bible students, that this horn was fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a king of the Seleucid line who ruled from 175 B.C. to 164 B.C. He started out small: he was not the rightful heir to the throne, and he took power while the true heir was away. He then pushed south against Egypt, east toward Persia and into the land of Israel.

This little horn should not be confused with the little horn of Daniel 7:8. That horn rises out of the fourth (Roman) beast and is the future Antichrist. This horn rises out of the third (Greek) kingdom, and he lived about 160 years before Christ. The two are alike in many ways, and that is not an accident, but they are not the same person.

8:10 *And it became great up to the host of the heavens, and it caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the ground, and it trampled them.*

The horn grows up to "the host of the heavens" and casts some of the host and some of the stars to the earth and tramples them. What does that mean? Gabriel explains it in 8:24: this king will destroy "mighty ones and the people of the holy ones." I believe the "host" and "stars" here are God's people, the faithful Jews, who are sometimes pictured as stars (Genesis 15:5; Daniel 12:3). Antiochus did exactly this. He killed many faithful Jews who refused to give up the Law of God. Some also see a spiritual battle behind the scenes, as in Daniel 10, and that may be part of the picture.

New Testament links: Revelation 12:4 (alluded to)

8:11 *And up to the Commander of the host it magnified itself; and from Him the continual **offering** was removed, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.*

The horn's pride rises even higher. He magnifies himself to be equal with "the commander of the host," which I believe refers to God Himself (some see it as the pre-incarnate Christ, the same "Prince of princes" in 8:25). He takes away "the continual offering," meaning the daily morning and evening offerings at the temple, and he throws down the place of God's sanctuary.

This is what Antiochus did. His title, "Epiphanes," means "God manifest" or "the Illustrious One," and his coins presented him as a god. In 167 B.C., he outlawed the Jewish faith, stopped the temple sacrifices and set up an altar to the Greek god Zeus in the temple. According to 1 Maccabees (a Jewish history book from that period, not part of Scripture but a valuable historical record), he also banned circumcision and Sabbath-keeping and ordered copies of the Law to be burned.

8:12 *And a host will be given over against the continual **offering** through transgression; and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.*

Because of "transgression," the host and the daily sacrifice are given over to the horn. Some believe the transgression is the horn's own sin, and others believe it is the sin of unfaithful Jews of that time. I lean toward the second view. In the years before Antiochus, many Jews in Jerusalem, including some of the priests, were eagerly adopting Greek ways, and the office of high priest was even bought and sold. God allowed the persecution as discipline on a nation that had drifted.

The horn "will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper." That is what persecution often looks like: for a time, the lie seems to win. But "for a time" is the key. God has already set the limit, as the next verses show.

8:13 *And I heard one holy one speaking, and one holy one said to the certain one who was speaking, "Until when **will be** the vision of the continual **offering**, and the transgression that makes desolate, to give both holy place and host **to** trampling?"*

Daniel hears two holy ones (angels) talking. One asks the question every suffering believer has asked: how long? How long will the sacrifice be stopped, the "transgression that makes desolate" be allowed, and the holy place and the host be trampled? I find it comforting that even the angels care about the suffering of God's people and the dishonor done to His house.

New Testament links: Revelation 11:2 (alluded to)

8:14 *And he said to me, "Until evening **and** morning, two thousand and three hundred; and **the** holy place will be vindicated."*

The answer is precise: 2,300 evenings and mornings, and then the holy place will be restored. There are two main views on how to count this.

2,300 days: Some take "evening and morning" as full days, as in Genesis 1, giving about six years and four months. Counting back from the temple's cleansing in 164 B.C. brings us to about 171 B.C., when the godly high priest Onias III was murdered and Antiochus's persecution of the faithful began to grow.

1,150 days: Others note that there were two daily sacrifices, one in the evening and one in the morning, and count 2,300 offerings, which is 1,150 days, a little over three years. That is close to the time between the desecration of the temple in 167 B.C. and its rededication in 164 B.C.

I lean toward the first view, because the phrase reads most naturally as a count of days, but faithful students hold both. Either way, the point is the same: God set an exact limit on the desecration. In December 164 B.C., Judas Maccabeus and his followers cleansed the temple and rededicated it. Jewish people still remember that event at Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, which Jesus Himself attended in Jerusalem (John 10:22-23).

8:15 *And it was, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought understanding; and look, standing before me **was one** like the appearance of a man.*

Daniel tries to understand the vision, and suddenly someone with the appearance of a man stands before him. The Hebrew word Daniel uses for "man" here is related to the name Gabriel, which means "mighty man of God" or "God is my strength."

8:16 *And I heard the voice of a man between **the banks of** Ulai, and he called and said, "Gabriel, make this **one** understand the vision."*

A voice from between the banks of the Ulai calls out and commands Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel. This is the first time in the Bible that an angel is named. Gabriel appears again in Daniel 9:21, and centuries later he is the one who announces the births of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:19, 26). Gabriel's job seems to be bringing God's messages about His plan of redemption.

Who gives the command? The voice speaks with authority over Gabriel himself. Some believe this is the Lord, perhaps the same person who appears as the man in linen in chapter 10. The text does not say, so I will not press it.

8:17 *And he came beside my standing place; and when he came, I was terrified and fell on my face. And he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision **is** for the time of the end."*

When Gabriel comes near, Daniel falls on his face in fear. Gabriel calls him "son of man," which here simply means "human being," reminding Daniel of his weakness before God (Ezekiel is

called this many times). Then Gabriel says the most important thing in the chapter: this vision pertains to "the time of the end."

How can a vision fulfilled in 167 B.C. be about the time of the end? I believe the answer is that God fulfilled this prophecy in Antiochus, and then used Antiochus as a pattern of the final Antichrist. Jesus confirms this. Speaking almost two hundred years after Antiochus died, Jesus told His disciples to watch for "the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15). If Antiochus had been the complete fulfillment, Jesus would not have pointed to it as still future. Some interpreters hold that "the time of the end" here means only the end of the persecution under Antiochus, and that is a fair reading of these words by themselves. But the language of 8:17-19 and 8:23-25 reaches further than Antiochus, and Jesus' words settle it for me.

8:18 *And when he spoke with me, I fell into a deep sleep on my face toward the ground; and he touched me and made me stand on my standing place.*

Daniel is overwhelmed and falls into a deep sleep with his face on the ground. Gabriel touches him and makes him stand up. Daniel is one of the most faithful men in the Bible, and yet he cannot stand in the presence of one of God's angels. John had the same experience in Revelation 1:17, falling at the feet of the glorified Christ until Jesus laid His hand on him. God does not reveal His plans to us to crush us, but to lift us up and help us understand.

8:19 *And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what will be in the latter part of the indignation; for **it is** for the appointed time of the end.*

Gabriel repeats that the vision is about "the latter part of the indignation" and "the appointed time of the end." "Indignation" here means God's anger, especially His discipline on Israel. The phrase "appointed time" tells us God has fixed the date. The persecution under Antiochus had an appointed end, and so will the Great Tribulation under the Antichrist.

8:20 *The ram which you saw, the owner of the two horns, **is** the kings of Media and Persia.*

Here is one of the clearest interpretations in all of Bible prophecy. Gabriel names the kingdom: the ram is Media and Persia. We do not have to guess. This also confirms what we saw in chapter 7, that the second kingdom of Daniel's visions is Medo-Persia, not Media alone. Some scholars who date Daniel late try to split Media and Persia into two separate kingdoms to make the four kingdoms end with Greece. This verse puts them together in one animal with two horns.

8:21 *And the shaggy male goat **is** the king of Greece; and the great horn which **is** between its eyes, it **is** the first king.*

Again Gabriel names the kingdom: the goat is Greece (the Hebrew says "Javan," the ancient name for the Greeks). The great horn is "the first king," Alexander the Great. Daniel was told the name of an empire that had not yet risen to power, about two centuries before it conquered the East. This is part of the reason some critics say Daniel must have been written later, around 165 B.C. As I explained in the Overview, I reject that view. If God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-10), there is nothing strange about Him naming Greece in advance.

8:22 *And the broken **horn**, and four arose in its place: four kingdoms will arise from **the** nation, and not with its power.*

The broken horn and the four that came up in its place are four kingdoms. They came from Alexander's nation, but none of them had his power. That is exactly what history shows. Alexander's successors fought among themselves for decades, and none of the four kingdoms ever matched the empire he had built.

8:23 *And in the latter part of their reign, when the transgressors have completed **it**, a king will arise, strong of face and understanding riddles.*

"In the latter part of their reign," when "the transgressors have completed it," a king will arise. Gabriel describes him as "strong of face," meaning bold-faced and shameless, and "understanding riddles," meaning clever with schemes and double talk. Antiochus IV fits this well. He rose late in the Seleucid line and won the throne through flattery and deception (Daniel 11:21 says he would seize the kingdom by intrigue).

The phrase "when the transgressors have completed it" suggests that this king comes when sin has filled up its measure. That will also be true at the very end. The Antichrist will rise when the world is ripe for him (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12).

8:24 *And his power will be mighty, and not by his own power; and he will destroy wondrously, and he will prosper and act, and he will destroy mighty ones and **the** people of **the** holy ones.*

This king becomes very strong, but his strength is not his own. Someone is behind him. With Antiochus, it was God permitting him, and Satan driving him. With the Antichrist, Revelation 13:2 says it plainly: the dragon gives the beast his power, his throne and great authority.

He will "destroy wondrously, and he will prosper and act," and he will destroy "mighty ones and the people of the holy ones." Antiochus killed thousands in Jerusalem. The Antichrist will make war with the saints (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7). The pattern is the same, only larger at the end.

8:25 *And through his insight he will make deceit prosper by his hand, and in his heart he will magnify himself, and in ease he will destroy many; and he will stand against the Prince of princes, and without hand he will be broken.*

Through his "insight," he will make deceit prosper. "In his heart he will magnify himself," he will destroy many while they are at ease, and he will even "stand against the Prince of princes." I believe the Prince of princes is God, and in the final fulfillment, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

Then comes the ending: "without hand he will be broken." No army defeated Antiochus. He died in 164 B.C. during a campaign in Persia, from an illness, according to ancient historians. The Antichrist will also be destroyed without any human hand, by Christ at His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:20). Every enemy of God, however strong, ends the same way.

8:26 *And the vision of the evening and the morning which has been told, it **is** truth; and you, shut up the vision, for **it is** for many days."*

Gabriel confirms that the vision of the evening and the morning is truth, and he tells Daniel, "shut up the vision," meaning to preserve it and keep it safe. It was not for Daniel's generation, for "it is for many days." Compare Daniel 12:4 and 12:9, where Daniel is again told to seal up the book until the end time, and Revelation 22:10, where John is told the opposite, not to seal his book, because the time is near.

8:27 *And I, Daniel, was exhausted and was sick **for** days; and I arose and did the work of the king. And I was appalled at the vision, and there was none making **it** understood.*

Daniel was exhausted and sick for days afterward. Then he got up and went back to the king's business. I love this detail. Daniel had just seen visions of empires and the end of the age, and the next thing he did was go back to work. Prophecy did not make him useless for daily life. It made him faithful in it.

He was still "appalled," and no one could fully explain the vision to him. Daniel did not understand every part of what he had seen, and that is all right. God gives us enough to trust Him, even when we cannot see the whole picture yet.

Two Little Horns: Antiochus and the Antichrist

Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 each describe a little horn. They are two different men, but God seems to have made the first a preview of the second. Here is how they compare.

Where they come from: The little horn of chapter 8 comes out of one of the four Greek kingdoms (8:9). The little horn of chapter 7 comes out of the fourth, Roman beast, from among ten horns (7:7-8).

When they appear: The horn of chapter 8 came about 175 B.C. (Antiochus IV Epiphanes). The horn of chapter 7 appears at the end of the age, just before the coming of the Son of Man (7:13, 26).

Their pride: Antiochus magnified himself to the Commander of the host (8:11, 25). The Antichrist speaks great boasts against the Most High (7:8, 25) and exalts himself above every so-called god (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Their war on God's people: Antiochus destroyed the holy people (8:24). The Antichrist wages war with the saints and overpowers them (7:21; Revelation 13:7).

The temple: Antiochus stopped the regular sacrifice and defiled the sanctuary (8:11-12). The Antichrist will put a stop to sacrifice in the middle of the seventieth week (9:27) and set up the abomination of desolation Jesus warned about (Matthew 24:15).

Their limit: Antiochus was given 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14). The Antichrist is given a time, times, and half a time (7:25), forty-two months (Revelation 13:5).

Their end: Antiochus was broken without a human hand (8:25). The Antichrist will be destroyed by Christ at His coming (7:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:20).

Chapter 8 Summary

In the third year of Belshazzar, Daniel sees a ram with two horns, which Gabriel identifies as Media and Persia, overrun by a goat from the west with one great horn, which Gabriel identifies as Greece and its first king. This was fulfilled in Alexander the Great. The great horn is broken and four horns rise in its place, the four kingdoms that divided Alexander's empire.

Out of one of them comes a small horn who persecutes God's people, stops the temple sacrifice and defiles the sanctuary for 2,300 evenings and mornings. This was fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in 167 B.C., and the temple was rededicated in 164 B.C. Gabriel says the vision also pertains to the time of the end, and Antiochus stands as a preview of the coming Antichrist, who will be broken without human hand.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. Have you ever seen someone gain great power or success very quickly and then lose it just as fast? What did you learn from it?

2. What do the ram and its two horns represent, and why was one horn higher than the other? (8:3, 20)

3. How does the goat's attack on the ram match the history of Alexander the Great? (8:5-7, 21)

4. What happened to the goat's large horn at the height of its power, and what came up in its place? (8:8, 22)

5. What did the small horn do to God's people and to the temple? (8:9-12, 24)

6. What are the two main ways of counting the 2,300 evenings and mornings? (8:14)

7. Why does Gabriel say the vision pertains to the time of the end, and how do Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15 help us understand this? (8:17, 19)

8. How was the king of 8:23-25 brought to his end, and how does that encourage you about the final defeat of evil? (8:25)

9. After this overwhelming vision, Daniel went back to the king's business. What does that teach you about living faithfully while waiting for Christ's return? (8:27)

10. Where in your life are you tempted to magnify yourself, and how can you humble yourself before God instead?

Chapter 9: Daniel's Prayer and the Seventy Weeks

Scripture: Daniel Prays and Gabriel Answers

9:1-3 (Daniel Reads Jeremiah) In year one of Darius son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of Media, who had been made king over the kingdom of ***the*** Chaldeans— in year one of his reigning, I, Daniel, understood in the scrolls the number of the years ***about*** which the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, to complete for the ruins of Jerusalem seventy years. And I set my face to the Lord God to seek prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

9:4-19 (Daniel's Prayer of Confession) And I prayed to the LORD my God, and I confessed, and I said, "Please, O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and the steadfast love for those who love Him and for those who keep His commandments, we have sinned, and we have committed iniquity; we have acted wickedly, and we have rebelled, and turned aside from Your commandments and from Your judgments. And we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our leaders, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To You, O Lord, ***belongs*** the righteousness, and to us the shame of face, as ***it is*** this day —to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those near and those far, in all the lands where You have banished them, in their unfaithfulness ***with*** which they have been unfaithful against You. O LORD, to us ***belongs*** the shame of face, to our kings, to our leaders, and to our fathers, in that we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God ***belong*** the compassion and the forgivenesses, for we have rebelled against Him, and we have not listened to the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws which He set before us by the hand of His servants the prophets. And all Israel have transgressed Your law, and turned aside to not listen to Your voice; and the curse and the oath which ***is*** written in the law of Moses the servant of God have poured out on us, for we have sinned against Him. And He has carried out His word which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing on us a great calamity, which has not been done under all the heavens as it has been done in Jerusalem. Just as ***it is*** written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; and we have not entreated the face of the LORD our God by turning back from our iniquity and by gaining insight into Your truth. And the LORD kept watch over the calamity and brought it on us; for the LORD our God ***is*** righteous in all His deeds which He has done, and we have not listened to His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out from the land of Egypt with a strong hand, and made for Yourself a name, as ***it is*** this day—we have sinned, we have acted wickedly. O Lord, according to all Your righteousnesses, let Your anger and Your rage turn back, please, from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and because of the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people ***have become*** a reproach to all around us. And now, hear, O our God, the prayer of Your servant and his supplications, and make Your face shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate, for the sake of the Lord. Incline, O my God, Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city on which Your name is called; for ***it is*** not on ***the basis of*** our righteousnesses ***that*** we are causing our supplications to fall before You, but on ***the basis of*** Your great compassion. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, give heed and act! Do not delay, for Your own sake, O my God, for Your name is called on Your city and on Your people."

9:20-23 (Gabriel Arrives) And I ***was*** still speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and causing my supplication to fall before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, and I ***was*** still speaking in prayer, and the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, wearied with weariness, ***was*** approaching me about the time of the evening grain offering. And he gave understanding, and he spoke with me, and he said, "O Daniel, now I have come forth to give you insight ***in*** understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to declare ***it***, for you ***are*** precious; and understand the word, and discern the appearance.

9:24-27 (The Seventy Weeks) Seventy sevens have been decreed on your people and on your holy city, to put an end to the transgression, and to complete sin, and to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint a holy of holies. And you shall know and gain insight: from the going forth of ***the*** word to restore and to build Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince, ***shall be*** seven sevens and sixty-two sevens; it will again be built, plaza and moat, even in the distress of the times. And after the sixty-two sevens an anointed one will be cut off, and ***there will be*** nothing for him; and the people of a prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and its end ***will be*** with the flood, and until ***the*** end ***there will be*** war; desolations ***are*** determined. And he will make a covenant strong for the many ***for*** one seven; and ***in*** the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease; and on a wing of abominations ***will be*** one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, and what has been decided will be poured out on the one who is desolate."

Chapter 9 Preview

Chapter 9 begins with an old man reading his Bible. Babylon has fallen, a new empire is in charge, and Daniel, now in his eighties, is studying the prophet Jeremiah. He finds God's promise that the exile would last seventy years, and he realizes the seventy years are nearly over. His response is not to celebrate or to calculate. It is to pray. What follows is one of the great prayers of the Bible, a humble confession of sin on behalf of his whole nation, resting entirely on God's mercy.

While Daniel is still praying, Gabriel arrives with an answer that reaches far beyond what Daniel asked. Daniel was thinking about seventy years. God answers with "seventy sevens," sevens of years, laying out His plan for Israel and Jerusalem all the way to the coming of the Messiah and the end of the age.

Daniel 9:24-27 is one of the most important prophecies in the Bible. It predicts when the Messiah would come, that He would be "cut off," that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed afterward, and that a final seven-year period would come, dominated by a ruler who makes a covenant and then breaks it. This seventieth week is the framework for the seven years of Tribulation described in the Book of Revelation. Because these four verses are so important, and so debated, I have laid them out plainly in a feature at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1 *In year one of Darius son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of Media, who had been made king over the kingdom of* ***the*** *Chaldeans—*

This is the same Darius the Mede who took over the kingdom in Daniel 5:31 and who threw Daniel into the lions' den in chapter 6. His first year would be about 539-538 B.C., right after Babylon fell to the Persians. This Ahasuerus is not the king of the Book of Esther, who lived later.

Who was Darius the Mede? History outside the Bible has not given us a clear answer. Some believe he was Gubaru (or Ugbaru), a governor whom Cyrus put in charge of Babylon. Others believe "Darius the Mede" is another name or title for Cyrus himself, and Daniel 6:28 can be translated in a way that allows this. I do not think we need to pick a side firmly. What matters is that Daniel ties this prayer to a real moment in history: the moment Babylon had fallen and the end of the exile was in sight.

9:2 *in year one of his reigning, I, Daniel, understood in the scrolls the number of the years* ***about*** *which the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, to complete for the ruins of Jerusalem seventy years.*

Daniel was reading Scripture. "The scrolls" included the writings of Jeremiah, who had prophesied that Judah would serve Babylon for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12) and that when seventy years were completed for Babylon, God would bring His people back (Jeremiah 29:10). Daniel calls Jeremiah's words "the word of the LORD." Even a prophet who received visions from angels humbly studied what other prophets had written. He did not think his own visions made the rest of Scripture less important.

When did the seventy years start? Daniel himself was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C. (Daniel 1:1). If we count from there, seventy years brings us to about 536 B.C., right around the time the first Jews returned under Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1:1-4). Others count from the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. to the completion of the second temple in 516 B.C., which is also about seventy years. Either way, God kept His word.

2 Chronicles 36:21 adds one more reason for the number. For centuries, Israel had ignored God's command to let the land rest every seventh year (Leviticus 25:1-7; 26:34-35). The seventy years of exile gave the land its missed sabbaths. Keep that in mind. God counts in sevens, and He is about to give Daniel a much bigger set of sevens.

9:3 *And I set my face to the Lord God to seek prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

Daniel's reaction to prophecy is to pray, and to pray with fasting, sackcloth and ashes, the signs of deep grief and humility. You might ask, "If God already promised to end the exile, why pray about it?" It's simple: God's promises are not a reason to stop praying; they are the reason to start. God promised in Jeremiah 29:12-13 that when the seventy years were done, His people would call on Him and seek Him with all their heart, and He would be found. Daniel took that promise at face value and did what it said.

God also gave a promise in Leviticus 26:40-42: if His scattered people would confess their iniquity, He would remember His covenant. Daniel's prayer follows that pattern closely. He is praying God's Word back to God.

9:4 *And I prayed to the LORD my God, and I confessed, and I said, "Please, O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and the steadfast love for those who love Him and for those who keep His commandments,*

Daniel begins with God, not with his problem. God is great and awesome, and He keeps His covenant and His "steadfast love" (the Hebrew word "hesed," God's loyal, faithful love) toward those who love Him and keep His commandments. Before Daniel says a word about Israel's failures, he reminds himself who God is. That is a good order for our prayers too.

9:5 *we have sinned, and we have committed iniquity; we have acted wickedly, and we have rebelled, and turned aside from Your commandments and from Your judgments.*

Notice the word "we." Daniel is one of the most faithful men in the Old Testament. There is no recorded sin of Daniel in Scripture. Yet he does not say "they have sinned." He stands with his people and confesses their sin as his own. He piles up words for sin, one after another, because he is not trying to make it sound smaller than it is. He also names the heart of it: they turned aside from God's commandments.

9:6 *And we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our leaders, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

God had sent prophet after prophet, men like Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others, to speak to Israel's kings, leaders and ordinary people. Israel's problem was not that God was silent. It was that they did not listen. That is still true. Most of us do not need a new word from heaven nearly as much as we need to obey the one we already have.

9:7 *To You, O Lord,* ***belongs*** *the righteousness, and to us the shame of face, as* ***it is*** *this day—to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those near and those far, in all the lands where You have banished them, in their unfaithfulness* ***with*** *which they have been unfaithful against You.*

Daniel draws a sharp contrast. God is righteous; Israel is ashamed. This shame belongs to everyone, the people of Judah, the people of Jerusalem and all Israel, near and far, wherever God had scattered them. Daniel does not argue that the exile was unfair. He agrees with God's judgment. True confession always starts by admitting that God is right.

9:8 *O LORD, to us* ***belongs*** *the shame of face, to our kings, to our leaders, and to our fathers, in that we have sinned against You.*

He repeats it and widens it: shame belongs to the kings, the princes and the fathers. Leaders were not excused. In fact, much of Israel's trouble had come through its kings. Daniel came from the royal family or the nobles of Judah (Daniel 1:3), so this confession was personal.

9:9 *To the Lord our God **belong** the compassion and the forgivenesses, for we have rebelled against Him,*

Here is the turning point of the prayer. Shame belongs to us, but compassion and forgiveness belong to God. That is the whole gospel in one contrast. We bring the sin; He brings the mercy. Daniel adds "for we have rebelled against Him." God's forgiveness is not because we deserve it. It is in spite of the fact that we do not.

9:10 *and we have not listened to the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws which He set before us by the hand of His servants the prophets.*

Israel did not walk in God's teachings, which He set before them through His prophets. Again the problem is not ignorance. They knew what God wanted. They simply would not do it.

9:11 *And all Israel have transgressed Your law, and turned aside to not listen to Your voice; and the curse and the oath which **is** written in the law of Moses the servant of God have poured out on us, for we have sinned against Him.*

All Israel transgressed God's law and turned aside. So "the curse" written in the law of Moses was poured out on them. Daniel is thinking of passages like Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, where God warned that if Israel broke His covenant, they would be scattered among the nations and their land would be left desolate. The exile was not random. It was exactly what God had said would happen.

9:12 *And He has carried out His word which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing on us a great calamity, which has not been done under all the heavens as it has been done in Jerusalem.*

God did what He said He would do. Jerusalem's destruction was a disaster unlike anything "under all the heavens." That sounds hard, but it is also hopeful. If God kept His word in judgment, He will also keep His word in restoration. A God who keeps His warnings is a God who keeps His promises.

9:13 *Just as **it is** written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; and we have not entreated the face of the LORD our God by turning back from our iniquity and by gaining insight into Your truth.*

Even after the calamity came, Israel did not turn from their iniquity or give attention to God's truth. Suffering by itself does not make people repent. It can soften a heart or harden it. Daniel is praying that this time, at last, his people will turn back.

9:14 *And the LORD kept watch over the calamity and brought it on us; for the LORD our God **is** righteous in all His deeds which He has done, and we have not listened to His voice.*

God was watching over the calamity and brought it on them, because He is righteous in everything He does. I think this phrase is striking. God did not lose control while Babylon burned

Jerusalem. He was keeping watch over it the whole time. The same God who watched over the judgment would now watch over the return.

9:15 *And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out from the land of Egypt with a strong hand, and made for Yourself a name, as **it is** this day—we have sinned, we have acted wickedly.*

Now Daniel turns from confession to request, and he starts with the Exodus. God had already shown once that He could bring His people out of a foreign land, and He did it to make a name for Himself. Daniel is asking God to do it again. He still adds, "we have sinned, we have acted wickedly." He does not stop confessing just because he has started asking.

9:16 *O Lord, according to all Your righteousnesses, let Your anger and Your rage turn back, please, from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and because of the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people **have become** a reproach to all around us.*

Daniel appeals to God's righteous acts. He asks God to turn His anger away from Jerusalem, "Your holy mountain." He calls it God's city, not Israel's. Jerusalem and God's people had become "a reproach," a joke and a byword, to all the nations around them. Daniel cares about Jerusalem because God's name was attached to it.

9:17 *And now, hear, O our God, the prayer of Your servant and his supplications, and make Your face shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate, for the sake of the Lord.*

This echoes the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, which asks the LORD to make His face shine on His people. The temple lay in ruins, but Daniel asks God to look on it with favor again. And he asks "for the sake of the Lord." That is the key to the whole prayer.

9:18 *Incline, O my God, Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city on which Your name is called; for **it is** not on **the basis of** our righteousnesses **that** we are causing our supplications to fall before You, but on **the basis of** Your great compassion.*

This verse may be the heart of Daniel's prayer. He asks God to open His eyes and see their desolation, and he makes it clear that he is not asking because Israel deserves it. He is asking "on the basis of Your great compassion."

This is how every believer comes to God. We do not come with a list of our good works. We come on the basis of God's mercy, which we now know was fully shown in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5). If Daniel, of all people, did not lean on his own merits, neither should we.

9:19 *O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, give heed and act! Do not delay, for Your own sake, O my God, for Your name is called on Your city and on Your people."*

The prayer ends in a rush of short, urgent requests: hear, forgive, listen, act, do not delay. Daniel asks God to act "for Your own sake," because the city and the people are called by His name. This is not a cold, formal prayer. It is a man pouring out his heart. God is not offended by urgent prayer when it rests on His glory and His promises.

9:20 *And I **was** still speaking and praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and causing my supplication to fall before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God,*

Daniel was still in the middle of praying, confessing his own sin and his people's sin and presenting his request for the holy mountain of God. Here Daniel says "my sin." He saw himself as part of the problem. The closer a person walks with God, the more clearly he sees his own sin, and the less likely he is to look down on anyone else.

9:21 *and I **was** still speaking in prayer, and the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, wearied with weariness, **was** approaching me about the time of the evening grain offering.*

Gabriel, whom Daniel had met in chapter 8, comes to him "wearied with weariness." The Hebrew phrase is hard, and many translations read it as "in swift flight." Either way, God's answer came quickly, while Daniel was still praying.

He came "about the time of the evening grain offering." There had been no temple and no sacrifices for decades, yet Daniel still marked his day by the times of offering in Jerusalem. His heart was still set on God's house, even in Babylon. That is a picture of a believer living faithfully in a world that is not his home.

9:22 *And he gave understanding, and he spoke with me, and he said, "O Daniel, now I have come forth to give you insight **in** understanding.*

Gabriel explains why he has come: to give Daniel insight and understanding. Daniel had prayed about Jerusalem's restoration, and God is about to show him not only the near future, but the whole future of Jerusalem until the end.

9:23 *At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to declare **it**, for you **are** precious; and understand the word, and discern the appearance.*

At the very beginning of Daniel's prayer, the command went out from heaven, and Gabriel was sent. God answered before Daniel finished. Isaiah 65:24 says God will answer before His people call. Gabriel also tells Daniel he is "precious," meaning greatly loved and treasured by God. Daniel will hear this again in 10:11 and 10:19.

Then Gabriel says, "understand the word, and discern the appearance." What follows is not easy, and God expects Daniel, and us, to think carefully about it.

9:24 *Seventy sevens have been decreed on your people and on your holy city, to put an end to the transgression, and to complete sin, and to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint a holy of holies.*

The word translated "sevens" means "units of seven." Many Bibles translate it "weeks," and that is why this prophecy is often called the Seventy Weeks. I use that name in this study too. It does not have to mean seven days. Daniel had been thinking about seventy years, and Gabriel answers with seventy sevens. In context, these are sevens of years, which makes seventy sevens equal to

490 years. Israel already knew about periods of seven years: every seventh year was a sabbath year for the land (Leviticus 25:1-7), and the seventy years of exile were connected to missed sabbath years (2 Chronicles 36:21).

These 490 years are decreed "on your people and on your holy city," meaning Daniel's people, the Jews, and Daniel's city, Jerusalem. Then Gabriel lists six things that will be accomplished by the end of the seventy weeks:

To put an end to the transgression: to bring Israel's long history of rebellion against God to an end.

To complete sin: to deal with sin once and for all.

To atone for iniquity: to provide the payment for sin, which Christ did on the cross.

To bring in everlasting righteousness: to establish a kingdom of righteousness that never ends.

To seal up vision and prophet: to fulfill and complete what the prophets foretold.

To anoint a holy of holies: to anoint and consecrate a most holy place or most holy one, which many see as the temple of the Messiah's kingdom.

Some of these were accomplished at the cross. Atonement for iniquity was paid in full when Jesus died (Hebrews 9:26). But others are clearly not finished for Israel as a nation yet. Israel's transgression has not been finished, everlasting righteousness does not fill the earth, and prophecy is still waiting to be fulfilled. That is one of the main reasons I believe the seventieth week is still future. The full list will be complete when Christ returns, Israel turns to Him (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26-27), and He reigns.

9:25 *And you shall know and gain insight: from the going forth of **the** word to restore and to build Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince, **shall be** seven sevens and sixty-two sevens; it will again be built, plaza and moat, even in the distress of the times.*

Gabriel now gives the starting point and the first milestone. The clock starts with "the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem," and it runs "until an anointed one, a prince." The Hebrew word for "anointed one" is mashiach, the word that comes into English as "Messiah." The Hebrew has no "the" here, so a literal translation reads "an anointed one, a prince." I believe this Anointed One is the Messiah, and this is one of the clearest uses of the word in the Old Testament for the coming King.

The time until Messiah is "seven sevens and sixty-two sevens," which is sixty-nine sevens, or 483 years. The first seven sevens (49 years) seem to cover the rebuilding of Jerusalem. "It will again be built, plaza and moat, even in the distress of the times." The books of Ezra and Nehemiah show exactly that kind of distress, with enemies opposing the work at every step (Nehemiah 4:1-23).

Which decree starts the clock? There were several Persian decrees about the Jews returning. Cyrus's decree in 538 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-4) dealt mainly with rebuilding the temple. The two decrees most often proposed as the starting point are both from King Artaxerxes:

457 B.C.: In his seventh year, Artaxerxes sent Ezra to Jerusalem with broad authority over the people and their worship (Ezra 7:11-26). Counting 483 years from 457 B.C. brings us to about A.D. 27, which many see as the year Jesus was baptized and began His public ministry as the Anointed One. (Some chronologies place Artaxerxes' seventh year in 458 B.C. instead; that shifts the count by a year but does not change the point.)

445/444 B.C.: In his twentieth year, Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to go and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-8). This decree speaks most directly about rebuilding the city. Those who start here usually count in "prophetic years" of 360 days, the same length of year that makes 1,260 days equal 42 months in Revelation. Counted that way, 483 years of 360 days come out to about 476 of our solar years, bringing us to about A.D. 32 or 33, the time of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His crucifixion.

Faithful scholars hold both views, and some have tried to calculate the result down to the day. I do not think we need to do that. What amazes me is that either way, Daniel, writing in the sixth century B.C., predicted that the Messiah would appear in the early first century A.D. That is exactly when Jesus came.

9:26 *And after the sixty-two sevens an anointed one will be cut off, and* ***there will be*** *nothing for him; and the people of a prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and its end* ***will be*** *with the flood, and until* ***the*** *end* ***there will be*** *war; desolations* ***are*** *determined.*

"After the sixty-two sevens," that is, after the sixty-ninth seven, "an anointed one will be cut off." I believe this is the Messiah. The words "cut off" are used in the Old Testament for being killed or put to death. The Messiah would not be welcomed as King; He would be killed. Isaiah 53:8 says the Servant would be "cut off from the land of the living." He would have nothing, meaning He would not receive the kingdom at that time. Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).

Then "the people of a prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary." This was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when Roman armies under Titus destroyed Jerusalem and burned the temple, about forty years after the crucifixion. Notice the wording carefully. It is not the prince himself who destroys the city, but "the people" of a prince who is still "coming." The people were the Romans. That tells us the coming prince will rise from the same people, the Roman world, which fits perfectly with the little horn rising from the fourth, Roman beast in Daniel 7.

The rest of the verse describes the time after the city's destruction: its end will come with a flood, war will continue to the end, and desolations are determined. That describes the long history of Jerusalem from A.D. 70 until now: conquered, ruled by foreign powers, and fought over again and again.

Something important has happened in this verse. Sixty-nine weeks are complete, and the Messiah is cut off, but the destruction of Jerusalem happens almost forty years later, and the seventieth week is not mentioned until the next verse. The seventieth week did not begin right after the sixty-ninth. There is a gap.

9:27 *And he will make a covenant strong for the many **for** one seven; and **in** the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease; and on a wing of abominations **will be** one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, and what has been decided will be poured out on the one who is desolate."*

Now we come to the seventieth week. "He will make a covenant strong for the many for one seven," that is, for seven years. Who is "he"? The nearest person named in the text is "a prince who is coming" in verse 26. I believe this is the Antichrist, the same little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13. "The many" are most likely the people of Israel, Daniel's people (9:24).

"In the middle of the seven," after three and a half years, he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering. This tells us two things. First, sacrifices will be offered again, which means a rebuilt temple, or at least a restored place of worship in Jerusalem, is expected at the end. Revelation 11:1-2 describes John measuring the temple of God during this time, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says the man of sin will take his seat in the temple of God. Second, the covenant will be broken. The Antichrist will pose as Israel's friend and protector, then turn on them.

"On a wing of abominations will be one who makes desolate." The Hebrew here is hard, and translations differ on it. I believe it points to "the abomination of desolation" Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:15, when He told those in Judea to flee to the mountains when they see it standing in the holy place. Jesus said this would be followed by a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world (Matthew 24:21), and then by His coming on the clouds (Matthew 24:29-30). The last half of the week is the same three and a half years as the "time and times and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 and the forty-two months of Revelation 13:5.

But the desolator's time is limited. It lasts "until a complete destruction, and what has been decided will be poured out on the one who is desolate." God has already decreed his end, and Christ will destroy him at His coming (Revelation 19:20).

I should be honest that not every Christian reads this verse this way. Many interpreters believe "he" in 9:27 is the Messiah, not the Antichrist. In that view, Jesus confirmed the new covenant with many, and His death in the middle of the seventieth week (after a ministry of about three and a half years) put an end to the meaning of the temple sacrifices. The seventieth week then follows the sixty-nine without a gap and was fulfilled in the first century, with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

I respect that view, and it rightly keeps Christ at the center. But I believe the futurist reading fits the text better, for four reasons. The nearest "he" in the text is the prince who is coming. The verse describes a covenant made and then broken by an evil ruler, which does not fit Christ's covenant, which is everlasting. Jesus Himself placed the abomination of desolation in the future, right

before the Great Tribulation and His return. And the six goals of 9:24 have not yet all been fulfilled for Daniel's people.

You might ask, "Is a gap of two thousand years really possible in one prophecy?" It is. Prophets often saw future events like mountain peaks, without seeing the valleys between them. When Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue at Nazareth, He stopped in the middle of a sentence, right before "a day of vengeance of our God," and said that the Scripture was fulfilled that day (Luke 4:16-21). The first part was fulfilled at His first coming; the rest waits for His second. I believe the seventy weeks work the same way. The clock stopped when the Messiah was cut off, and it will start again when the Antichrist confirms his covenant.

What about the church during the seventieth week? I hold the pre-tribulation view. The seventy weeks are decreed for Daniel's people, Israel, and the holy city (9:24), and I believe the church will be gathered to Christ before the seventieth week begins (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 3:10). Those who hold the post-tribulation view believe the church will be on earth during these seven years and that God will keep His people through it until Christ returns (Matthew 24:29-31). Other believers hold mid-tribulation or pre-wrath views. This is a difference among brothers and sisters, not a test of faith. Whatever your view, Scripture calls every believer to be ready and to stand firm in whatever trouble comes (Ephesians 6:13).

New Testament links: Matthew 24:15 (alluded to); Mark 13:14 (alluded to)

The Seventy Weeks Laid Out Plainly

Daniel 9:24-27 can feel complicated, so here is the whole prophecy in plain steps.

The unit: A "week" is a "seven." In this prophecy, each seven is seven years. Seventy weeks = 70 x 7 = 490 years.

Who it is for: Daniel's people (Israel) and Daniel's holy city (Jerusalem) (9:24).

The goal: Six things will be done by the end of the 490 years: putting an end to the transgression, completing sin, atoning for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up vision and prophet, and anointing a holy of holies (9:24).

The starting point: A decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (9:25). The two main candidates are Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7) and Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah in 445/444 B.C. (Nehemiah 2).

The first seven weeks (49 years): Jerusalem is rebuilt, with its streets and defenses, in troubled times (9:25), as described in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The next sixty-two weeks (434 years): These bring the total to sixty-nine weeks (483 years), reaching "an anointed one, a prince" (9:25), the Messiah. This lands in the early first century A.D., during the life and ministry of Jesus.

After the sixty-nine weeks: The Messiah is cut off and has nothing (9:26). This is the crucifixion of Jesus.

Also after the sixty-nine weeks: The people of a prince who is coming destroy the city and the sanctuary (9:26). This was fulfilled by Rome in A.D. 70.

The gap: War and desolations continue until the end (9:26). I believe the present church age falls between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

The seventieth week (7 years, future): The coming prince, the Antichrist, makes a strong covenant with the many for seven years (9:27). This is the seven-year Tribulation described in Revelation 6-19.

The middle of the week (after 3 1/2 years): He stops the sacrifice and grain offering and sets up the abomination of desolation (9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

The last half (3 1/2 years): The Great Tribulation, the same as the "time and times and half a time" (7:25), 42 months (Revelation 13:5) and 1,260 days (Revelation 12:6).

The end of the seventy weeks: What has been decided is poured out on the desolator (9:27). Christ returns, the beast is destroyed, and the goals of 9:24 are completed in His kingdom (Daniel 7:26-27; Revelation 19:19-20:6).

The main alternative view: Many Christians see no gap, and they understand the seventieth week as fulfilled in the first century through Christ's ministry, death and the new covenant, with Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70. I hold the futurist view for the reasons given in the study of 9:27.

Chapter 9 Summary

In the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel reads Jeremiah and understands that the seventy years of exile are almost complete. He responds with fasting and a humble prayer, confessing the sins of his people as his own, admitting that God was right to judge them, and asking for mercy not on the basis of their merits but on God's great compassion and for the sake of His name.

While Daniel is still praying, Gabriel arrives with God's answer: seventy weeks, or 490 years, are decreed for Israel and Jerusalem. Sixty-nine weeks run from a decree to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, who will be cut off. Afterward, the city and temple are destroyed, which happened in A.D. 70. A final seventieth week remains, a seven-year period in which the coming prince makes a covenant with Israel and breaks it in the middle, stopping the sacrifices, until God's decreed destruction falls on him. I believe this seventieth week is the future seven-year Tribulation.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. When you read a promise in God's Word, what is your usual response? How does Daniel's response compare? (9:2-3)

2. What prophecy was Daniel reading, and how long did it say the exile would last? (9:2; Jeremiah 25:11-12)

3. How does Daniel describe God at the beginning of his prayer, and why do you think he starts there? (9:4)

4. Why do you think Daniel, a faithful man, says "we have sinned" instead of "they have sinned"? (9:5, 20)

5. On what basis does Daniel ask God to answer his prayer? (9:18-19)

6. When was the command to answer Daniel given, and what does that tell you about how God hears prayer? (9:23)

7. What six things are to be accomplished by the end of the seventy weeks? (9:24)

8. What happens after the sixty-nine weeks, and how was this fulfilled in history? (9:26)

9. What does the coming prince do in the seventieth week, and how did Jesus refer to this event? (9:27; Matthew 24:15)

10. Is there a sin in your own life, your family or your church that you need to confess honestly before God, the way Daniel did?

Chapter 10: The War Behind the Curtain

Scripture: Daniel's Final Vision Begins

10:1-9 (Daniel's Fast and the Man in Linen) In year three of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the word ***was*** truth, and a great war; and he understood the word, and understanding ***was*** to him in the appearance. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three sevens of days. I did not eat food of desirable things, and flesh and wine did not come into my mouth, and I did not anoint myself at all, until three sevens of days were completed. And on day twenty-four of the first month, I was beside the great river, that ***is*** Tigris. And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and look, a certain man clothed ***in*** linen, and his loins ***were*** girded with gold of Uphaz. And his body ***was*** like topaz, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and his feet like the look of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. And I, Daniel, by myself saw the vision, and the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great trembling fell on them, and they fled to hide themselves. And I was left by myself, and I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me, and my splendor was changed in me into ruin, and I retained no strength. And I heard the sound of his words; and as I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face, and my face ***was*** toward the ground.

10:10-14 (The Messenger Explains His Delay) And look, a hand touched me, and it set me trembling on my knees and the palms of my hands. And he said to me, "O Daniel, man of preciousness, understand the words which I am speaking to you, and stand on your standing place, for now I have been sent to you." And when he spoke this word with me, I stood up trembling. And he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you gave your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words. And the prince of the kingdom of Persia was standing opposite me twenty-one days; and look, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there beside the kings of Persia. And I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people at the end of the days, for ***there is*** still a vision for the days."

10:15-21 (Daniel Strengthened for What Is Coming) And when he spoke with me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and I was mute. And look, ***one*** like the likeness of the sons of man ***was*** touching my lips; and I opened my mouth and spoke, and I said to the one standing opposite me, "O my lord, by the vision my pangs have turned on me, and I have retained no strength. And how is the servant of this my lord able to speak with this my lord? And I—from now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." And he again touched me, like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. And he said, "Do not fear, O man of preciousness; peace ***be*** to you; be strong, and be strong!" And when he spoke with me, I strengthened myself, and I said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." And he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia; and I am going forth, and look, the prince of Greece is coming. But I will tell you what is inscribed in ***the*** writing of truth; and there is not one who shows himself strong with me against these, except Michael your prince.

Chapter 10 Preview

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 are one long vision, the last one God gave to Daniel. Chapter 10 is the introduction, and it may be the most surprising chapter in the whole book. Daniel prays and fasts for three weeks, and when the answer finally comes, the messenger tells him why it took so long: a spiritual war was being fought over the kingdom of Persia.

This chapter pulls back the curtain on something we rarely think about. Behind the kings, armies and politics of this world, there are spiritual powers at work, both good and evil. Chapter 11 will show us the human side of history, kings of the North and kings of the South. Chapter 10 shows us the unseen side first, so we never forget who is really fighting, and who wins.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *In year three of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the word **was** truth, and a great war; and he understood the word, and understanding **was** to him in the appearance.*

The third year of Cyrus as king over Babylon was about 536 B.C. Cyrus had captured Babylon in 539 B.C., and in his first year he issued the decree allowing the Jews to go home and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). So by the time of this vision, the first group of exiles had already gone back to Jerusalem.

Daniel did not go with them. He had been carried to Babylon as a teenager in 605 B.C., so he was now well into his eighties. Old age may have kept him in Babylon, or God may simply have had more for him to do there. Either way, this verse tells us the message was *"truth, and a great war."* Before we even read the vision, God wants us to know two things: it will come true, and it is about war.

Notice too that *"he understood the word, and understanding was to him in the appearance."* In chapter 8 he was left confused (8:27). This time God made sure he understood. That is a good reminder that God does not give prophecy to confuse His people. He gives it so we can know Him and trust Him.

10:2 *In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three sevens of days.*

Daniel had been mourning for three full weeks. The text does not tell us exactly why, but the timing gives us a clue. The exiles who went home were facing hard opposition. Ezra 4:4-5 tells us the people of the land discouraged and frightened them and hired counselors against them through all the days of Cyrus. The work on the temple stalled. If news of this reached Daniel, it would have broken his heart.

You might ask, "Why would a man who had seen so many answered prayers still mourn?" It's simple: Daniel cared about God's people and God's name more than his own comfort. His mourning was not despair. It was the grief of a man who loved what God loves.

10:3 *I did not eat food of desirable things, and flesh and wine did not come into my mouth, and I did not anoint myself at all, until three sevens of days were completed.*

This was a partial fast. Daniel gave up *"food of desirable things,"* meat and wine, and he did not anoint himself with oil, which people normally did to refresh their skin and appearance. This passage, along with 1:12, is where the idea of a "Daniel fast" comes from.

There is an interesting detail in the dates. Verse 4 tells us the vision came on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, after three full weeks of fasting. That means Daniel's fast covered the days of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which fell on the fourteenth through the twenty-first of that month. Passover was a feast, but Daniel set aside his own comfort to seek God through the very days that remembered God's rescue of Israel from Egypt. He was asking God to rescue His people again.

10:4 *And on day twenty-four of the first month, I was beside the great river, that **is** Tigris.*

Daniel was standing on the bank of the Tigris River. This is not the Euphrates, which ran through Babylon, so Daniel was away from the capital, perhaps on government business or with a small group of companions (verse 7).

God often meets His people in ordinary places. Daniel was not in a temple. He was by a river, far from Jerusalem, after three weeks of quiet, hungry prayer. Faithfulness in the quiet place is often what comes before a great word from God.

10:5 *And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and look, a certain man clothed **in** linen, and his loins **were** girded with gold of Uphaz.*

Daniel looks up and sees a man dressed in linen, with a belt of pure gold. Linen was the clothing of the priests (Leviticus 16:4), and it is also worn by heavenly messengers elsewhere (Ezekiel 9:2; Revelation 15:6). Gold speaks of royalty and glory.

Who is this man? Christians have held two main views. Some believe he is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, meaning the Son of God appearing in a visible form before He was born in Bethlehem. Others believe he is a mighty angel, possibly Gabriel, who came to Daniel twice before (8:16; 9:21). I will give my own lean after verse 6, because that verse is the key.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:13 (alluded to); Revelation 15:6 (alluded to)

10:6 *And his body **was** like topaz, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and his feet like the look of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.*

His body was like topaz, a gemstone. His face shone like lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet gleamed like polished bronze, and his voice sounded like the noise of a great crowd.

If you studied Revelation with me, this should sound familiar. In Revelation 1:13-16, John sees the glorified Jesus clothed in a long robe with a golden sash, His eyes like a flame of fire, His feet like

burnished bronze, and His voice like the sound of many waters. The match is very close. And just as Daniel fell to the ground, John fell at Jesus' feet as if dead (Revelation 1:17).

Because of this, I lean toward seeing the glorious man of verses 5-6 as the pre-incarnate Christ. But I hold that loosely, and here is why. Starting in verse 10, someone touches Daniel and explains that he was held back for twenty-one days by the prince of Persia and needed Michael's help (10:13). It is hard to picture the eternal Son of God needing an angel's help. So many Bible teachers, and I agree with them, believe there are two figures here: the glorious man Daniel first sees (Christ), and an angelic messenger who then touches and speaks to him (likely Gabriel). Others believe it is one angel all the way through. Godly people land in different places, and the main message of the chapter does not change either way.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:14-15 (alluded to); Revelation 19:12 (alluded to); Matthew 28:3 (alluded to)

10:7 *And I, Daniel, by myself saw the vision, and the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great trembling fell on them, and they fled to hide themselves.*

Only Daniel saw the vision. The men with him did not see it, but they felt it. A great dread came over them, and they ran and hid.

This is very much like Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, where the men with him heard a sound but did not see who was speaking (Acts 9:7; 22:9). God can reveal Himself to one person while the people standing beside him sense only that something holy is happening.

10:8 *And I was left by myself, and I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me, and my splendor was changed in me into ruin, and I retained no strength.*

Left alone, Daniel lost all his strength. His face turned a deathly pale. This was not weakness of faith. It was the normal human response to standing in the presence of heavenly glory.

We sometimes speak casually about God, as if He were a buddy. Daniel's reaction reminds us that God is holy. Isaiah said "Woe to me!" when he saw the Lord (Isaiah 6:5), and John fell like a dead man (Revelation 1:17). A right view of God always humbles us.

10:9 *And I heard the sound of his words; and as I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face, and my face **was** toward the ground.*

At the sound of the man's voice, Daniel fell face down into a deep sleep, the same thing that happened to him when Gabriel came in 8:18. This was not ordinary sleep. Daniel was overwhelmed and passed out under the weight of what he was experiencing.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:17 (alluded to)

10:10 *And look, a hand touched me, and it set me trembling on my knees and the palms of my hands.*

A hand touched Daniel and raised him up onto his hands and knees, still trembling. God does not leave His servant lying on the ground. He lifts him up step by step: first to his hands and knees here, then to his feet in verse 11, and then to full strength in verse 19.

That is often how God restores us too. He rarely takes us from the floor to full strength in one moment. He lifts us a little at a time.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:17 (alluded to)

10:11 *And he said to me, "O Daniel, man of preciousness, understand the words which I am speaking to you, and stand on your standing place, for now I have been sent to you." And when he spoke this word with me, I stood up trembling.*

For the second time, Daniel is called a *"man of preciousness"* (see 9:23). Other translations say "greatly beloved." Think about that. God's own messenger calls an old man in exile one whom heaven treasures.

The messenger tells him to understand and to stand up, *"for now I have been sent to you."* Daniel stands, but he is still trembling. He obeys even while he is shaking, which is a good picture of real faith.

10:12 *And he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you gave your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words.*

This is one of the most encouraging verses in Daniel. The messenger tells Daniel not to be afraid, because his prayer was heard *"from the first day."* God did not wait three weeks to hear Daniel. He heard him on day one and sent His answer right away.

Notice the two things Daniel did. He set his heart on understanding, and he humbled himself before God. He wanted to know God's will, and he came to God in humility, not demanding anything.

You might ask, "If God heard on the first day, why did the answer take three weeks?" Verse 13 will answer that. For now, hold onto this: a delay in the answer is not a delay in God hearing. If you have been praying for something for weeks, months or years, God heard you the first time.

New Testament links: Revelation 1:17 (alluded to)

10:13 *And the prince of the kingdom of Persia was standing opposite me twenty-one days; and look, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there beside the kings of Persia.*

Here the curtain is pulled back. The messenger was opposed for twenty-one days, the same three weeks Daniel was fasting, by *"the prince of the kingdom of Persia."*

Who is this prince? A few have suggested he was a human ruler, but that does not fit. No human king could block a messenger from heaven for three weeks. I believe, along with most Bible

teachers, that this is a fallen angel, a demonic power assigned to influence the Persian Empire. Paul tells us our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, powers and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). Daniel 10 shows us what that looks like.

Then help arrived: *"Michael, one of the chief princes."* Michael is the only angel the Bible calls an archangel (Jude 9). The messenger will call him *"your prince"* in verse 21 and the great prince who stands guard over Israel in 12:1. In Revelation 12:7, Michael and his angels go to war against the dragon and his angels in heaven. The same Michael who fought for Israel in Daniel's day will fight in the last days.

We should be careful here. The Bible does not give us a full map of the spirit world, and we should not build one out of our imagination. What we do learn is enough: there is a real battle, our prayers matter in it, and God's side wins.

10:14 *And I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people at the end of the days, for* ***there is*** *still a vision for the days."*

The messenger tells Daniel why he came: to explain what will happen to *"your people at the end of the days."* This vision is about Israel, the Jewish people, and it reaches all the way to the end.

This verse is a key to reading chapters 11 and 12. Some of what follows was fulfilled in the centuries after Daniel, and history matches it in amazing detail. But the vision does not stop there. It runs on to the *"end of the days,"* to the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation and the resurrection. We will see that shift clearly in 11:36.

10:15 *And when he spoke with me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and I was mute.*

Daniel is overcome again. He bows his face to the ground and cannot speak. The weight of what he is about to hear, about his own people, is already pressing on him.

10:16 *And look,* ***one*** *like the likeness of the sons of man* ***was*** *touching my lips; and I opened my mouth and spoke, and I said to the one standing opposite me, "O my lord, by the vision my pangs have turned on me, and I have retained no strength.*

Someone who looks like a man touches Daniel's lips, and he is able to speak again. This recalls Isaiah 6:6-7, where an angel touched Isaiah's lips with a coal, and Jeremiah 1:9, where the LORD touched Jeremiah's mouth. When God calls someone to receive or speak His word, He prepares their mouth for it.

Daniel tells him honestly that the vision has brought him anguish and he has no strength left. There is no pretending here. Daniel does not put on a brave face before heaven, and we do not have to either.

10:17 *And how is the servant of this my lord able to speak with this my lord? And I—from now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."*

Daniel feels the gap between himself and the heavenly being before him. He calls himself a servant and asks how someone like him could even talk with someone so great. He has no strength and can hardly breathe.

This is humility, not false modesty. Daniel had served kings his whole life and was not easily intimidated. But before heaven's messenger he knew exactly how small he was.

10:18 *And he again touched me, like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.*

For the third time Daniel is touched (verses 10, 16 and 18), and this time he is strengthened. God never gives His servant a task without giving the strength to carry it.

10:19 *And he said, "Do not fear, O man of preciousness; peace **be** to you; be strong, and be strong!" And when he spoke with me, I strengthened myself, and I said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."*

The messenger speaks words of comfort: do not be afraid, peace be with you, be strong. And Daniel says, *"you have strengthened me."*

Notice that the strength came through the word as much as the touch. As soon as the messenger spoke, Daniel was strengthened. That is still true for us. When we are weak and afraid, God strengthens us through His word. The same God who told Joshua to be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9) speaks that courage to us through the same Scripture.

10:20 *And he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia; and I am going forth, and look, the prince of Greece is coming.*

The messenger asks if Daniel understands why he came. Then he tells him he must go back to fight the prince of Persia, and after that the prince of Greece will come.

This lines up exactly with the kingdoms we have already seen in Daniel: Persia, then Greece (2:39; 7:6; 8:20-21). Behind each earthly empire there is a spiritual battle. When Persia fell to Alexander the Great about two centuries later, it was not only armies at work. Heaven was involved in the rise and fall of nations, just as Daniel 2:21 says: God removes kings and sets up kings.

10:21 *But I will tell you what is inscribed in **the** writing of truth; and there is not one who shows himself strong with me against these, except Michael your prince.*

Before he goes, the messenger will reveal what is written in *"the writing of truth."* This is God's plan for history, already settled before it happens. Nothing in chapter 11 surprises God. It is written down before the first king takes the throne.

The messenger also says that no one stands firmly with him against these forces except *"Michael your prince."* Israel has a guardian in heaven. That is a great comfort for God's people, and it sets up the promise in 12:1, when Michael will arise in Israel's darkest hour.

Chapter 10 Summary

In the third year of Cyrus, after three weeks of fasting and mourning, Daniel sees a glorious man dressed in linen by the Tigris River. He collapses, and a heavenly messenger touches him and lifts him up. The messenger explains that Daniel's prayer was heard on the first day, but the answer was delayed for twenty-one days by the demonic prince of Persia until Michael came to help.

The messenger has come to show Daniel what will happen to his people in the latter days. Before he begins, Daniel is touched and strengthened three times. The chapter teaches us that history has an unseen side, that prayer is heard the first time, and that God gives His servants the strength to receive what He reveals.

The Unseen War in Daniel 10

The prayer: Daniel humbles himself and seeks understanding for twenty-one days (10:2-3, 12).

The answer sent: God hears on the first day and sends His messenger right away (10:12).

The opposition: The demonic "prince of the kingdom of Persia" resists the messenger for twenty-one days (10:13).

The help: Michael, one of the chief princes and Israel's prince, comes to help (10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9).

The next battle: After Persia, the "prince of Greece" will come (10:20), matching the kingdom order in Daniel 2, 7 and 8.

The last battle: Michael and his angels fight the dragon in Revelation 12:7-9, and the dragon is thrown down.

I have waited a long time for answers to prayer. Sometimes I waited with grace and sometimes with impatience. Daniel waited three weeks and learned his prayer was heard the first day. That changes how I wait.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. Have you ever waited a long time for an answer to prayer? How did you handle the waiting?

2. When did this vision come to Daniel, and what was he doing beforehand? (10:1-3)

3. How does the man in linen compare with John's description of Jesus? (10:5-6; Revelation 1:13-16)

4. How did Daniel and the men with him react to the vision? (10:7-9)

5. According to the messenger, when was Daniel's prayer heard, and why did the answer come late? (10:12-13)

6. Who is Michael, and what role does he play for Daniel's people? (10:13, 21; 12:1)

7. What does this chapter teach you about the spiritual battle behind world events? (Ephesians 6:12)

8. How was Daniel strengthened, and how does God strengthen you today? (10:10, 16, 18-19)

9. What does it mean to you that God's plans are written in "the writing of truth" before they happen? (10:21)

10. Is there a prayer you have stopped praying because the answer seemed slow? What would it look like to pick it up again?

Chapter 11: History Written in Advance

Scripture: The Kings of the North and the South

11:1-4 (From Persia to Alexander the Great) And I, in year one of Darius the Mede, my standing ***was*** as a strengthener and as a stronghold for him. And now I will tell you truth: look, three more kings will arise for Persia, and the fourth will gain great wealth, more than all; and according to his strength, by his wealth, he will rouse all ***against*** the kingdom of Greece. And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule a great dominion, and he will do according to his pleasure. And as he arises, his kingdom will be broken and divided to the four winds of the heavens, and not to his posterity, and not according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom will be uprooted, and ***it will go*** to others besides these.

11:5-20 (The Kings of the North and the South) And the king of the south will become strong, and one of his princes; and he will become strong over him and rule; his dominion ***will be*** a great dominion. And at the end of years they will join together; and the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement; and she will not retain the strength of the arm, and he will not stand, nor his arm; and she will be given up, she and those who brought her, and the one who fathered her, and the one who strengthened her in the times. And ***one*** from a shoot of her roots will arise ***in*** his place, and he will come against the army and enter the stronghold of the king of the north, and he will act against them and prevail. And also their gods with their molten images, with their vessels of desire, silver and gold, he will bring into captivity ***to*** Egypt; and for years he will stand away from the king of the north. And he will come into the kingdom of the king of the south, and he will return to his own ground. And his sons will stir themselves up and gather a multitude of great armies; and he will surely come and overflow and pass through; and he will again stir himself up, up to his stronghold. And the king of the south will be enraged, and he will go out and fight with him, with the king of the north; and he will raise up a great multitude, and the multitude will be given into his hand. And the multitude will be carried away, and his heart will be lifted up; and he will cause tens of thousands to fall, and he will not prevail. And the king of the north will again raise up a multitude greater than the first; and at the end of the times, years, he will surely come with a great army and with much property. And in those times many will arise against the king of the south; and the sons of the violent ones of your people will lift themselves up to fulfill ***the*** vision, and they will stumble. And the king of the north will come and pour out a siege mound and capture a city of fortifications; and the arms of the south will not stand, and the people of his choice ones, and ***there will be*** no strength to stand. And the one who comes against him will do according to his pleasure, and ***there will be*** no one standing before him; and he will stand in the land of the beauty, and complete destruction ***will be*** in his hand. And he will set his face to come with the power of all his kingdom, and upright ***terms*** with him, and he will act; and he will give him the daughter of women, to destroy it; and it will not stand, and it will not be for him. And he will set his face to the coastlands and capture many; and a commander will put an end to his reproach for him; except ***that*** he will turn his reproach back on him. And he will turn his face to the strongholds of his own land, and he will stumble and fall, and he will not be found. And ***one*** will arise in his place who sends an oppressor

through the splendor of a kingdom; and within a few days he will be broken, and not in anger and not in battle.

11:21-35 (The Despised One) And a despised one will arise in his place, and they had not given to him the splendor of ***the*** kingdom; and he will come in quietness and seize ***the*** kingdom by intrigues. And the arms of the flood will be swept away from before him and be broken, and also a prince of a covenant. And from ***their*** joining together with him he will practice deceit, and he will rise up and become mighty with a small nation. In quietness, and into the rich places of the province, he will come, and he will do what his fathers did not do, nor the fathers of his fathers: plunder and spoil and property he will scatter to them; and against fortifications he will plot his plots, and until a time. And he will rouse his strength and his heart against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south will stir himself up for the battle with a great and exceedingly mighty army; and he will not stand, for they will plot plots against him. And those who eat his delicacies will break him, and his army will overflow, and many slain will fall. And the two of them, the kings—their heart ***will be*** for evil, and at one table they will speak falsehood; and it will not succeed, for the end ***is*** still for the appointed time. And he will return ***to*** his own land with great property, and his heart ***will be*** against the holy covenant; and he will act, and return to his own land. At the appointed time he will return and come into the south; and it will not be as the first and as the last. And ships of Cyprus will come against him, and he will lose heart and turn back, and he will be indignant against the holy covenant, and he will act; and he will turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. And arms from him will arise, and they will profane the sanctuary, the stronghold, and they will remove the continual ***offering***, and they will set up the abomination that makes desolate. And those who act wickedly ***against*** the covenant he will pollute with flatteries; and the people who know their God will show strength and act. And those of the people who have insight will give understanding to the many; and they will stumble by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, ***for*** days. And when they stumble they will be helped ***with*** a little help; and many will join themselves to them with intrigues. And some of those who have insight will stumble, to refine among them, and to purge, and to make white, until the time of ***the*** end; for ***it is*** still for the appointed time.

11:36-45 (The King Who Exalts Himself) And the king will do according to his pleasure, and he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god; and against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things; and he will succeed until ***the*** indignation has been completed; for what has been decreed will be done. And to the gods of his fathers he will not pay attention, and to the desire of women, and to any god he will not pay attention; for above all he will magnify himself. And to a god of strongholds in his place he will give honor; and to a god whom his fathers did not know he will give honor with gold and with silver and with costly stone and with precious things. And he will act against the fortifications of strongholds with a foreign god; whoever acknowledges ***him***, he will increase glory ***to him***, and he will make them rule over the many, and he will divide ground for a price. And at the time of ***the*** end the king of the south will push against him, and the king of the north will storm against him with chariotry and with horsemen and with many ships; and he will come into lands and overflow and pass through. And he will come into the land of the beauty, and many will stumble; and these will escape from his hand: Edom and Moab and the chief of the sons of Ammon. And he will stretch out his hand against lands, and the land of Egypt will not become an escape. And he will rule over the treasures of the gold and the

silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Cushites ***will be*** at his steps. And reports from the east and from the north will dismay him; and he will go out in great rage to destroy and to devote many to destruction. And he will plant the tents of his palace between ***the*** seas and the holy mountain of beauty; and he will come to his end, and ***there will be*** no helper for him.

Chapter 11 Preview

Daniel 11 is the most detailed prophecy in the Bible. In 45 verses the messenger from chapter 10 lays out roughly 370 years of history before it happened: the last kings of Persia, Alexander the Great, the breakup of his empire, and a long string of wars between the "king of the south" (the Ptolemy family who ruled Egypt) and the "king of the north" (the Seleucid family who ruled Syria and the lands to the east). Little Israel sat right between them, and it suffered under both.

The chapter builds to one man, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attacked the Jewish faith, stopped the sacrifices and set up "the abomination that makes desolate" in the temple in 167 B.C. Then, at verse 36, the prophecy jumps ahead to a king of the end time who does everything Antiochus did and far more. I believe that king is the Antichrist, the same person as the little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13.

This chapter is so accurate that some critics say it must have been written after the events, around 165 B.C. I reject that view. Jesus Himself called the author "Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15), and He treated the abomination of desolation as something still to come. If God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), then detailed prophecy is exactly what we should expect from Him. The chart at the end of this chapter lines up verses 2-35 with the rulers who fulfilled them.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1 *And I, in year one of Darius the Mede, my standing **was** as a strengthener and as a stronghold for him.*

This verse finishes the messenger's words from chapter 10, which is a good reminder that the chapter breaks in our Bibles were added much later. The messenger says that in the first year of Darius the Mede, about 539 B.C., the year Babylon fell, he stood up to encourage and protect "him."

Who is "him"? It could be Darius, the ruler whom God was moving to treat the Jews kindly, or it could be Michael, whom the messenger just mentioned in 10:21. Either way, the point is the same: heaven was at work behind the change of empires that let the Jews go home. (On the debate over who Darius the Mede was, see our study of chapter 5.)

11:2 *And now I will tell you truth: look, three more kings will arise for Persia, and the fourth will gain great wealth, more than all; and according to his strength, by his wealth, he will rouse all **against** the kingdom of Greece.*

The messenger begins with Persia. Cyrus was reigning when Daniel received this vision (10:1). Three more kings would follow, and then a fourth who would be far richer than all of them and would stir up his whole empire against Greece.

Most Bible teachers identify the three as Cambyses, the false Smerdis (an impostor who briefly held the throne), and Darius I. The fourth, the rich one, is Xerxes I, who ruled from 486 to 465 B.C. Many believe he is the King Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, whose wealth is on display in Esther 1. Xerxes gathered a huge army and invaded Greece in 480 B.C., and he was defeated.

Persia had more kings after Xerxes, but the prophecy skips them. Why? Because the invasion of Greece is the thread that leads to what comes next. The Greeks never forgot it, and about 150 years later a Greek king came east to settle the score.

11:3 *And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule a great dominion, and he will do according to his pleasure.*

That mighty king was Alexander the Great. Starting in 334 B.C., he crossed into Asia and defeated the Persian Empire in a few short years. He ruled with great authority and did as he pleased, just as Daniel says. We met him already as the leopard with four wings (7:6) and the male goat with the large horn that charged so fast it did not touch the ground (8:5-8, 21).

11:4 *And as he arises, his kingdom will be broken and divided to the four winds of the heavens, and not to his posterity, and not according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom will be uprooted, and* ***it will go*** *to others besides these.*

At the height of his power Alexander died, in Babylon in 323 B.C., at about thirty-two years old. His kingdom was broken up, but not given to his descendants. His half-brother and his young son, who were his heirs, were both murdered within fourteen years of his death.

After years of war among his generals, four main kingdoms came out of his empire: Cassander in Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor, Seleucus in Syria and the lands to the east, and Ptolemy in Egypt. These are the four horns of 8:8 and 8:22. From here on, the prophecy follows only two of them, the two that bordered Israel: Ptolemy's kingdom to the south and Seleucus's kingdom to the north.

11:5 *And the king of the south will become strong, and one of his princes; and he will become strong over him and rule; his dominion* ***will be*** *a great dominion.*

The first *"king of the south"* is Ptolemy I, who ruled Egypt. *"One of his princes"* is Seleucus I. For a time Seleucus was driven out of Babylon and served as a general under Ptolemy. He later went back, regained Babylon in 312 B.C., and built a kingdom that stretched from Syria toward India. He would *"become strong over him and rule; his dominion will be a great dominion,"* a domain larger than Ptolemy's.

Notice that "North" and "South" are directions from Israel. The angel told Daniel this vision was about *"your people"* (10:14). The whole map is drawn with Jerusalem at the center.

11:6 *And at the end of years they will join together; and the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement; and she will not retain the strength of the arm, and he will not stand, nor his arm; and she will be given up, she and those who brought her, and the one who fathered her, and the one who strengthened her in the times.*

Some years later the two kingdoms tried to make peace through a marriage. Ptolemy II gave his daughter Berenice to the Seleucid king Antiochus II, around 252 B.C. To marry her, Antiochus put away his first wife, Laodice.

The arrangement did not last. Antiochus later went back to Laodice, and in 246 B.C. he died; ancient writers say Laodice poisoned him. Berenice, her infant son and many of her attendants were murdered. Her father Ptolemy II died that same year. Just as the verse says, she did not keep her position, and she was given up along with those who brought her and the one who fathered her.

11:7 *And **one** from a shoot of her roots will arise **in** his place, and he will come against the army and enter the stronghold of the king of the north, and he will act against them and prevail.*

"One from a shoot of her roots" was her brother, Ptolemy III, who took the throne of Egypt in 246 B.C. He marched north to avenge his sister, entered Seleucid territory and won great victories. Ancient sources report that he had Laodice put to death.

11:8 *And also their gods with their molten images, with their vessels of desire, silver and gold, he will bring into captivity **to** Egypt; and for years he will stand away from the king of the north.*

Ptolemy III carried home a great amount of plunder, including sacred images that the Persians had taken from Egypt centuries before. The Egyptians were so grateful that they honored him with the title Euergetes, "Benefactor." For some years after that, he left the king of the North alone.

11:9 *And he will come into the kingdom of the king of the south, and he will return to his own ground.*

The *"latter"* here is the king of the North, Seleucus II. He tried to strike back by invading Egypt's territory, but he failed and returned home.

11:10 *And his sons will stir themselves up and gather a multitude of great armies; and he will surely come and overflow and pass through; and he will again stir himself up, up to his stronghold.*

Seleucus II had two sons. The first, Seleucus III, reigned only a short time before he was murdered. The second, Antiochus III, known as Antiochus the Great, took the throne in 223 B.C. He raised a large army and swept south through Syria and the land of Israel, pushing toward the Egyptian frontier.

11:11-12 *And the king of the south will be enraged, and he will go out and fight with him, with the king of the north; and he will raise up a great multitude, and the multitude will be given into his*

hand. And the multitude will be carried away, and his heart will be lifted up; and he will cause tens of thousands to fall, and he will not prevail.

The king of the South at this point was Ptolemy IV. He met Antiochus III at the battle of Raphia, near Gaza, in 217 B.C., and won a great victory. Thousands of Antiochus's soldiers fell.

But Ptolemy *"will not prevail."* His heart was lifted up with pride, and instead of following up his win, he made peace and went back to a life of ease. Pride often wastes a victory. It is a pattern we see in kings and in ourselves: the moment we think we have won, we stop depending on God.

11:13 *And the king of the north will again raise up a multitude greater than the first; and at the end of the times, years, he will surely come with a great army and with much property.*

More than a dozen years later, Ptolemy IV died, and his son Ptolemy V took the throne as a small child. Antiochus III saw his chance. He came back with an even greater army than before.

11:14 *And in those times many will arise against the king of the south; and the sons of the violent ones of your people will lift themselves up to fulfill* ***the*** *vision, and they will stumble.*

Egypt now had enemies on many sides. Philip V of Macedon joined Antiochus against the boy king, and there was unrest inside Egypt as well.

The verse also mentions *"the violent ones of your people,"* meaning some Jews who would *"lift themselves up to fulfill the vision, and they will stumble."* We do not know the exact details. Many believe it refers to Jews who sided with Antiochus against Egypt, perhaps thinking they were helping God's plan along. God's plans do not need our violence to come true, and those who took matters into their own hands fell.

11:15 *And the king of the north will come and pour out a siege mound and capture a city of fortifications; and the arms of the south will not stand, and the people of his choice ones, and* ***there will be*** *no strength to stand.*

Antiochus III defeated the Egyptian general Scopas at the battle of Panium, near the sources of the Jordan River, in about 200 B.C. Scopas fled to the fortified city of Sidon on the coast. Antiochus besieged it and Scopas surrendered. Egypt's best troops could not stand.

11:16 *And the one who comes against him will do according to his pleasure, and* ***there will be*** *no one standing before him; and he will stand in the land of the beauty, and complete destruction* ***will be*** *in his hand.*

After this victory, the *"land of the beauty"* (Israel) came under Seleucid control, around 198 B.C. Antiochus did as he pleased, and no one could stop him. The phrase *"complete destruction will be in his hand"* reminds us that when giants fight, the small land in the middle always pays the price.

11:17 *And he will set his face to come with the power of all his kingdom, and upright* ***terms*** *with him, and he will act; and he will give him the daughter of women, to destroy it; and it will not stand, and it will not be for him.*

Antiochus III next tried to take Egypt by marriage instead of by war. He gave his daughter, Cleopatra I (not the famous Cleopatra of Julius Caesar's day, who came much later), to the young Ptolemy V in marriage, around 193 B.C. He hoped she would help him control Egypt from the inside.

It did not work. Just as the verse says, she did not take his side. She sided with her husband and Egypt. Even the most clever plans of men cannot get around what God has already written.

11:18 *And he will set his face to the coastlands and capture many; and a commander will put an end to his reproach for him; except **that** he will turn his reproach back on him.*

Antiochus III then turned west to the *"coastlands,"* Asia Minor and Greece, and captured many places. But a new power was rising in the west: Rome. A Roman commander, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, defeated Antiochus at the battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C. In the peace treaty that followed, Rome forced Antiochus to pay huge sums of money and to send hostages to Rome, among them his own son, the future Antiochus IV. His scorn was turned back on him.

This is the first time Rome shows up in Daniel's history, and it is no accident. Rome is the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7. It is quietly moving onto the stage.

11:19 *And he will turn his face to the strongholds of his own land, and he will stumble and fall, and he will not be found.*

Short of money, Antiochus III went back east to his own fortresses. In 187 B.C. he was killed while trying to rob a temple in Elymais to pay what he owed Rome. The man called "the Great" stumbled and fell and was found no more.

11:20 *And **one** will arise in his place who sends an oppressor through the splendor of a kingdom; and within a few days he will be broken, and not in anger and not in battle.*

His son Seleucus IV took the throne. He needed money to pay Rome, so he sent his official, Heliodorus, to take treasure from the temple in Jerusalem, which may well be *"the splendor of a kingdom."* The Jewish book of 2 Maccabees (chapter 3) tells the story of that attempt.

Seleucus IV reigned about twelve years and then died suddenly in 175 B.C., *"not in anger and not in battle."* He was murdered, most likely by Heliodorus himself.

11:21 *And a despised one will arise in his place, and they had not given to him the splendor of **the** kingdom; and he will come in quietness and seize **the** kingdom by intrigues.*

Now we come to the central figure of this chapter, Antiochus IV, who called himself Epiphanes, "God Manifest." Some people of his day mocked him with a play on that name, calling him Epimanes, "the Madman."

The rightful heir to the throne was Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV, but he was being held as a hostage in Rome. Antiochus, who had just been released from Rome, came in quietly, won

support (including help from the king of Pergamum), and took the throne by flattery and scheming. The honor of kingship was never rightfully given to him. He took it.

I believe Antiochus is the same person as the little horn of Daniel 8:9-12 and 8:23-25, and the details match. He is also a preview, a type, of the Antichrist, who will rise the same way: through flattery, intrigue and a promise of peace.

11:22 *And the arms of the flood will be swept away from before him and be broken, and also a prince of a covenant.*

Armies were swept away before him. *"A prince of a covenant"* is most likely the Jewish high priest Onias III, a godly man. Antiochus removed him from office in 175 B.C. and sold the high priesthood to Onias's brother Jason. Onias was later murdered, around 171 B.C. Some teachers think the phrase refers instead to the young Egyptian king Ptolemy VI, who had a treaty with Antiochus, but I find the high priest view more likely because of how this chapter uses the word "covenant" for God's covenant with Israel (11:28, 30, 32).

11:23 *And from **their** joining together with him he will practice deceit, and he will rise up and become mighty with a small nation.*

Antiochus was a master of deception. He made alliances and broke them whenever it suited him, and he rose to power with only a small group of supporters at first. Even the high priesthood went to whoever paid him most: a man named Menelaus soon outbid Jason for it (2 Maccabees 4:23-24).

11:24 *In quietness, and into the rich places of the province, he will come, and he will do what his fathers did not do, nor the fathers of his fathers: plunder and spoil and property he will scatter to them; and against fortifications he will plot his plots, and until a time.*

Unlike the kings before him, Antiochus gave away plunder lavishly to buy loyalty. The book of 1 Maccabees (3:30) says he gave gifts more freely than the kings before him. He would plot against fortifications, *"and until a time,"* meaning only for a time. That phrase comes up again and again in this chapter. Evil men can make big plans, but God sets the clock.

11:25 *And he will rouse his strength and his heart against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south will stir himself up for the battle with a great and exceedingly mighty army; and he will not stand, for they will plot plots against him.*

Around 170-169 B.C., Antiochus invaded Egypt. The king of the South was now Ptolemy VI, who was also Antiochus's nephew. Egypt raised a large army, but it did not stand, because schemes were made against its king.

11:26 *And those who eat his delicacies will break him, and his army will overflow, and many slain will fall.*

The people betraying Ptolemy VI were his own advisers, the men who ate at his table. They gave him bad counsel and helped bring about his defeat, and Ptolemy fell into Antiochus's hands.

Betrayal from those closest to us is one of the deepest wounds there is. Jesus knew it too: the one who shared His bread lifted up his heel against Him (John 13:18).

11:27 *And the two of them, the kings—their heart **will be** for evil, and at one table they will speak falsehood; and it will not succeed, for the end **is** still for the appointed time.*

Antiochus and his nephew Ptolemy VI sat at the same table, each pretending friendship and each lying to the other. Neither plan succeeded, *"for the end is still for the appointed time."* No matter how clever kings are, God has fixed the times.

11:28 *And he will return **to** his own land with great property, and his heart **will be** against the holy covenant; and he will act, and return to his own land.*

On his way home from Egypt in 169 B.C., loaded with plunder, Antiochus turned on Jerusalem. He entered the temple and stripped it, taking the golden altar, the lampstand and other holy vessels (1 Maccabees 1:20-24). His heart was set *"against the holy covenant,"* meaning against God's people and their worship.

11:29 *At the appointed time he will return and come into the south; and it will not be as the first and as the last.*

In 168 B.C. Antiochus invaded Egypt a second time. But this time things went very differently.

11:30 *And ships of Cyprus will come against him, and he will lose heart and turn back, and he will be indignant against the holy covenant, and he will act; and he will turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.*

The Hebrew word behind *"Cyprus"* here is Kittim. It originally meant Cyprus, and it came to mean the lands and peoples of the west across the sea. Here it points to Rome. A Roman fleet brought a Roman envoy, Gaius Popillius Laenas, to meet Antiochus near Alexandria. The ancient historians tell us that the envoy handed Antiochus the Senate's order to leave Egypt. When Antiochus asked for time to think, the Roman drew a circle in the sand around him and told him to answer before he stepped out of it. Antiochus gave in.

Humiliated and furious, he turned his rage on the Jews. He sent his forces against Jerusalem in 167 B.C., and they attacked the city, killed many people and built a fortress overlooking the temple. He showed favor to *"those who forsake the holy covenant,"* the Jews who were willing to abandon God's law and adopt Greek ways.

11:31 *And arms from him will arise, and they will profane the sanctuary, the stronghold, and they will remove the continual **offering**, and they will set up the abomination that makes desolate.*

This is the darkest moment of the chapter. Antiochus outlawed the Jewish faith. Sabbath-keeping and circumcision were banned, the *"continual offering"* at the temple was stopped, and unclean animals such as pigs were ordered to be sacrificed (1 Maccabees 1:44-50). In December of 167 B.C., a pagan altar was set up on top of God's altar in the temple (1 Maccabees 1:54), and the temple was

dedicated to the Greek god Zeus (2 Maccabees 6:2). This was *"the abomination that makes desolate,"* something so detestable to God that it left His sanctuary desolate.

But this is not the last time we hear of it. About two hundred years later, Jesus told His disciples to watch for *"the abomination of desolation,"* which was *"spoken of through Daniel the prophet"* (Matthew 24:15), as something still in their future. So Antiochus fulfilled this verse, but he did not use it up. What he did is a preview of what the Antichrist will do in the middle of the seventieth week (9:27; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

New Testament links: Matthew 24:15 (alluded to); Mark 13:14 (alluded to)

11:32 *And those who act wickedly **against** the covenant he will pollute with flatteries; and the people who know their God will show strength and act.*

Antiochus used smooth words to win over those who were already unfaithful to the covenant. But not everyone gave in. *"The people who know their God will show strength and act."*

That is exactly what happened. An old priest named Mattathias, in the village of Modein, refused to offer a pagan sacrifice, and he and his sons fled to the hills. His son Judas, called Maccabeus ("the Hammer"), led a revolt against the Seleucid army. In December of 164 B.C., the Jews took back the temple, cleansed it and rededicated it. Jewish families still remember that event every year at Hanukkah, which the Gospel of John calls the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:22). Jesus Himself was in the temple during that feast.

This is one of my favorite verses in Daniel. When pressure comes, the people who really know God are the ones who stand. Not people who merely know about Him, but people who know Him. How well do you know your God? The strength to stand in a hard day is built in the ordinary days before it.

11:33 *And those of the people who have insight will give understanding to the many; and they will stumble by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, **for** days.*

Those who had insight taught the many. Yet many of them fell by sword, by flame, by captivity and by plunder. The books of Maccabees tell of faithful Jews who chose death rather than break God's law (2 Maccabees 6-7). Hebrews 11:35-38 seems to have people like them in mind when it speaks of those who were tortured and would not accept release.

Being faithful did not keep these people from suffering. Sometimes God rescues His people out of trouble, and sometimes He keeps them faithful through it. Both are His care.

11:34 *And when they stumble they will be helped **with** a little help; and many will join themselves to them with intrigues.*

When the faithful fell, they received *"a little help,"* most likely the Maccabean revolt, which was real help but not the final rescue God's people were waiting for. And as the revolt succeeded, many people joined it for the wrong reasons, out of fear or for gain. Every movement of God attracts some people whose hearts are not in it.

11:35 *And some of those who have insight will stumble, to refine among them, and to purge, and to make white, until the time of **the** end; for **it is** still for the appointed time.*

Why would God allow His wise and faithful servants to fall? The verse tells us: *"to refine among them, and to purge, and to make white."* Suffering in God's hands is never wasted. It burns away what is false and leaves what is true, like gold in a fire (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Notice the last words: *"until the time of the end,"* because *"it is still for the appointed time."* This is the hinge of the chapter. The prophecy is about to leave Antiochus behind and look ahead to the end.

11:36 *And the king will do according to his pleasure, and he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god; and against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things; and he will succeed until **the** indignation has been completed; for what has been decreed will be done.*

At this point I believe the prophecy jumps forward to the future Antichrist. Here is why.

First, the setting changes. Verse 35 just said the end is still to come, and verse 40 says *"at the time of the end."* Then 12:1-2 says that *"at that time"* there will be a time of distress like none before, followed by the resurrection of the dead. None of that happened in 164 B.C.

Second, the details do not fit Antiochus. He did put a god-title on his coins, but he still worshiped the Greek gods, especially Zeus. He did not set himself above every god. And as we will see, the campaigns and death described in verses 40-45 do not match his life. He died in 164 B.C. in Persia, far from the *"holy mountain of beauty."*

Third, the rest of the Bible describes this king. Daniel 7:8, 25 shows the little horn speaking against the Most High. Paul describes the man of sin who exalts himself above every so-called god and takes his seat in the temple of God, showing himself as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Revelation 13:5-6 shows the beast with a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. That is the same man.

This kind of jump is common in prophecy. A near fulfillment (Antiochus) becomes a picture of a far fulfillment (the Antichrist), and the prophet moves from one to the other without warning. Isaiah 61:1-2 does something similar, and Jesus stopped reading it in the middle because only the first part was being fulfilled that day (Luke 4:18-21).

So the king of verse 36 will *"exalt himself and magnify himself above every god,"* and *"against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things."* He will succeed, but only *"until the indignation has been completed."* His time is limited, and God has set the limit: time, times and half a time (7:25; 12:7), forty-two months (Revelation 13:5).

New Testament links: Revelation 13:5-6 (alluded to); 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (alluded to)

11:37 *And to the gods of his fathers he will not pay attention, and to the desire of women, and to any god he will not pay attention; for above all he will magnify himself.*

This king will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for any other god. He will worship himself.

He also will not pay attention to *"the desire of women."* This phrase is debated, and there are two main ways to read it. The first is the Messianic view. For a Jewish woman, the greatest hope was to give birth to the promised Messiah, the seed of the woman first promised in Genesis 3:15. In this view, "the desire of women" points to Christ Himself, and the verse is saying this ruler will hold the true Messiah in total contempt. That fits verse 36, where "against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things." The second is the natural affection view. Here the phrase means he has no regard for love, marriage or normal human relationships. He turns away from them not because he is holy, but because he is consumed by a hunger for power. I lean toward the Messianic view, but I hold it humbly. What is clear is that his only true love is himself.

11:38 *And to a god of strongholds in his place he will give honor; and to a god whom his fathers did not know he will give honor with gold and with silver and with costly stone and with precious things.*

Instead of the gods of his fathers, he honors *"a god of strongholds,"* a god his fathers did not know. I take this to mean military power itself. He pours gold, silver and treasure into strength and war. Revelation 13:4 shows the world saying of the beast, "Who is able to make war with it?" His real faith is in force.

11:39 *And he will act against the fortifications of strongholds with a foreign god; whoever acknowledges **him**, he will increase glory **to him**, and he will make them rule over the many, and he will divide ground for a price.*

With the help of this foreign god, he attacks the strongest fortresses. He honors those who accept him, gives them power over many, and parcels out land as a reward. This is how the Antichrist will rule: loyalty bought with power and property, much like the mark of the beast, without which no one can buy or sell (Revelation 13:16-17).

11:40 *And at the time of **the** end the king of the south will push against him, and the king of the north will storm against him with chariotry and with horsemen and with many ships; and he will come into lands and overflow and pass through.*

"At the time of the end," the king of the South attacks him, and the king of the North storms against him with chariots, horsemen and many ships. He overruns countries like a flood.

Who are these kings in the last days? Bible teachers differ. Some believe the Antichrist himself is the final king of the North, rising from the old Seleucid lands of Syria and Mesopotamia. Others, and I lean this way, believe the Antichrist is a separate ruler here, attacked by a southern power and a northern power, both of whom he defeats. I would be careful about pinning these on particular modern nations. Many confident guesses have come and gone. What the text does tell us is that the last days will be days of war, and the Antichrist will come out on top for a time.

11:41 *And he will come into the land of the beauty, and many will stumble; and these will escape from his hand: Edom and Moab and the chief of the sons of Ammon.*

He enters the *"land of the beauty,"* Israel, and many countries fall. But Edom, Moab and the leading part of the Ammonites escape. Those ancient peoples lived east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, in what is now the nation of Jordan.

Why would they escape? The text does not say. Some suggest this area will be a place of refuge, perhaps connected with the woman who flees to the wilderness in Revelation 12:6, 14. That is possible, but it is a guess, and we should hold it as one.

11:42 *And he will stretch out his hand against lands, and the land of Egypt will not become an escape.*

He reaches out his hand against other countries, and this time Egypt does not escape. In the past, Egypt was often the great southern power that stood against the north. In the end, it falls.

11:43 *And he will rule over the treasures of the gold and the silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Cushites* ***will be*** *at his steps.*

He takes control of Egypt's treasures of gold and silver. The Libyans to the west and the Ethiopians to the south (the land the Bible calls Cush, south of Egypt) follow at his heels, meaning they either submit to him or join him. At this point his power looks unstoppable.

11:44 *And reports from the east and from the north will dismay him; and he will go out in great rage to destroy and to devote many to destruction.*

Then troubling news comes from the east and the north, and he goes out in a great rage to destroy many. We are not told what the reports are. Some connect them with the kings from the east whose way is prepared when the Euphrates dries up (Revelation 16:12), as the nations gather for the battle of Armageddon. That fits the timing well, though Daniel does not spell it out.

11:45 *And he will plant the tents of his palace between* ***the*** *seas and the holy mountain of beauty; and he will come to his end, and* ***there will be*** *no helper for him.*

He sets up his royal tents *"between the seas and the holy mountain of beauty,"* that is, in the land of Israel, between the Mediterranean and Mount Zion, where Jerusalem stands. Zechariah 14:2 says the nations will gather against Jerusalem in the last day, and Revelation 16:16 names the gathering place Armageddon.

And then, in one short line, it is over: *"he will come to his end, and there will be no helper for him."* Daniel does not even describe the battle. He does not need to. Paul tells us the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Revelation 19:19-20 shows the beast seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire. After all his boasting, no one can help him.

That is how every rebellion against God ends. The man who magnified himself above every god meets the God of gods, and it is not a contest.

Chapter 11 Summary

The messenger shows Daniel the future in amazing detail: the last great kings of Persia, Alexander the Great, the division of his empire, and more than a century of wars between the Ptolemies of Egypt (the king of the South) and the Seleucids of Syria (the king of the North). Israel is caught in the middle. History confirms these verses one after another, which is a powerful witness that God knows and rules the future.

The history builds to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attacked God's people, stopped the sacrifices and set up the abomination of desolation in 167 B.C., while those who knew their God stood strong. Then, at verse 36, the prophecy leaps to the end time and describes the Antichrist, who exalts himself above every god, makes war, conquers many lands, and camps near Jerusalem, where he comes to his end with no one to help him.

Daniel 11:2-35 Fulfilled in History

11:2, three more kings: Cambyses, the false Smerdis and Darius I, who followed Cyrus on the Persian throne.

11:2, the rich fourth king: Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.), who invaded Greece in 480 B.C.

11:3, the mighty king: Alexander the Great, who conquered Persia beginning in 334 B.C.

11:4, the kingdom divided: Alexander died in 323 B.C.; his empire was split among his generals, not his heirs. Four kingdoms emerged under Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy.

11:5, the first king of the South and his prince: Ptolemy I of Egypt, and Seleucus I, who served under him for a time and then built the larger Seleucid kingdom.

11:6, the daughter of the king of the South: Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, married to Antiochus II around 252 B.C.; she and her son were killed after Antiochus died in 246 B.C.

11:7-8, a branch of her line: Ptolemy III, her brother, who invaded the north and carried home great plunder, including Egypt's sacred images.

11:9, the counterattack: Seleucus II, whose attempt against Egypt failed.

11:10, his sons: Seleucus III and Antiochus III (the Great).

11:11-12, the king of the South enraged: Ptolemy IV, who defeated Antiochus III at Raphia in 217 B.C. but did not follow up his victory.

11:13-16, the north returns: Antiochus III against the child king Ptolemy V; victory at Panium (about 200 B.C.), the surrender of Sidon, and control of Judea (about 198 B.C.).

11:17, the daughter of women: Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III, married to Ptolemy V around 193 B.C.; she sided with Egypt.

11:18, the commander from the west: The Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Scipio, who defeated Antiochus III at Magnesia in 190 B.C.

11:19, the fall of Antiochus III: Killed in 187 B.C. while plundering a temple in Elymais.

11:20, the one who sends an oppressor: Seleucus IV, who sent Heliodorus after the temple treasury; he died in 175 B.C., not in battle.

11:21-24, the despised one: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who seized the throne in 175 B.C. by intrigue; the "prince of a covenant" is most likely the high priest Onias III.

11:25-27, the first Egyptian campaign: Antiochus IV against his nephew Ptolemy VI (170-169 B.C.); lies at the same table.

11:28, against the holy covenant: Antiochus IV plunders the Jerusalem temple in 169 B.C.

11:29-30, ships of Cyprus: The Roman envoy Popillius Laenas orders Antiochus IV out of Egypt in 168 B.C.

11:31, the abomination of desolation: The sacrifices stopped and a pagan altar set up in the temple in December 167 B.C.

11:32-35, the people who know their God: Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus and the faithful; the temple rededicated in December 164 B.C. (Hanukkah).

11:36-45, the king who exalts himself: Not fulfilled in history. I believe this is the future Antichrist (7:8, 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13).

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. Why do you think God revealed so much history ahead of time to Daniel?

2. Who were the "king of the south" and the "king of the north," and why are they described by their direction from Israel? (11:5-6)

3. How did Alexander's kingdom end up divided, and who received it? (11:3-4)

4. How did Antiochus IV come to power, and what does that teach about how the Antichrist will rise? (11:21-23)

5. What did Antiochus IV do to the temple and to the Jewish faith? (11:28, 31)

6. How did "the people who know their God" respond to persecution? (11:32-33)

7. What purpose does God give for the suffering of His faithful people? (11:35; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

8. Why does this study see verses 36-45 as describing the future Antichrist? (11:36-40; 12:1-2)

9. How does the Antichrist's end compare to all his boasting? (11:45; 2 Thessalonians 2:8)

10. What are you doing in ordinary days to know God well enough to stand firm in hard ones?

Chapter 12: The Time of the End

Scripture: Distress, Deliverance and Resurrection

12:1-4 (Michael Arises and the Dead Awake) And at that time Michael will arise, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people; and there will be a time of distress such as has not been since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people will escape, everyone who is found written in the scroll. And many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake, these to everlasting life, and these to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence. And those who have insight will shine like the brightness of the expanse, and those who make the many righteous like the stars forever and ever. And you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of ***the*** end; many will rove about, and knowledge will increase."

12:5-13 (How Long Until the End?) And I, Daniel, saw, and look, two others ***were*** standing, one on this side at the bank of the stream, and one on that side at the bank of the stream. And ***one*** said to the man clothed ***in*** linen, who ***was*** above the waters of the stream, "Until when ***is*** the end of the wonders?" And I heard the man clothed ***in*** linen, who ***was*** above the waters of the stream, and he raised his right ***hand*** and his left ***hand*** to the heavens and swore by the One who lives forever that ***it will be*** for an appointed time, appointed times, and a half; and as the shattering of the hand of the holy people is finished, all these ***things*** will be finished. And I heard, and I did not understand; and I said, "O my lord, what ***will be*** the latter end of these ***things***?" And he said, "Go, Daniel, for the words ***are*** shut up and sealed until the time of ***the*** end. Many will purge themselves and make themselves white and be refined; and the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand; and those who have insight will understand. And from ***the*** time ***that*** the continual ***offering*** is removed and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, ***there will be*** one thousand two hundred and ninety days. How blessed ***is*** the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. And you, go to the end; and you will rest, and you will stand for your allotted portion at the end of the days."

Chapter 12 Preview

Daniel's last chapter finishes the vision that began in chapter 10. Chapter 11 ended with the Antichrist coming to his end near Jerusalem. Chapter 12 tells us what happens to God's people in that same season: a time of distress worse than any in history, Michael standing up to protect them, and a promise of rescue for everyone written in the book of life. Then comes one of the clearest promises of resurrection in the whole Old Testament.

The chapter closes with a conversation by the river. Daniel asks how long and how it will all end, and he is told the answer is sealed until the end time. He is given some numbers (1,260, 1,290 and 1,335 days) that Christians have studied for centuries. Then God tells Daniel, now a very old man, to go his way, because he will rest and rise again for his reward. That is the last word of the book, and it is a word of hope.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1 *And at that time Michael will arise, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people; and there will be a time of distress such as has not been since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people will escape, everyone who is found written in the scroll.*

"At that time" ties this verse to the end of chapter 11. We are in the days of the Antichrist, in the second half of the seventieth week (9:27). At that time, *"Michael will arise, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people,"* that is, over Daniel's people. We met Michael in 10:13 and 10:21 as Israel's prince. In Revelation 12:7-9 Michael and his angels fight the dragon and throw him down to the earth, and the dragon then goes after the woman and her children with great wrath (Revelation 12:12-17). I believe these two passages describe the same moment from two sides.

Then the angel says there will be *"a time of distress such as has not been since there was a nation until that time."* Jesus used almost the same words for the Great Tribulation: a tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will (Matthew 24:21). Jesus tied it to the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15), just as Daniel will in verse 11. This is the last half of the seven-year Tribulation we studied in Revelation.

But God has not forgotten His people: *"your people will escape, everyone who is found written in the scroll."* The scroll is the book of life (Revelation 13:8; 20:12, 15; Philippians 4:3). Those written there will be delivered.

How will they be rescued? Christians answer this differently. I hold, as I did in the Revelation study, the pre-tribulation view: the church is taken to be with Christ before this time begins, and this verse speaks first of Daniel's people, Israel, along with all who come to faith during the Tribulation. God will keep them through it, and the rescue comes when Christ returns after the tribulation of those days and gathers His elect (Matthew 24:29-31). Daniel 7:21-22 shows the little horn making war with the holy ones and prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days comes and judgment is given in their favor. Others hold mid-tribulation, pre-wrath or post-tribulation views and believe the church will be here for part or all of it. Notice that this verse does not promise those on the earth will avoid the time of distress. It promises they will be rescued from it. Whatever your view, the comfort is the same: no one written in the scroll will be lost.

New Testament links: Matthew 24:21 (alluded to); Mark 13:19 (alluded to); Revelation 12:7 (alluded to); Revelation 16:18 (alluded to); Revelation 20:15 (alluded to)

12:2 *And many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake, these to everlasting life, and these to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence.*

This is one of the clearest statements of resurrection in the Old Testament (see also Isaiah 26:19 and Job 19:25-27). Death is described as sleep, because for God it is not the end. The dead will *"awake,"* some *"to everlasting life,"* and others *"to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence."*

Jesus taught the same thing: an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who did good to a resurrection of life, and those who did evil to a resurrection

of judgment (John 5:28-29). Both outcomes are *"everlasting."* There is no third option and no second chance after death (Hebrews 9:27).

Daniel mentions both resurrections in one breath, but the New Testament shows us more. The first resurrection, of those who belong to Christ, comes in stages. Believers who have died are raised when Christ comes for His church (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and those who die for Him during the Tribulation are raised when He returns to the earth, and they reign with Him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6). The rest of the dead are raised after the thousand years to stand before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). This is the premillennial view I hold. Daniel does not show the gap between the two resurrections, just as he does not show the length of the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks in 9:26-27. Prophets often see mountain peaks that look close together from a distance, with a valley between them that only becomes visible later.

You might ask, "Why does Daniel say 'many' instead of 'all'?" Many teachers believe "many" here simply means the great multitude of the dead, as it sometimes does in Hebrew. Others believe the angel is focusing on Daniel's people in that time. Either way, the rest of Scripture makes clear that every person will be raised, some to life and some to judgment.

New Testament links: John 5:28-29 (alluded to); Matthew 25:46 (alluded to); Acts 24:15 (alluded to)

12:3 *And those who have insight will shine like the brightness of the expanse, and those who make the many righteous like the stars forever and ever.*

"The wise" are the ones we met in 11:33 and 11:35, the faithful who taught others and stood firm under persecution. They will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine *"like the stars forever and ever."*

This is a promise for every believer who helps someone else know God. The world may forget them. Some of them may die for their faith. But God will make them shine forever. Jesus said something very similar: the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43).

Who have you helped lead toward righteousness? You do not have to be a preacher. A parent teaching a child, a friend sharing the gospel, a believer quietly faithful at work: these are the kinds of people this verse is talking about.

New Testament links: Matthew 13:43 (alluded to)

12:4 *And you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of **the** end; many will rove about, and knowledge will increase."*

Daniel is told to *"shut up the words and seal the scroll"* until the time of the end. In the ancient world, an important document was sealed to keep it safe and unchanged until the right time to open it. The point is not that no one may read Daniel. The point is that its full meaning would not be understood until the end draws near.

Compare this with the end of Revelation, where John is told the opposite: do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near (Revelation 22:10). What Daniel was told to seal, John was told to leave open. The end that was far away in Daniel's day was drawing near in John's.

Then the angel says *"many will rove about, and knowledge will increase."* There are two main views. Some see it as a picture of the modern world, with fast travel and an explosion of knowledge. Others, and I lean this way, see it in light of the context: people will search back and forth through the Scriptures, and understanding of this prophecy will increase as the end approaches (compare Amos 8:12, where people roam back and forth seeking the word of the LORD). Both may be true, but the second fits what the verse is about, a sealed book whose meaning opens up over time.

New Testament links: Revelation 22:10 (alluded to); Revelation 10:4 (alluded to); Revelation 5:1 (alluded to)

12:5 *And I, Daniel, saw, and look, two others **were** standing, one on this side at the bank of the stream, and one on that side at the bank of the stream.*

Daniel looks and sees two more heavenly beings, one on each bank of the river. This is the Tigris from 10:4. In the Law, two witnesses were needed to confirm a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15). These two may be standing as witnesses to the oath that comes in verse 7.

12:6 *And **one** said to the man clothed **in** linen, who **was** above the waters of the stream, "Until when **is** the end of the wonders?"*

One of them asks the man dressed in linen, who stands above the waters of the river, *"Until when is the end of the wonders?"* It is the question every suffering believer asks. The souls under the altar ask the same thing in Revelation 6:10: how long, O Lord?

The man in linen is the glorious figure from 10:5-6. As I said in chapter 10, I lean toward seeing him as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, though some see a mighty angel. Standing above the river shows his authority over it.

12:7 *And I heard the man clothed **in** linen, who **was** above the waters of the stream, and he raised his right **hand** and his left **hand** to the heavens and swore by the One who lives forever that **it will be** for an appointed time, appointed times, and a half; and as the shattering of the hand of the holy people is finished, all these **things** will be finished.*

The man in linen raises both hands toward heaven and swears *"by the One who lives forever."* Normally a person raised one hand to take an oath. Raising both hands makes it doubly solemn. In Revelation 10:5-6, a strong angel stands on the sea and the land, lifts his right hand to heaven, and swears by Him who lives forever and ever that there will be no more delay. The two scenes fit together.

The answer is *"for an appointed time, appointed times, and a half."* An appointed time is one year, appointed times is two years, and a half is half a year: three and a half years. This is the same period as the "time and times and half a time" of 7:25, the forty-two months of Revelation 11:2 and

13:5, and the 1,260 days of Revelation 11:3 and 12:6. It is the second half of the seventieth week, after the Antichrist breaks his covenant in the middle of the week (9:27).

It will end *"as the shattering of the hand of the holy people is finished."* The "hand" here means their power. This is hard to read. God's people will be brought to the end of their own strength. I believe this speaks of Israel coming to the end of itself in those days, and then turning to the One they pierced (Zechariah 12:10), so that all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). Sometimes God lets us come to the end of our strength so we will finally lean on His.

New Testament links: Revelation 10:5-7 (alluded to); Revelation 12:14 (alluded to)

12:8 *And I heard, and I did not understand; and I said, "O my lord, what **will be** the latter end of these **things**?"*

Daniel is honest: he heard, but he did not understand. So he asks again, *"what will be the latter end of these things?"*

I find great comfort in this. Daniel was one of the greatest prophets who ever lived, and he still did not understand everything God showed him. If Daniel could say "I don't understand," so can we. We can study prophecy carefully and hold some things humbly, and that is not a lack of faith. It is honesty before God.

12:9 *And he said, "Go, Daniel, for the words **are** shut up and sealed until the time of **the** end.*

The answer is gentle but firm: *"Go, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."* Daniel did not need to understand every detail. He needed to trust God and keep being faithful. That is often God's answer to us as well.

12:10 *Many will purge themselves and make themselves white and be refined; and the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand; and those who have insight will understand.*

In the time of the end, two things will happen at once. Many will be purged, purified and refined. The trials will make God's people pure, like the refining in 11:35. At the same time, *"the wicked will act wickedly."* The same fire that purifies gold burns up straw. The Tribulation will make the righteous more righteous and the wicked more wicked (compare Revelation 22:11).

And *"those who have insight will understand."* The wicked will not understand what is happening, but the wise will. This is one reason God gave us the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation: so that believers living in those days will recognize the times and not be deceived (Matthew 24:24-25).

New Testament links: Revelation 22:11 (alluded to)

12:11 *And from **the** time **that** the continual **offering** is removed and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, **there will be** one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

From the time the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. That is thirty days more than the 1,260 days of the Antichrist's reign.

This verse tells us something important: the abomination of desolation is tied to the time of the end. It did happen in a preview form under Antiochus in 167 B.C. (11:31), but this verse places it in the final days, which is exactly how Jesus spoke of it (Matthew 24:15). Paul says the man of sin will take his seat in the temple of God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). As in the Revelation study (Revelation 11:1-2), this means I expect a temple and sacrifices in Jerusalem before the end, which the Antichrist will stop at the midpoint of the seven years.

What are the extra thirty days for? Scripture does not say directly. See the feature at the end of this chapter for the main views.

New Testament links: Matthew 24:15 (alluded to); Mark 13:14 (alluded to)

12:12 *How blessed **is** the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.*

"Blessed is the one who waits" and reaches the 1,335 days! That is forty-five days more than the 1,290. A special blessing is promised to whoever waits faithfully and reaches that day.

Notice the word *"waits."* God's people are called to keep waiting, keep enduring, keep trusting. Jesus said the one who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). Whatever the forty-five days mean exactly, the blessing belongs to those who do not give up.

12:13 *And you, go to the end; and you will rest, and you will stand for your allotted portion at the end of the days."*

The last verse of Daniel is a personal word to Daniel himself. *"And you, go to the end."* Daniel would not live to see these things. He would die, but God told him, *"You will rest, and you will stand for your allotted portion at the end of the days."*

What a promise to end on. Daniel served God faithfully for about seventy years in a foreign land. He stood firm under four kings and two empires, and he never saw Jerusalem again. But God told him his reward was secure. He will rise at the end of the age and receive his place in God's kingdom.

That promise is for every believer. You may not see all that you pray for in this life. You may not understand every vision or every number. But if you belong to God, you can go your way in peace, rest when your time comes, and rise again to your inheritance. Daniel's story does not end in a grave. Neither does yours.

Chapter 12 Summary

At the time of the end, Michael, Israel's great prince, will arise. There will be a time of distress worse than any before, the Great Tribulation, but everyone written in the book of life will be rescued. The dead will rise, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting abhorrence, and those who are wise and lead others to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. Daniel is told to seal the book until the end.

By the river, a heavenly being asks how long these things will last. The man in linen swears it will be a time, times and half a time, three and a half years. Daniel does not understand, and he is told to go his way, because the words are sealed until the end. He is given the numbers 1,290 and 1,335 days, a blessing is promised to those who keep waiting, and Daniel is promised that he will rest and rise again for his reward at the end of the age.

Daniel's Numbers: 1,260, 1,290 and 1,335 Days

A word of humility: These numbers have puzzled careful students for centuries, and Daniel himself said he did not understand (12:8). What follows are the common views. I hold them loosely. What is certain is that God has counted the days, and the time of distress has a fixed end.

1,260 days: "A time and times and half a time" (7:25), "an appointed time, appointed times, and a half" (12:7), forty-two months (Revelation 11:2; 13:5), or 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6). Many Bible teachers count these as 30-day months, which is why forty-two months equals 1,260 days. Most who read Daniel in its plain sense, including me, see this as the second half of the seventieth week, from the abomination of desolation to the return of Christ.

1,290 days (12:11): Thirty days more than 1,260, counted from the same starting point, the abolishing of the sacrifice and the setting up of the abomination. One common view is that the extra thirty days cover events right after Christ returns, such as the removal of the abomination and the cleansing of the temple, or the judgment of the nations Jesus describes in Matthew 25:31-46. Others suggest the 1,290 days simply begin a little earlier, with the abomination set up before the full 1,260 days are counted.

1,335 days (12:12): Forty-five days more than 1,290. Many believe this marks the full start of Christ's millennial kingdom, and the blessing is entering into it. Others see it as the end of a period of restoration after the Tribulation. The text does not explain the blessing beyond saying it belongs to the one who keeps waiting.

Other approaches: Some apply these numbers to the persecution under Antiochus IV in the 160s B.C., but the dates of his desecration and the temple's rededication do not line up neatly with them. Others, in what is called the historicist view, read each day as a year and look for periods of 1,260 or 1,290 years in church history. Because this study reads prophecy in its plain sense unless the text says otherwise, I do not take the day-for-a-year approach here.

What we can hold firmly: The Antichrist's power is limited to a set time. God knows exactly how long the distress will last. And a blessing waits for those who endure to the end (12:12; Matthew 24:13).

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. When you think about the end of your life, what gives you the most hope?
2. Who is Michael, and what does he do "at that time"? (12:1; Revelation 12:7-9)

3. How does Daniel's "time of distress" compare with what Jesus said about the Great Tribulation? (12:1; Matthew 24:21)

4. What two outcomes does Daniel describe for the dead, and how does Jesus say the same thing? (12:2; John 5:28-29)

5. What promise is given to those who are wise and lead others to righteousness? (12:3)

6. Why was Daniel told to seal the book, and why was John told not to? (12:4, 9; Revelation 22:10)

7. How long will the final time of distress last, and where else in the Bible do we see that same period? (12:7; Revelation 12:6; 13:5)

8. How do you feel about Daniel admitting he did not understand? What does that teach you about studying prophecy? (12:8-9)

9. What blessing is promised to the one who "waits," and what does faithful waiting look like for you right now? (12:12)

10. What does God promise Daniel at the very end, and how does that promise apply to you? (12:13)

Key Terms in Daniel

Here are short, plain definitions of words that come up often in this study.

Abomination of desolation: Something so detestable to God that it leaves His holy place desolate. Antiochus IV set up a pagan altar in the temple in 167 B.C. (Daniel 11:31). Jesus said Daniel's words still point ahead (Matthew 24:15), and I believe the Antichrist will do it in the middle of the seventieth week (Daniel 9:27; 12:11).

Ancient of Days: Daniel's name for God the Father on His throne of judgment (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22). It tells us He was there before all days.

Antichrist: The final world ruler who sets himself against Christ. In Daniel he is the little horn of chapter 7, the coming prince of 9:26-27 and the king who exalts himself in 11:36-45. John calls him the beast (Revelation 13).

Aramaic: The common language of the Babylonian and Persian empires. Daniel 2:4b through 7:28 is written in Aramaic; the rest of the book is in Hebrew.

Chaldeans: The ruling people of Babylon in Daniel's day. The word also came to mean a class of learned men who studied the stars, omens and dreams.

Dispensational premillennial view: The view I hold. God works with people in different stages, or dispensations, through history, and He keeps distinct promises to Israel and to the church. Christ comes for His church before the Tribulation, and after it He returns to reign on the earth for a thousand years.

Futurist view: The view that much of Daniel 7-12 and Revelation, including the seventieth week, is still to be fulfilled at the end of the age. This study takes that view.

Great Tribulation: The last three and a half years of the Tribulation, a time of distress like none before it (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21).

Historicist view: A view that reads the days in Daniel's numbers as years and looks for their fulfillment in church history. This study does not take that approach.

Holy ones: The word the SLB uses in Daniel 7 and 8 for God's people, those set apart to Him. Many translations say "saints."

Indignation: God's anger, especially His discipline on Israel (Daniel 8:19; 11:36).

Kings of the North and the South: In Daniel 11, the Seleucid kings of Syria, north of Israel, and the Ptolemy kings of Egypt, south of Israel. The directions are measured from Jerusalem.

Little horn: Daniel sees two. The horn of chapter 7 rises from the fourth beast and is the future Antichrist. The horn of chapter 8 rises from the Greek kingdom and was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a preview of the Antichrist.

Maccabees: Judas Maccabeus and his family, who led the Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV and rededicated the temple in 164 B.C. The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees tell their story. They are useful history, but they are not part of Scripture.

Messiah: From the Hebrew word mashiach, "anointed one." The promised King, Jesus Christ (Daniel 9:25-26).

Millennium: The thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth after His return (Revelation 20:1-6).

Pre-incarnate appearance: An appearance of the Son of God in visible form before He was born in Bethlehem. Many see one in the fourth man in the fire (Daniel 3:25) and in the man dressed in linen (Daniel 10:5-6).

Rapture: Christ coming for His church, when believers who have died are raised and living believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). I hold that it happens before the Tribulation begins.

Satrap: A governor over a province of the Babylonian or Persian Empire (Daniel 3:2; 6:1).

Second Coming: Christ's return to the earth in glory at the end of the Tribulation, when He destroys the beast and sets up His kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 19:11-21).

Seventy Weeks: Gabriel's prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 of seventy sevens of years, 490 years in all, decreed for Daniel's people and Jerusalem. I believe the last seven, the seventieth week, is still future.

Son of Man: The one "like a son of man" who receives the everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus used this title for Himself more than any other.

Time, times and half a time: Three and a half years (Daniel 7:25; 12:7), the same period as the forty-two months and the 1,260 days of Revelation.

Tribulation: In this study, the seven years of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27).

Type: A real person or event that also gives a preview of something greater to come. Antiochus IV is a type of the Antichrist.

Watcher: A name for an angel in Daniel 4, where the watcher is also called "a holy one" (Daniel 4:13). Daniel 4 is the only chapter in the Bible that calls angels watchers.

Conclusion

We started this study with a teenager carried off to a foreign country, and we finished it with an old man being told to rest, because he would rise again at the end of the age (Daniel 12:13). In between, we watched empires come and go exactly as God said they would. Babylon fell. Persia fell. Greece split apart and fell. Rome rose. Every one of those kingdoms looked like it would last forever, and every one of them is gone. Only one kingdom is left standing at the end of Daniel, and it is the kingdom of God.

As I said at the very start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, at face value, unless the text itself signals that something should be understood symbolically. Daniel makes that easier than most books, because God so often explains His own pictures. And because so much of Daniel has already come true, we have every reason to trust the parts that are still ahead.

Daniel's life matters as much as his visions. He made up his mind early not to defile himself (Daniel 1:8), and he kept praying three times a day even when it could cost him his life (Daniel 6:10). He never knew everything about the future. In fact, he told us plainly that he heard things he did not understand (Daniel 12:8). What he did know was the God who holds the future, and that was enough for him. It is enough for us too.

I hope this study has done what I set out for it to do: open up real conversation, stretch your thinking, and encourage you to keep discussing the book of Daniel, and God's whole plan of salvation, with others. If you haven't yet worked through my study of Revelation, I encourage you to pick it up next. You will see Daniel's visions finished there.

The one "like a son of man" Daniel saw coming with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13) is Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. He is the stone cut out without hands that will fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35). He is our mediator, the one and only way to be with God forever. The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are Savior of mankind and the forgiver of all. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross to provide me this opportunity to be atoned and forgiven. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

Daniel and Revelation Side by Side

Daniel and Revelation were written about six hundred years apart, one by a captive in Babylon and the other by an exile on the island of Patmos. But they tell one story. Daniel watched the kingdoms of this world rise and fall and saw God's kingdom take their place. John was shown how that story ends. Many of the same pictures show up in both books, sometimes in almost the same words, and God gave them to us so that each book helps explain the other.

This section lays the two books next to each other. First come the pictures they share, each with the Daniel passage, the Revelation passage, and a few words on what the pair tells us. Then a table lines up the numbers, followed by what each book adds that the other does not, and where I stand. All Scripture here is from the Steadfast Literal Bible.

You might ask, "Why not just read each book on its own?" You can, and you should. But reading them side by side keeps us honest. When Revelation borrows a picture from Daniel, Daniel usually tells us what it means, and when Daniel leaves something sealed, Revelation often opens it.

Beasts Out of the Sea

Daniel 7:3 *And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different this from this.*

Revelation 13:1 *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns*

Revelation 13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet like **those of** a bear, and its mouth like **the** mouth of a lion.*

Daniel saw four beasts, one after another: a lion (Babylon), a bear (Medo-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and a fourth beast so terrible he could not compare it to any animal (Rome). John sees one beast that carries the leopard, the bear, and the lion all in its body. Notice that John lists them in the opposite order. Daniel was looking forward from Babylon, and John was looking back from the other end of history. I believe this tells us the final world power gathers up everything the empires before it stood for.

Count the heads. The leopard has four, and if the lion, the bear, and the fourth beast have one each, Daniel's beasts have seven heads among them, and the fourth beast has ten horns. John's beast has seven heads and ten horns. I don't believe that is an accident.

Ten Horns, Ten Kings

Daniel 7:24 *And the ten horns: from it, the kingdom, ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the former **ones**, and he will bring low three kings.*

Revelation 17:12 *And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings for one hour along with the beast.*

Both books explain the horns for us, so we don't have to guess: they are kings. Historic Rome never ruled through ten kings at the same time, and in John's day these kings had *"not yet received a kingdom."* That is why I believe the ten horns are a future union of rulers that grows out of the old Roman world and hands its power to the Antichrist (Revelation 17:13).

A Mouth Speaking Great Things

Daniel 7:8 *eyes like the eyes of man **were** in this horn, and a mouth speaking great **things***

Daniel 7:25 *And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the holy ones of the Most High*

Revelation 13:5 *And a mouth was given to it speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given to it to act **for** forty-two months.*

The little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13 are the same person, the one we call the Antichrist. They have the same mouth, the same boasting against God, and the same time limit. Daniel 11:36 says the same thing a third way: *"against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things."*

Don't mix this horn up with the small horn of Daniel 8. That one came out of the Greek kingdom and was fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. He was a preview of the Antichrist, not the Antichrist himself.

War Against the Saints

Daniel 7:21 *that horn was making war with the holy ones and prevailing against them*

Revelation 13:7 *And it was given to it to make war with the saints and to overcome them*

God does not hide the hard part. For a time, the Antichrist wins. But both books tell us how long it lasts. Daniel's very next verse says it goes on only *"until the Ancient of Days came"* (Daniel 7:22), and in Revelation *"the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings"* (Revelation 17:14).

As I explain in both studies, I believe the church is caught up to meet the Lord before these years begin. The holy ones who suffer here are those who come to faith during the Tribulation, and many of them pay with their lives (Revelation 20:4). I respect believers who see the timing differently.

Three and a Half Years

Daniel 7:25 *they will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time*

Daniel 12:7 ***it will be*** *for an appointed time, appointed times, and a half*

Revelation 12:14 *where she is nourished there a time and times and half a time*

Revelation 11:3 *they will prophesy **for** one thousand two hundred sixty days*

A *"time"* is one year, *"times"* is two years, and *"half a time"* is half a year, so three and a half years in all. Revelation says the same length of time three ways: *"a time and times and half a time"* (12:14), forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), and 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6). Counted in prophetic years of 360 days, forty-two months and 1,260 days come out exactly the same. When three different ways of counting land on the same number, God is making sure we don't miss it.

The Seventieth Week

Daniel 9:27 *And he will make a covenant strong for the many **for** one seven; and **in** the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease*

Revelation 11:2 *and they will trample the holy city **for** forty-two months*

Revelation never uses the words "seven years." That number comes from Daniel. Gabriel told Daniel that seventy sevens were set for his people and his city (Daniel 9:24). Sixty-nine of them ran from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah, who was then *"cut off"* (9:26). I believe the church age falls in the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens, and that the last seven years are still ahead.

Daniel splits that last seven in the middle, when the sacrifices are stopped. Jesus pointed to that same moment when He spoke of *"the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet"* (Matthew 24:15). Revelation then fills in the halves with its forty-two months and 1,260 days.

Not every Christian reads it this way. Many see no gap and believe the seventieth week was fulfilled in the first century, through Christ's ministry and death and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. I hold the futurist view, which means most of these prophecies are still ahead of us, for the reasons I give in the Daniel study.

The Throne and the Books

Daniel 7:9 *His clothing **was** white like snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne **was** flames of fire*

Daniel 7:10 *a thousand thousands were ministering to Him, and a myriad of myriads were standing before Him. The court sat, and books were opened.*

Revelation 5:11 *the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*

Revelation 20:12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened*

Both men were taken into the same throne room. They saw the same crowd of angels too big to count, and the same books opened for judgment.

Here is something worth slowing down for. In Daniel, the white hair like wool belongs to the Ancient of Days, God the Father. In Revelation 1:14, John sees the same thing on Jesus: *"His head and hair were white, like white wool, like snow."* John is telling us that the Son shares the Father's glory.

One Like a Son of Man

Daniel 7:13 *with the clouds of the heavens **one** like a son of man was coming; and He reached the Ancient of Days*

Revelation 1:7 *Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him*

Revelation 14:14 *and on the cloud **One** sitting like a son of man, having on His head a golden crown*

Jesus' favorite name for Himself was *"the Son of Man,"* and He took it straight from Daniel 7. When the high priest put Him under oath, He answered, *"from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Matthew 26:64).

In Daniel, the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and is given a kingdom that *"will not pass away"* (7:14). In Revelation, we see Him come from heaven to take it.

The Man in Linen and the Glorified Christ

Daniel 10:5-6 *a certain man clothed **in** linen, and his loins **were** girded with gold of Uphaz. And his body **was** like topaz, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and his feet like the look of burnished bronze*

Revelation 1:13-15 *clothed **in a robe** reaching to the feet, and girded around at the breasts with a golden sash. And His head and hair **were** white, like white wool, like snow; and His eyes **were** like a flame of fire; and His feet **were** like fine bronze, as refined in a furnace*

Linen and gold, eyes of fire, and feet like polished bronze. The two descriptions are so close that John seems to be telling us he saw the same Person Daniel saw. Both men also fell on their faces: Daniel says, *"I was in a deep sleep on my face"* (Daniel 10:9), and John *"fell at His feet as dead"* (Revelation 1:17).

In Revelation 1 there is no question who it is. It is Jesus. In Daniel 10, I lean toward seeing the man in linen as an appearance of Christ before He was born in Bethlehem, though some see a mighty angel. I hold that loosely.

Michael and the Time of Distress

Daniel 12:1 *And at that time Michael will arise, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people; and there will be a time of distress such as has not been since there was a nation until that time*

Revelation 12:7 *Michael and his angels warred against the dragon*

Michael is the angel who stands guard over Israel, Daniel's people. Both books bring him in at the same point, right when the worst trouble the world has ever seen breaks out. Jesus described the same days: *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor by any means will happen"* (Matthew 24:21).

Both books also give the same comfort. In Daniel, those who escape are *"everyone who is found written in the scroll"* (12:1). In Revelation, the ones who refuse the beast are those whose names are written *"in the book of life of the Lamb"* (13:8). God's promises to Israel stay with Israel, and He keeps every name He has written down.

The Oath Toward Heaven

Daniel 12:7 *he raised his right **hand** and his left **hand** to the heavens and swore by the One who lives forever*

Revelation 10:5-6 *lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by the One who lives to the ages of the ages*

In Daniel, the oath answers the question *"Until when?"* with three and a half years (Daniel 12:6). In Revelation, the oath says *"that time will be no longer"* (10:6), meaning the waiting is over and *"the mystery of God should be finished"* (10:7). Daniel was told the end would come. John was told it had arrived.

Sealed, Then Opened

Daniel 12:4 *shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of **the** end*

Revelation 22:10 *Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*

Daniel was told to seal his book. John was told not to seal his. Daniel's visions reached far past his own lifetime, and he admitted, *"I heard, and I did not understand"* (Daniel 12:8). By John's day the Lamb had come, and He alone was worthy *"to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals"* (Revelation 5:5). What Daniel saw from a distance, John was allowed to see up close.

The End of the Beast

Daniel 7:11 *I was seeing until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning of fire.*

Revelation 19:20 *And the beast was captured, and with this **one** the false prophet who did the signs before it*

The beast's end is sudden in both books. In Daniel, the horn is still bragging when judgment falls. In Revelation, the beast and the false prophet *"were thrown living into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur"* (19:20). No one fights his way out of God's courtroom.

A Kingdom That Never Ends

Daniel 2:44 *the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed*

Revelation 11:15 *The kingdoms of the world have become **those** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign to the ages of the ages.*

This is where both books are headed. Every vision in Daniel ends with God's kingdom winning and lasting forever (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27), and Revelation ends the same way. The empires of this world get a few verses each. The kingdom of God gets forever.

The Dead Will Rise

Daniel 12:2 *many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake, these to everlasting life, and these to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence*

Revelation 20:5 *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This **is** the first resurrection.*

Daniel names both resurrections in one sentence. Revelation shows us that a thousand years come between them. Those who belong to Christ are raised first, and the rest of the dead are raised after the thousand years to stand before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-12). Daniel saw two mountain peaks. John was shown the valley in between.

The Numbers Side by Side

Here are the numbers the two books share, in one place. Where Christians disagree, the right-hand column gives my view; the studies give the other views.

Number	Daniel	Revelation	What I believe it means
Seventy sevens (490 years)	9:24	Not named	The full time God set for Daniel's people and Jerusalem
Sixty-nine sevens (483 years)	9:25-26	Not named	From the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah, who is then cut off
The gap	9:26	Not named	The church age, between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens
One seven (7 years)	9:27	Not named, but both halves appear	The Tribulation, still future
Middle of the seven	9:27; 12:11	11:1-2; 13:5-6	The Antichrist stops the sacrifices and sets up the abomination of desolation
Time, times, and half a time (3 1/2 years)	7:25; 12:7	12:14	The Great Tribulation, the last half of the seven years
Forty-two months	Not named	11:2; 13:5	The same three and a half years
1,260 days	Not named	11:3; 12:6	The same three and a half years, at 360 days a year
1,290 days	12:11	Not named	Thirty days past the 1,260; Scripture does not say what they are for

Number	Daniel	Revelation	What I believe it means
1,335 days	12:12	Not named	Forty-five days more, with a blessing for the one who waits
Seven heads and ten horns	7:4-7 (heads counted together), 7:24	12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 9-12	The final world power and its ten kings
A thousand years	Not named	20:2-7	Christ's reign on earth after He returns

One more word on the numbers. They are real, and I believe they mean what they say. But they were given to help God's people recognize the season and hold on through it, not to circle a date on the calendar. Jesus said, *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"* (Matthew 25:13).

What Daniel Gives That Revelation Assumes

Daniel lays out the history. The statue in chapter 2 and the beasts in chapter 7 name the empires in order, and chapter 9 gives the timetable of the seventy sevens. Revelation takes all of that for granted. If you have never read Daniel, the beast with ten horns and the forty-two months come out of nowhere. If you have, they feel like old friends.

What Revelation Adds That Daniel Leaves Sealed

Revelation adds the second beast, the false prophet (13:11-17), and shows the dragon behind both of them (13:2, 11). It separates the two resurrections by a thousand years (20:4-6), and it carries the story past the last judgment to a new heaven, a new earth, and the new Jerusalem (21:1-2). Daniel was told to go his way and rest (Daniel 12:13). John got to see where Daniel's road comes out.

Where I Stand

Here is where I stand, the same as in both studies. I hold the dispensational premillennial view, which means Christ returns before His literal thousand-year reign on earth (Revelation 20:1-6). I hold the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture: before the seven years begin, Christ comes for His church, and believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). At the end of the seven years He returns to the earth with His saints to reign.

Faithful Christians see these things differently. Some believe most of Daniel and Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. Some read Revelation as a picture of the whole church age. Some see the little horn only as Antiochus. Your view on the timing of the Rapture won't affect your salvation either way. What matters most is that we know Jesus and stay faithful to Him, just like Daniel did and just like John did.

Study Questions

1. Daniel saw four beasts and John saw one beast with parts of three of them. What does that tell you about the last world power?

2. Compare Daniel 7:8, 21, 25 with Revelation 13:5-7. List every way the little horn and the beast match.

3. Revelation says three and a half years three different ways. Why do you think God repeated it?

4. In Daniel 7:9 the white hair belongs to the Ancient of Days. In Revelation 1:14 it belongs to Jesus. What does that teach you about who Jesus is?

5. Daniel was told to seal his book, and John was told not to seal his. What changed between the two?

6. Both books promise safety to those whose names are written down (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 13:8). Is your name written there? How do you know?

Old and New Testament Links in Daniel

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	New Testament passage	Kind
1:11-12	Revelation 2:10	alluded to
1:13-14	Revelation 2:10	alluded to
2:34	Matthew 21:44	alluded to
2:34	Luke 20:18	alluded to
2:35	Revelation 20:11	alluded to
2:35	Matthew 21:44	alluded to
2:35	Luke 20:18	alluded to
2:44	Revelation 11:15	alluded to
3:6	Revelation 13:15	alluded to
3:27	Hebrews 11:34	alluded to
4:10-12	Matthew 13:32	alluded to
4:10-12	Luke 13:19	alluded to
4:10-12	Mark 4:32	alluded to
4:30	Revelation 14:8	alluded to
5:23	Revelation 9:20	alluded to
6:21-22	Hebrews 11:33	alluded to
7:3	Revelation 13:1	alluded to
7:4	Revelation 13:2	alluded to
7:5	Revelation 13:2	alluded to
7:6	Revelation 13:2	alluded to
7:7	Revelation 13:1	alluded to
7:7	Revelation 12:3	alluded to
7:8	Revelation 13:5	alluded to
7:9	Revelation 1:14	alluded to
7:9	Revelation 20:4	alluded to
7:10	Revelation 20:12	alluded to
7:10	Revelation 5:11	alluded to
7:11	Revelation 19:20	alluded to
7:11	Revelation 13:5	alluded to
7:13	Matthew 26:64	alluded to
7:13	Mark 14:62	alluded to
7:13	Matthew 24:30	alluded to
7:13	Revelation 1:7	alluded to
7:13	Revelation 1:13	alluded to
7:13	Revelation 14:14	alluded to
7:14	Revelation 11:15	alluded to
7:14	John 5:27	alluded to
7:14	Matthew 28:18	alluded to
7:18	Revelation 22:5	alluded to
7:20	Revelation 13:5	alluded to

Verse in this study	New Testament passage	Kind
7:20	Revelation 17:12	alluded to
7:20	Revelation 17:3	alluded to
7:20	Revelation 12:3	alluded to
7:21	Revelation 13:5-7	alluded to
7:21	Revelation 11:7	alluded to
7:22	Revelation 20:4	alluded to
7:22	1 Corinthians 6:2	alluded to
7:24	Revelation 17:12	alluded to
7:25	Revelation 12:14	alluded to
7:25	Revelation 13:5	alluded to
7:27	Revelation 11:15	alluded to
8:10	Revelation 12:4	alluded to
8:13	Revelation 11:2	alluded to
9:27	Matthew 24:15	alluded to
9:27	Mark 13:14	alluded to
10:5	Revelation 1:13	alluded to
10:5	Revelation 15:6	alluded to
10:6	Revelation 1:14-15	alluded to
10:6	Revelation 19:12	alluded to
10:6	Matthew 28:3	alluded to
10:9	Revelation 1:17	alluded to
10:10	Revelation 1:17	alluded to
10:12	Revelation 1:17	alluded to
11:31	Matthew 24:15	alluded to
11:31	Mark 13:14	alluded to
11:36	Revelation 13:5-6	alluded to
11:36	2 Thessalonians 2:4	alluded to
12:1	Matthew 24:21	alluded to
12:1	Mark 13:19	alluded to
12:1	Revelation 12:7	alluded to
12:1	Revelation 16:18	alluded to
12:1	Revelation 20:15	alluded to
12:2	John 5:28-29	alluded to
12:2	Matthew 25:46	alluded to
12:2	Acts 24:15	alluded to
12:3	Matthew 13:43	alluded to
12:4	Revelation 22:10	alluded to
12:4	Revelation 10:4	alluded to
12:4	Revelation 5:1	alluded to
12:7	Revelation 10:5-7	alluded to
12:7	Revelation 12:14	alluded to
12:10	Revelation 22:11	alluded to
12:11	Matthew 24:15	alluded to
12:11	Mark 13:14	alluded to

Bibliography

The following sources were consulted for this study, to present a range of perspectives and to help clarify the meaning of Daniel. All commentary in this book is written in my own words, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

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Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, about 1830. Public domain.

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For Further Study

If you want to go deeper into Daniel, these commentaries are widely used. I do not agree with every view in them, so read with discernment and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

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