

Daniel

A Suggested Outline of Daniel

- I. The Personal History of Daniel (1–6)
 - A. Maintaining his godly walk (1)
 - B. Interpreting the “image dream” (2)
 - C. The golden image—Daniel not present here (3)
 - D. Interpreting the “tree dream” (4)
 - E. Interpreting the handwriting on the wall (5)
 - F. Maintaining his godly devotion—the lions’ den (6)

- II. The Prophetical Ministry of Daniel (7–12)
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 - C. His prayer of confession—the seventy weeks (9)
 - D. His final vision of the future (10–12)

The Kingdoms in Daniel: You must keep in mind that six different kingdoms are identified in the Book of Daniel. They are:

1. Babylon (606–539 B.C.)	4. Rome (ca. 150 B.C.–ca. A.D. 500)
The head of gold (2:36–38)	Legs of iron (2:33, 40)
The lion with eagle’s wings (7:4)	The “dreadful beast” (7:7)
2. Media-Persia (539–330 B.C.)	5. Antichrist’s kingdom
Arms and chest of silver (2:32, 39)	Ten toes of iron and clay (2:41–43)
Bear with three ribs (7:5)	Little horn (7:8)
3. Greece (330–ca. 150 B.C.)	6. Christ’s kingdom
Thigh of brass (2:32, 39)	The stone that smites the image (2:34–35, 44–45)
Leopard with four heads (7:6)	The Ancient of Days (7:9–14)

Keep in mind that the Roman Empire has never been replaced by another world empire, so that it actually continues until the rise of Antichrist in the latter days. This last world dictator will establish a United States of Europe (the ten toes) after the pattern of the old Roman Empire. Note that in chapter 2 we have man's view of the nations (valuable metals), while in chapter 7 we have God's view (dangerous beasts).

Introductory Notes to Daniel

I. The Man

Daniel stands out as one of the greatest men in Jewish history. That he was a real person in history is proved by Ezek. 14:14 and 28:3, as well as Matt. 24:15 and Heb. 11:33. He was a teenager in the year 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and began his conquest of Judah. There were several "deportations" of Jews to Babylon, and Daniel was in the first group because he was of the princely line. It was the practice of Babylon to deport the finest of the citizens and train them for service in their own government. Daniel was still active in 539 B.C. when the kingdom was taken by Cyrus, so he lived and ministered in Babylon for over sixty years. In fact, he lived through the reigns of four rulers (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus) and three different kingdoms (Babylon, Media, Persia). His name means "God is my judge." He held several important positions and was promoted greatly because of his character and wisdom, and because the blessing of God was upon him. Nebuchadnezzar named him chief of the wise men and a ruler of the land (2:48), a position similar to a modern prime minister. Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, called Daniel out of retirement and, because he explained the handwriting on the wall, made Daniel third ruler in the land (5:29). Darius named him leader over the whole realm (6:1-3). For at least seventy-five years, Daniel was God's faithful witness in a wicked and idolatrous kingdom.

II. The Book

Daniel is to the OT what the Book of Revelation is to the NT; in fact, we cannot fully understand one without the other. Prophetically, Daniel deals with "the times of the Gentiles" (see Luke 21:24), that period of time that began in 606 B.C. with the captivity of Jerusalem and will end when Christ returns to earth to judge the Gentile nations and establish His kingdom. In the various visions and dreams in Daniel, we see the program of Gentile history from the rise of Babylon through the conquests of the Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, and to the rule of Antichrist just before the return of Jesus Christ. This book proves that "there is a God in heaven" (2:28) and that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men" (4:25, nkjv). Daniel makes it clear that God Almighty is sovereign in the affairs of this world; "history is His story." God can take rulers off their thrones; God can defeat the strongest nations and turn them over to their enemies. In 1:1-2:3, the writing is in Hebrew, but from 2:4 to 7:28, it is in the Chaldean language. The Hebrew sections deal primarily with the Jews.

III. The Order of History

The Book of Daniel is not arranged in chronological order. In the first half, Daniel interprets the *dreams* of others; in the last half, he is given *visions* of his own concerning the future of his people. The historical order of the book is as follows:

(1)	Captivity (605–604 B.C.)
(2)	Dream of the image (602 B.C.)
(3)	Nebuchadnezzar's image
(4)	Nebuchadnezzar's tree dream
(7)	The vision of the four beasts (556 B.C.)
(8)	Ram and the goat vision (554 B.C.)
(5)	Belshazzar's feast—Babylon falls (539 B.C.)
(9)	Vision of seventy weeks (538 B.C.)
(6)	The lions' den
(10–12)	Closing visions

You can see that Daniel was a man in his eighties when cast into the lions' den.

Daniel

In the personal history of Daniel (chapters 1–6), we find three different times of difficulty: the testing of the four Hebrews when they arrived at Babylon (chap. 1); the fiery furnace (chap. 3); and the lions' den (chap. 6). In each of these experiences, Daniel and his friends won the victory, but the very first victory was the foundation for the other victories. Because these Jewish boys were faithful to God while they were yet teenagers, God was faithful to them in the years that followed.

I. A Difficult Trial (1:1–7)

Imagine four Hebrew boys, teenagers, being snatched from their lovely homes in Jerusalem and moved to faraway Babylon. Since all of them were princes, belonging to the royal family, they were probably not accustomed to this kind of treatment. It is too bad when the youth of the land must suffer because of the sins of the parents. The Jews had refused to repent and obey the Lord, so (as Jeremiah had warned) the Babylonian army came in 606–586 B.C. and conquered the land. It was their custom to take the best of the youths to Babylon for training in the king's court. In v. 3 we see what fine specimens these four lads were: they were physically strong and handsome, socially experienced and well-liked by others, mentally keen and well-educated, and spiritually

devoted to the Lord. Their lives were balanced, as we see Christ's in Luke 2:52—perfect examples of teenagers!

But a difficult trial lay ahead of them: the king wanted to force them to conform to the ways of Babylon. He was not interested in putting good Jews to work; he wanted these Jews to be Babylonians! Christians today face the same trial: Satan wants us to become “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:1–2). Sad to say, too many Christians give in to the world and lose their power, their joy, and their testimony. Note the changes that these young men experienced:

A. A new home (vv. 1–2).

No longer were they surrounded by the things of God in Jerusalem, and no longer would they have the influence of their godly parents and teachers. When some Christians get away from home, they rejoice at the opportunity to “let down the bars and live it up”; but not so with Daniel and his friends.

B. New knowledge (vv. 3–4).

The old Jewish wisdom had to go; from now on it would be the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of Babylon. They had to learn the wisdom and the language of their captors. The king hoped that this “brainwashing” would make better servants out of them. God's people often have to study things that do not agree with God's Word. Like Daniel and his friends, we should do our best but not abandon our faith.

C. New diets (v. 5).

For the next three years, the four youths were supposed to eat the king's diet, which, of course, was contrary to the dietary laws of the Jews. No doubt the food was also offered to the idols of the land, and for the Hebrew youths to eat it would be blasphemy.

D. New names (vv. 6–7).

The world does not like to recognize the name of God, yet each of the four boys had God's name in his own name. Daniel (“God is my judge”) was changed to Belteshazzar (“Bel protect his life”). Bel was the name of a Babylonian god. Hananiah (“Jehovah is gracious”) became Shadrach (“the command of the moon god”); Mishael (“Who is like God?”) became Meshach (“who is like Aku,” one of the heathen gods); and Azariah (“Jehovah is my helper”) became Abed-nego (“the servant of Nego,” another heathen god). The Babylonians hoped that these new names would help the youths forget their God and gradually become more like the heathen people with whom they were living and studying.

II. A Daring Test (1:8–16)

The Babylonians could change Daniel's home, textbooks, menu, and name, but they could not change his heart. He and his friends purposed in their hearts that they would

obey God's Word; they refused to become conformed to the world. Of course, they could have made excuses and "gone along with" the crowd. They might have said, "Everybody's doing it!" or "We had better obey the king!" or "We'll obey on the outside but keep our faith privately." But they did not compromise. They dared to believe God's Word and trust God for victory. They had surrendered their bodies and minds to the Lord, as Rom. 12:1–2 instructs, and they were willing to let God do the rest.

Daniel asked for a ten-day test, which was not very long considering that they had three years of training ahead of them; the head servant agreed with their plan. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). See also Matt. 6:33 and Prov. 22:1. The servant was afraid to change the king's orders, lest anything happen to the youths and to himself, so Daniel's proposed test was a good solution to the problem. Of course, God honored their faith. The boys were fed vegetables (pulse) and water for ten days, thus avoiding the defiled food of the Babylonians. At the end of the test, the four lads were healthier and more handsome than the other students who ate from the king's table.

It takes faith and obedience to overcome the temptations and pressures of the world. First Corinthians 10:13 had not yet been written, but Daniel and his three friends knew its truth by experience. Note how polite and kind Daniel was to the Babylonian servant; he did not "parade" his religion or embarrass the man. This is a good example for us to follow: we may hold to our convictions without becoming cranks!

III. Divine Triumph (1:17–21)

A test for ten days is one thing, but what about the three-year course at the University of Babylon? The answer is in v. 17: "God gave them ..." all that they needed! He enabled them to learn their lessons better than the other students, and He added to this knowledge His own spiritual wisdom. The "magicians and astrologers" in v. 20 were the men of the kingdom who studied the stars and sought to determine what decisions the king should make. They also claimed to interpret dreams. Certainly Daniel and his friends did not believe the foolish religion and practices of the Babylonians, but they studied just the same, just as a Christian student must do when he attends a university today and is told to learn "facts" that he knows are contrary to God's Word. Daniel understood that God would use him as a witness in that godless place—and He did that for the next seventy-five years!

The king himself had to admit that the four Hebrew lads were ten times smarter than his best advisers. Of course, this kind of reputation made the astrologers envious, and it is no wonder they tried to do away with the Jews in later years. If Daniel had been worried about pleasing people and being "popular," he would have yielded to the pressures and failed the Lord. But because he lived to please the Lord, he ignored the faces and threats of people and did the thing God wanted him to do. We need Christians today who will purpose in their hearts to put Christ first in everything—in the dining room, in the classroom, and even in the throne room!

"And Daniel continued ..." What a testimony! Satan must have said to Daniel, "You had better follow the crowd if you want to stay around here." But Daniel obeyed the Lord—and he "stayed around" longer than anyone else. He ministered under four kings and

probably lived to see the Jews return to their land at the end of the captivity. "He who does the will of God abides forever"

(1 John 2:17). In fact, we today are being blessed and helped because of Daniel's faithfulness. Had he failed God when he faced tests in his youth, Daniel would never have enjoyed the victories and blessings of the later years. He was called "beloved" (10:11), an honor given in the Bible only to one other—Jesus Christ. Because he lived in the will of God, Daniel enjoyed the love of God (1 John 2:15–17). His consecration gave him courage; his faith made him faithful.

Daniel 2

This chapter is the outline of world history. An understanding of this chapter, and chapter 7, will assist you in your study of Revelation and other Bible prophecies. Note the chart in the Introductory Notes to Daniel.

I. Daniel's Peril (2:1–13)

When Nebuchadnezzar first came to Jerusalem to conquer, he was not yet king; he was acting for his father, Nabopolassar, back in Babylon. This accounts for the seeming contradiction between the three years of training for Daniel in 1:5 and the "second year" of the king's reign in 2:1. Once again archaeology has proved the Bible true. The king was concerned about his future (see v. 29) and whether or not his kingdom would last. God gave him a dream describing the future, but he could not understand it. In fact, he forgot it! Christians have the Holy Spirit to teach and remind them (John 14:26). The "fake" magicians and wise men were really on the spot, for the king wanted not only an interpretation of the dream, but also a description of it! Any man could "invent" an interpretation, but it was impossible for them to describe a dream they had never seen. They tried to "stall for time" (v. 8), hoping the king would "change his mind" (v. 9). Instead, the king ordered all the wise men to be slain, and that included Daniel and his three friends. Satan is a murderer (John 8:44); he would certainly have been happy to see Daniel killed.

II. Daniel's Prayer and Praise (2:14–23)

We must admire the courage of Daniel, for he faced the chief executioner boldly, and even went right in to see the king. "The righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). God overruled in these conversations (Prov. 21:1), and the king gave Daniel time, even though he had refused to give the other wise men time. Daniel and his three friends knew what to do; they spent the next hours in fervent prayer to God. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7). And God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel in the hours of the night. Read Prov. 3:32 and Ps. 25:14 to see why Daniel was given this privilege. Instead of rushing to the king, or boasting of his new wisdom, Daniel paused to praise the Lord. And you

will note in vv. 25–30 that Daniel gave all the glory to God; he took none of it for himself. There is no limit to what God will do for the believer who will let God have all the glory.

III. Daniel's Prophecy (2:24–45)

The prophet went to the chief executioner and told him not to slay the other wise men. They deserved death, of course, and it would have exalted Daniel's position had they been removed, but Daniel was not a man with hatred for his enemies. Only eternity will reveal how many lost people have been saved from physical harm by the presence and intercession of a believer. Then Daniel told the king the contents of his forgotten dream. The king had been worried about the future of his kingdom (v. 29), so God gave him a vision of the kingdoms to come. He saw a huge statue of a man: the head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thigh of copper or bronze (but not brass, which was not known at that time), the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay. He also saw a stone come down upon the feet and crush the entire image into powder. Then the stone grew and filled the whole earth like a great mountain.

Verse 28 tells us that the full meaning is for the "latter days." Each metal represented a different kingdom: Babylon was the head of gold (v. 38); it would be followed by the Medo-Persian kingdom, the breast and arms of silver; then would come Greece, the belly and thigh of bronze; Rome would follow as the two legs of iron (and the Roman Empire did divide into Eastern and Western parts). The feet of iron and clay (a brittle mixture) represented the kingdoms at the end times, a continuation of the Roman Empire divided into ten kingdoms (the ten toes). Of course, the final "human kingdom" on earth will be that of the Antichrist during the last part of the Tribulation. How will it all end? Christ, the Stone (Matt. 21:44), will suddenly appear and smite the nations of the world, setting up His own worldwide kingdom of power and glory.

This image, then, is a picture of world history. You can see that the materials in it decrease in *weight* (from gold to clay) so that the statue is top-heavy and easily pushed over. Men and women think that human civilization is so strong and enduring; really it is resting on brittle feet of clay. Note too that the *value* decreases: from gold to silver to bronze to iron to clay. Is mankind getting "better and better" as time goes on? No! Human civilization is actually getting cheaper and weaker. There is also a decrease in *beauty* and *glory* (gold is certainly more beautiful than iron mixed with clay); and there is a decrease in *strength* (from gold to clay) as we approach the end of human history. Each of the successive kingdoms had its own strengths, of course, and Rome exercised a tremendous military power, but through history civilization will become weaker and weaker. This explains why the Antichrist will be able to organize a worldwide dictatorship: nations will be so weak they will demand a dictator just to be able to survive.

Each of these kingdoms had a different form of government. Babylon was ruled by an absolute monarch, a dictator (see 5:19). The Medo-Persian empire had a king, but he worked through princes and established laws (see 6:1–3—and remember the "law of the Medes and the Persians" in Esther 1:19). Greece operated through a king and an army, and Rome was supposed to be a republic, but it was actually a rule of the military through laws. When you come to the iron and clay, you have our present governments: the iron represents law and justice, the clay represents mankind, and together they

make up democracy. What is the strength of democracy? Law. What is its weakness? Human nature. We are seeing today that lawlessness comes when human nature refuses to be bound by God's order and laws.

This entire picture is not a very optimistic one. Nebuchadnezzar saw that his own kingdom would fall one day and be replaced by the Medes and Persians. This happened in 538 B.C. (Dan. 5:30–31). The Medes and Persians would be conquered by the Greeks about 330 B.C.; and Greece would give way to Rome. The Roman Empire outwardly would disappear, but its laws, philosophies, and institutions would continue until this very day, taking us down to the “feet of clay.” The only hope for this world is the return of Christ. When He comes to the earth, it will be to conquer the nations (Rev. 19:11ff) and to establish His own glorious kingdom.

IV. Daniel's Promotion (2:46–49)

The king kept his promise (v. 6) and gave honors and gifts to Daniel, who did not want to receive them since he was anxious that God alone receive the glory. Daniel was honored and promoted because he was faithful to God, and not because he compromised his convictions. He sat in the gate, which was the place of authority. Lot also sat in the gate (Gen. 19:1), but this was because he had compromised and moved out of God's will—and he lost everything! Note that Daniel did not keep the honors for himself, but asked that his three friends also share the promotion (v. 49). The more we see of this man, the more we love him for his unselfishness and humility.

We shall meet these same kingdoms again in chapter 7. There they will be pictured as wild beasts, because that is what God sees when he looks at human history. God is not impressed with gold, silver, and bronze. He sees the human heart, and he knows that the kingdoms of the world are full of violence and sin. From humanity's point of view, earthly kingdoms are like metal—durable and strong; from God's point of view, they are ferocious beasts that must be slain. Daniel had perfect confidence and peace because he knew God's plan for the future. The Christian today who knows God's Word and believes it will also have peace.

Daniel 3

What a dramatic story this is! Imagine three Jewish men daring to defy the ruler of the world, and daring to be different from the thousands of people in Babylon! Though this event took place over 2,000 years ago in far-off Babylon, it has lessons for us today.

I. The Practical Lesson

There is a twenty-year interval between this chapter and the events in chapter 2. As you can see, Nebuchadnezzar's heart has not changed one bit. He admitted in 2:46–47 that Jehovah God was a great God, but this truth never really got to his heart. He praised Daniel and Daniel's God, but he did not repent of his sins and trust in Him. As a result,

the king tried to force the entire empire to be idol-worshippers, which, in the long run, actually meant worshiping the king. After all, was he not the “head of gold” in the image he saw in his dream? (2:38) Then why not make an entire image of gold (probably wood covered with gold) and glorify the king even more? This is the way the human heart operates when God is not honored: man glorifies himself and tries to make everybody worship him.

Naturally, the three Jewish officers could not follow the king's orders. Romans 13 tells believers to obey rulers and laws, but Acts 5:29 and 4:19 make it clear that no Christian is to disobey the Lord by obeying the government. When the government tries to control our conscience and tell us how to worship, we obey God rather than human beings, regardless of the cost. It was not easy for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to stand their ground as everybody else bowed down when the music played, but they refused to budge. Some of the other wise men (v. 8) took this as an opportunity to accuse the Jews, and the king was enraged when he heard that his decree had been disobeyed. Knowing that the three men were good men (and friends of Daniel), he gave them another chance, but they remained firm. They would rather burn than turn! So, into the furnace they went, bound with their own clothing. Three promises stand out in this story:

A. The promise of persecution.

Christians should expect the furnace of persecution if they are wholly dedicated to Christ. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you” (1 Peter 4:12ff). The world hates us, and Satan sees to it that the furnace gets “stoked up” seven times hotter. Of course, the three Jews could have made excuses and gone along with the crowd. Instead, they stood with one another and with the Lord, trusting God to glorify Himself either by their life or by their death. Christian, expect persecution; God promised it (Phil. 1:29; John 15:18–20).

B. The promise of preservation.

God will never forsake His own when they go through the fiery trial. He may not keep us out of the furnace, but He will go with us and bring us through for His glory. Read Isa. 43:2 for God's promise to you. When the king looked into the furnace, he saw four men—and one of them was Jesus Christ. Christ walked with them; He loosed their bonds; He kept them from being harmed; in fact, they did not even smell of the fire when they came out (v. 27). The secret? Their faith—Heb. 11:30–34.

C. The promise of promotion.

These men were actually better off for having gone through the fire. For one thing, it gave them opportunity to walk with Christ and suffer with Him. It is worth danger and trial to know how near the Lord can be to us. The fire set them free from their bonds, just as suffering for Christ today gives us joyful liberty from sin and the world. Their experience glorified God before others (1 Cor. 6:19–20), and the king promoted them and gave them honors. First the suffering, then the glory (see 1 Peter 5:1, 10–11).

II. The Doctrinal Lesson

In the Bible, "Babylon" is more than a city or an empire; it represents a system. It is God's name for Satan's system in this world. Babylon started in Gen. 10:10; it was the work of Nimrod, that "mighty rebel against the Lord." Babylon stands for our rebellion against the Lord and our substitutes for what the Lord gives us. In Gen. 11 we see Babel in its rebellion against God, a human attempt at worldwide unity politically and religiously. This is what Nebuchadnezzar wanted to accomplish with his great image; he wanted to unify his kingdom under one government and one religion. But this whole scheme was man-centered; there was no place for God at all. And it centered around gold. This whole Babylonian system is Satan's counterfeit, opposing God's truth, and seeking to capture the hearts, minds, and bodies of people. Actually, the name "bab-el" means "the gate of God." It pretends to be the way to heaven. In truth, it is the way to hell. We see the final development of this false system in Revelation 17–18, the material, cultural, and religious systems of the world all united in one world federation. God will permit this "one world" system to grow, and then He will destroy it once for all. It is important that you know the difference between God's truth and Satan's lies, between true Christianity and Satan's "religions." True believers are not to be a part of this worldly system (Rev. 18:4–5). Like the three Hebrew men, we must take our stand against Babylon and bear witness to the truth of God's Word.

III. The Prophetic Lesson

We have here a picture of events in the last days. Note, first of all, that Daniel was not present when these things took place. Undoubtedly he was away on official business for the king, and the king took advantage of his absence to erect his wicked idol. This illustrates the rapture of the church: when the church is out of the world, then Satan will be able to carry out his diabolical plans for enslaving the minds and bodies of men.

Second Thessalonians 2 and Rev. 13 both make it clear that Satan will have a "heyday" after the Christians are raptured and taken to heaven. For one thing, he will raise up a world ruler, the Antichrist, who (like Nebuchadnezzar) will conquer the nations and establish a totalitarian government. The church will be gone, but there will be 144,000 Jewish believers sealed by the Lord and protected from Satan's devices (Rev. 7:1–8; 14:1–5). The Antichrist will set up his own image and force the world to worship it (see Rev. 13), but the faithful Jews will not bow down. Like the Hebrews in Babylon, the 144,000 will serve God and God will protect them. It is interesting to note that the image of King Nebuchadnezzar is identified with the number six (sixty cubits high, six cubits wide, Dan. 3:1), and the image of Antichrist is identified with his number, 666 (Rev. 13:18). It is this image that Jesus called "the abomination of desolation" in Matt. 24:15–22.

So, Dan. 3 is a prophetic forecast of Israel during the tribulation period, after the church has been raptured. Nebuchadnezzar represents the Antichrist; his image represents the image of Antichrist that he will erect; and the three Hebrews represent the believing Jews, the 144,000 who will be protected during the Tribulation. It is likely that these Jews will read Daniel 3 and understand it and know that their God will go into the furnace of tribulation with them and bring them out again for His glory.

Every day we can see our present world moving toward unification. There are hundreds of organizations and agreements that bind nations together these days. There will one day be a "United States of Europe," and the leader of that organization will become the last world dictator, the Antichrist. The stage is set. "The coming of the Lord draws nigh." Before Jesus returns, we Christians may have to go through the "furnace of fire," but we need not fear, for He is with us. And far better to go through a furnace of fire than to live in a lake of fire for all eternity.

Daniel 4

This chapter is an official Babylonian document, written by the king himself. It is the story of his conversion, and what a story it is. Keep in mind that it was written seven years after the experience itself, so that vv. 1–3 and 37 are Nebuchadnezzar's public testimony of what God did to him and for him. We will consider those verses at the end of our study. Now for the account of the king's dream.

I. The Dream Received (4:4–18)

It was at a time of peace and prosperity that God sent this dream to the king, for this dream was really a divine warning to him that his sins were going to catch up with him at last. He was secure, but it was a false security, similar to the one Jesus pictured in the Parable of the Rich Farmer (Luke 12:15–21). It is when this wicked world is resting in "peace and safety" that God's judgment will fall (1 Thes. 5:3). The only true safety and rest is in Jesus Christ.

The dream was this: he saw a huge tree that overshadowed the entire earth, with the birds and animals taking refuge under it, and he heard an angelic voice say, "Cut down the tree." The tree was cut down, but the stump was left in the wet grass, with a band of iron about it, for "seven times." Needless to say, the king was greatly disturbed by this dream, especially since he had received another dream in the early years of his kingdom, and it dealt with the future of his reign.

The king summoned his wise men, but they were unable to explain the dream. Remember their boast in chapter 2: "Show us the dream and we will explain it." Well, the king did show them this dream but they could not explain it. The worldly-wise make their boast of great wisdom, but they cannot understand or explain the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14–15). The king knew that only one man could solve the problem—Daniel, the man of God. So he called Daniel to his throne and related to him the dream that had perplexed him. Nebuchadnezzar had power, riches, and glory, but he was unable to unlock the future. The poorest Christian is far richer than he, because in the Word we have God's program for the future.

II. The Dream Revealed (4:19–27)

God used Daniel to be a “light in the darkness,” for He revealed to him the meaning of the dream. But the revelation struck the prophet dumb for an hour. That must have been the longest hour of waiting in the king’s history. It was plain to Daniel that the message of the dream was a sobering one. He did not take it lightly or deliver it in a careless fashion. A true prophet is always in sympathy with his message; he feels the burden of it and delivers God’s Word faithfully. Many people have the idea that spiritual wisdom and knowledge always lead to joy and witness, when sometimes they lead to sorrow and silence. See Dan. 10:1–3 for Daniel’s reaction to the truth about the seventy years of captivity.

The explanation is not difficult to grasp. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and his great kingdom (vv. 20–22). God often uses the figure of a tree to picture a kingdom; Ezek. 31 is an example, and so is Matt. 13:31–32. A tree is a good symbol of an earthly kingdom because it is rooted in the earth and depends on the earth for its food and stability. The other nations that looked to Babylon for protection and provision are pictured by the beasts and birds lodging in and under the tree. Certainly Babylon had become a great and powerful kingdom. But it was not for Nebuchadnezzar to boast, because God had given him his throne and his kingdom. That was the lesson the monarch was to learn the hard way.

“The watcher and holy one” is an angel of God, appointed to work in the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel 10:4–20 informs us that the angels are very active in the affairs of the nations of the world. The angel announced, “Cut down the tree—get King Nebuchadnezzar off the throne.” What an experience the king would have! He would actually cease to live like a man and would live like a beast for seven years. The tree would be cut down, and the iron band would restrain its growth, but the judgment would not be permanent. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar would become human again, his reason would return, and he would ascend his throne in great glory.

Why was God working this way in the king’s life? To teach him humility. You will remember that in the king’s “image dream” he was pictured as the head of gold; and in chapter 3, the king had made an entire image of gold to attract worship and praise to himself. God would show this proud monarch that he was actually a beast at heart. In fact, in chapter 7, Daniel will have a vision that shows that *all* the empires are nothing but wild beasts. Daniel warned the king to repent and change his ways. “Break off your sins,” he begged, “and perhaps the Lord will give you forgiveness and time to serve Him.” After all, God had spoken to the king on two different occasions—the dream of chapter 2 and the furnace episode of chapter 3—and it is dangerous to turn a deaf ear to God.

III. The Dream Realized (4:28–36)

It happened as Daniel said. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a whole year to consider the warning and turn from his sins, but the king paid no heed. In fact, he became more and more proud of his achievements. See Ecc. 8:11 and Prov. 29:1. But there came a day when judgment fell and the true beastly nature of the king was revealed for all to see. Men drove him from his palace and he lived for seven years like a beast of the field,

eating grass like the oxen. When God wants to humble a proud king, He can do it quickly and thoroughly.

This did not last forever. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was converted. The first step (the king tells us) was, "I lifted my eyes to heaven" (v. 34, nkjv). It is too bad he had not looked to heaven long before this. "I blessed God—I praised God." That certainly sounds like a man whose life has been changed by faith in the Lord. The king had learned his lesson: he was nothing and God was everything. Read vv. 34–35 to see how much practical doctrine Nebuchadnezzar learned through this humbling experience. How tragic that the proud rulers of this present world fail to see they are nothing and God is everything. Verse 17 (nkjv) states the lesson clearly: "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men ..."

Now back to vv. 1–3. Here is the mighty dictator addressing all the peoples of the world and sending them *peace*. Nebuchadnezzar certainly was not known for his peaceful activities, because he was a cruel man of war. Verse 1 reads almost like a NT epistle from Peter or Paul. Note how in vv. 2–3 he gives all the glory to God and ascribes greatness to the Lord. This, again, was very unlike this heathen dictator; just seven years before he had been saying, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" He was boasting about *his* power and *his* majesty, with not a syllable of praise or gratitude to God. Well, all that is changed now; the king writes an official document giving personal witness to what God has done for him. Verse 37 is the grand climax: "I praise and extol and honor"—not Nebuchadnezzar—"the King of heaven" and "those that walk in pride He is able to abase." Do we not have in this chapter a foreview of what will happen to the nations in the latter days? Just about the time they will be boasting of their greatness and glory, God will send seven years of awful judgment upon them and bring them low. Then, at the end of that Tribulation period, Christ will return to earth and establish His kingdom. The nations that have trusted Him will enter into the glorious kingdom; the others will be cast out. Like Nebuchadnezzar, the believers will be converted from their pride and unbelief and will enjoy the blessing of God.

Daniel 5

Some twenty years pass between chapters 4 and 5. Nebuchadnezzar moved off the scene, succeeded by a son who reigned just a few years and then was assassinated by his own brother-in-law. He in turn ruled four years but was killed while in battle. The next two rulers occupied the throne a very brief time; the second of these was Nabonidus. He was actually a son-in-law to Nebuchadnezzar and was married to the widow of one of the previous kings. At this time, Nabonidus was king of the Babylonian empire and his son Belshazzar was king of the *city* of Babylon. This explains why Daniel was named third ruler (vv. 7, 29). While the events in chapter 5 are taking place, King Nabonidus has been a captive of the Medes and Persians for four months. Note the experiences of Belshazzar.

I. Enjoying His Feast (5:1–4)

This feast was in honor of one of the great Babylonian gods, and it took place in the autumn of 539 B.C. Archaeologists have unearthed palaces at Babylon containing great halls large enough to entertain a thousand guests. They have also discovered that the walls were covered with a white chalklike substance, which explains the matter of the handwriting on the wall. The main idea in these verses is drinking wine. Wine has always been associated with Babylon and the Babylonian “system” of this world (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8; 17:1–5; 18:3, 13). The king was not content to drink wine to his gods (v. 4, and see Rev. 9:20); he wanted to blaspheme the God of the Jews as well. So he had the sacred temple vessels brought in to be used at this idolatrous, blasphemous feast (see Dan. 1:2). The word “father” in 5:2 indicates “grandfather”; see also the use in vv. 11 and 13. Please keep in mind that the Medes and Persians were already outside the gates of the city when this feast was in progress. So confident was the king that his fortress city was impregnable that he laughed at the invading armies. What a picture of our world today: judgment is about to fall, yet people are making merry and worshiping their false gods. “When they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them” (1 Thes. 5:3, nkjv). Babylon was a strong city with walls 350 feet high and eighty-seven feet thick. The Euphrates River ran diagonally through the city, and great brass gates controlled the city entrances. How could any invading army capture such a city?

II. Revealing His Fear (5:5–9)

The guests apparently did not immediately see the mysterious hand appear, but the king looked over their heads and saw it on the opposite wall. Imagine how shocked the guests were when they saw their king trembling, his knees knocking together. Wine could not give him courage now; he was face-to-face with a message from God. You can read v. 7, “And the king *shrieked*.” He had to know the meaning of the hand and the handwriting. In fact, he offered the man who would explain it the position as third ruler of the land. (In a few hours Belshazzar would not even be alive and ruling himself.) As usual, none of the king’s “experts” could explain the writing on the wall, and this made the king even more concerned. How strange that he did not know Daniel, the man who had counseled his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. But Belshazzar was a careless youth (he was about thirty-five years old at this time) who was more interested in power and pleasure than in spiritual matters. No wonder his city fell.

III. Discovering His Future (5:10–29)

The Queen Mother solved the problem. It is possible that this wise woman was the widow of Nebuchadnezzar whom Belshazzar’s father, Nabonidus, married in order to solidify his power in the kingdom. At any rate, she heard of the consternation in the banquet hall and came to advise the king. “O king, live forever,” she said (v. 10)—and he was going to be dead before the night was over. Then she told him about Daniel and how he had advised Belshazzar’s grandfather. Daniel was an old man now, and had been “retired” from public service. As an honored member of the official family, Daniel

was probably invited to the feast as a guest, but he would not defile himself or compromise his testimony. Because of his separated position, Daniel was honored of God (2 Cor. 6:14–18).

The king tried to impress Daniel (vv. 13–16), but Daniel would not be impressed. He knew that the king's gifts meant nothing in comparison to the blessing of God; for that matter, Belshazzar would not be king much longer. Before explaining the handwriting, Daniel preached a sermon to the king, using the king's grandfather as his illustration. He warned the king about his pride and sin and reminded him that God judged Nebuchadnezzar severely. "And you knew all this," Daniel exclaimed, "yet you persist in living such a wicked life. Now God has sent you a message of judgment and it is too late." God gave Nebuchadnezzar a year to repent (4:28–33), but there was no year for Belshazzar to repent. He was doomed.

Now for the explanation. The words were in Chaldean. In Babylon a mina and a tekela were different weights; and the word *peres* simply means "to divide." When the Babylonian magicians saw these words on the wall, they could not understand what they meant. But God gave Daniel the interpretation: "Numbered—weighed—divided." Belshazzar's days had been numbered and time was up; he had been weighed in God's scales and found wanting; now his kingdom would be taken from him and divided by the Medes and Persians. And keep in mind that Darius was at the gates at that very hour. Did Belshazzar believe the message from God, even after all his fear and shaking? No. We find no evidence of repentance or concern. He kept his promise and made Daniel third ruler just as though his kingdom were to continue forever. The king's pride, lust, indifference, and self-satisfaction led to his downfall.

IV. Meeting His Fate (5:30–31)

Had Belshazzar studied the Prophet Isaiah, he would have known just how the city of Babylon would be taken, and by whom it would be taken. Cyrus the Persian conqueror would defeat the Medes and then come down upon Babylon (Isa. 41:25; 45:1–4). He would dig a canal that would reroute the Euphrates River and then smuggle his army into the city *under* the gates. The Babylonians had seen the enemy digging, but they thought they were going to build a mound against the city. Actually, they were diverting the river. Why was the city taken unawares? Because most of the people were drunk. It was a great religious feast day, and the people were too involved in pleasure to think about defense. The enemy came right into the banquet hall, and the king was slain. What a warning to any nation! We have such a pleasure-mad world today that it will be easy for some enemy to take us unawares, and history will repeat itself.

Who was Darius the Mede? Isaiah had said that Cyrus would capture Babylon and set the Jews free (Isa. 44:28–45:13); see also Dan. 1:21 and 10:1. Darius is mentioned as "king" in Dan. 6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1; 11:1. The solution is found in the word "took" in 5:31; it should be translated "received." Darius (Cyrus' military leader) received the kingdom from Cyrus, king of Persia, and ruled Babylon for him. In 6:28 we see that it was a dual kingship; Cyrus was the king of the empire, while Darius ruled Babylon and the area connected with it. Cyrus entered Babylon a mighty conqueror and proceeded to deal wisely with the people, including the exiled Jews. It was Cyrus who issued the decrees that permitted the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple (Ezra

1:1–4; see Isa. 44:28). So, even the rise and fall of empires is all a part of God's plan for His people.

The fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. is a picture of the future fall of Babylon (the devil's world system) as given in Rev. 17–18. And Bible-believing Christians can already see "the handwriting on the wall." But blind world rulers continue in their pride and pleasure, little realizing that the Lord is coming.

Daniel 6

In this chapter we spend a day in the life of the prime minister of the Medo-Persian Empire—Daniel the beloved. Remember, now, that Daniel is not a teenager in this chapter; he is a man in his eighties. This just proves that age is no barrier to serving Christ, nor is it any protection against temptation and testing. Because Daniel started young as a man of faith and prayer, he was faithful to the Lord even in his old age.

I. A Dawn of Devotion

How did the prime minister begin each day? He prayed to the Lord. In 6:10 we are told that Daniel prayed three times a day in a special "prayer chamber" atop his house. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray," says Ps. 55:17. So, Daniel started his day with the Lord—and it's a good thing that he did. The enemy was afoot and Daniel was going to face one of the greatest tests of his life. "Watch and pray!" was our Lord's warning. Prayer was not an incidental thing in Daniel's life; it was the most essential thing. He had a special place for prayer and special times for prayer, and you can be sure that he talked to the Lord all day long. No wonder God called him "greatly beloved" (9:23; 10:11, 19), language that in the NT the Lord reserves for His own Son. It was Daniel's faithful walk and consistent prayer life that made him one of God's "beloved sons" (read John 14:21–23 carefully). How important it is to start the day with the Lord. Abraham had this habit (Gen. 19:27); so did David (Ps. 5:3) and our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35).

II. A Morning of Deception (6:1–9)

God had honored Daniel for his faithfulness, so that he was practically the second ruler in the land. There were actually 124 persons involved in the leadership of the land: Darius the king, the three presidents (with Daniel as #1), and 120 princes. We see that Darius was so impressed with Daniel that he was planning to make him the official second ruler. The promotions of Daniel in Babylon are proof that a believer does not have to compromise to succeed (Matt. 6:33).

The other 122 leaders were not too happy about Daniel's success. For one thing, he was an alien and a Jew. Satan has always hated the Jews and done his utmost to persecute them and eliminate them. The wicked always hate the just. Certainly godly Daniel was honest and kept careful watch over the affairs of state; the other leaders

were stealing from the king and covering up their thefts with false accounts. This is why Darius had reorganized the government, so that he “should have no damage” (loss). The wicked lied about God’s people; they told Darius that all the presidents agreed on the plan (v. 7), when Daniel had never been consulted. How foolish Darius was to sign the decree without first consulting with his best president. But history shows that Darius was easily influenced by flattery.

III. A Noon of Decision (6:10–13)

Daniel was one of the first ones to hear of the new decree, and he had to decide what to do. Of course, his godly character and spiritual walk had already decided for him: he would serve the Lord and pray to Jehovah just as he had always done. He could have made excuses and compromised. “Everybody was doing it.” And he was an old man who had served the Lord faithfully all his life. One little compromise at the end of his life could not do too much damage. Could he not be more useful to the Lord alive than dead? No. Daniel refused to compromise. He chose rather to be eaten by lions than to miss one prayer meeting.

His enemies watched as Daniel went to his prayer chamber where the windows were always open (“Pray without ceasing”), and they could see him kneel and lift up his hands toward Jerusalem. Now they had him. But Daniel had peace in his heart. He was praying, giving thanks, and making supplication, and this is the formula for peace (Phil. 4:6–7). This was not a “crisis prayer meeting”; Daniel was used to praying and had been since he was a teenager. It is wise to start building spiritual habits when you are young.

IV. A Sundown of Disappointment (6:14–17)

The king realized what a fool he had been, but even his power and wealth could not alter the law of the Medes and Persians. God did not want Darius to deliver Daniel; that was a privilege He was reserving for Himself. Daniel was not depending on the king either (Ps. 146:1–6). He had learned long ago to trust the living God. God did not want to save Daniel *from* the lions’ den; He wanted to deliver him *out of* it.

V. A Night of Deliverance (6:18–23)

What a contrast between Darius in his palace and Daniel in the lions’ den. Darius had no peace, yet Daniel was perfectly at peace with himself, the Lord, and the lions. Daniel was in a place of perfect safety, for God was there. Darius could have been slain by some enemy right in his bedroom. Darius had labored all the previous day to save Daniel from judgment, yet he could not break his own laws. Daniel simply talked to the God of the universe and received all the power he needed. In every way, Daniel was reigning as king while Darius was a slave.

It was Daniel’s faith in God that delivered him (6:23; Heb. 11:33). It is amazing that he had any faith at all, after living in that idolatrous heathen land for so many years. His daily fellowship with the Lord was the secret: he had faith, and he was faithful. See Ps. 18:17–24.

Christians today face many temptations to compromise, and it often appears that the “safest” course is to go with the crowd. But this is the most dangerous course. The only really safe place is in the will of God. Daniel knew that it was wrong to worship the king and pray to him, because Daniel knew God's Word. He would rather die obeying God's Word than live outside of God's will. Satan comes as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8–9) and uses our enemies to try to devour us (2 Tim. 4:17), but God can deliver us if it is for His glory. It is not always God's will to deliver His children from danger; many Christians have given their lives in the place of duty. But what a reward they receive! Read Rev. 2:10 carefully.

VI. A Morning of Destruction (6:24–28)

Our souls revolt at the thought of whole families, including children, being thrown to hungry lions. But this was the law of the land, the same law that these wicked men had tried to use against Daniel. How tragic that their innocent children had to suffer; however, such are the awful penalties of sin. We believe that the children under the age of accountability went to be with the Lord. God always vindicates His own. “The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead” (Prov. 11:8, nkjv). If you are going through persecution and you wonder if God cares, read Ps. 37:1–15—and trust Him the way Daniel did.

Now we see why God permitted Daniel to go through this experience (vv. 25–27). It brought great glory to His name. Peter may have had Daniel in mind when the Spirit led him to write 1 Peter 3:10–17. When Christians overcome temptation, they always glorify the Lord, even if only the angels and demons are watching. May we, like Paul, desire that Christ might be magnified in our bodies, “whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20).

Daniel 7–8

Until now, Daniel has been interpreting the dreams of others. Now God gives him extraordinary visions of his own. These two chapters take place before chapter 5, of course, since Babylon has not yet fallen to the Medes and Persians. Remember that Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, was actually king of Babylon (the empire) and Belshazzar was his co-regent in the city of Babylon. Nabonidus became king in 556 B.C., so we may date chapter 7 in 556 and chapter 8 in 554. Other historians prefer to date chapter 7 in 550, when Nabonidus left for Arabia and put Belshazzar officially in charge. This would put chapter 8 in the year 548. In these visions, Daniel sees the course of Gentile world history and helps us understand what will happen to the Jews in the end times.

I. The Vision of the Four Beasts (7)

The restless sea in the Bible is a picture of the Gentile nations (Rev. 17:15; Isa. 17:12). Here it is the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea, and all of the empires mentioned in

this vision bordered on this sea. Daniel saw four beasts, and the angel explained what they meant. Each beast represented a kingdom (v. 17).

A. The lion with wings (v. 4).

Here we have Babylon, corresponding to the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (2:36–38). The winged lion was a favorite image in Babylon; you may see these figures in any museum that has a Babylonian display. The animal made to stand like a man certainly reminds us of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience in 4:27–37. Babylon was still ruling the world at this time, but in just a few years (as chap. 5 explains), the empire would fall. So, that takes us to the next beast.

B. The bear with the ribs (v. 5).

Here we meet the Medo-Persian empire, known not for its swiftness or skill, but for its brute force, just like a bear. The three ribs depict the three empires already defeated (Egypt, Babylon, Lydia); and the fact that the bear stood "raised up on one side" indicates that the one half of the empire (the Persian half) was stronger and more honorable (higher) than the other half (the Medes). Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., but their empire lasted only some two hundred years.

C. The winged four-headed leopard (v. 6).

This is certainly Greece, led by Alexander the Great, who swiftly conquered the world, defeating the Persians about 331 B.C. But the great general died in 323, and his vast kingdom was divided into four parts (and thus the four heads). Four of his leading generals each took a part of the kingdom and ruled it as the monarch.

D. The terrible beast (vv. 7–8, 17–27).

This beast startled Daniel, because nothing like it had appeared in any of the previous revelations. It seems clear that we have here the Roman Empire, corresponding to the iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image. But the picture seems to go beyond history into "the latter days," because we see ten horns on the beast, and these parallel the ten toes of the image in chapter 2, the revived Roman Empire of the last days. Verses 8 and 20 both tell us that a "little horn" (ruler) will appear and defeat three of the ten kingdoms represented by the ten horns and ten toes. This little horn will then become a world ruler, the Antichrist. His mouth will speak great things, and he will persecute the saints (believing Jews and Gentiles during the Tribulation period) for three and a half years (v. 25—time, times, and half a time). This is the last half of the Tribulation period, the "seventieth week" that Daniel will tell us about in chapter 9. According to vv. 11–12, the three previous kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) will be "swallowed up" and included in this last great world empire, but the Antichrist himself will finally be judged and slain. Read Rev. 13:1–2, where John describes the beast (Antichrist) and uses the very same beasts we find in Dan. 7. But notice that their order is reversed. This is because Daniel was looking ahead while John was looking back.

E. The judgment (vv. 9–14, 26–28).

It must have shocked Daniel to see a man in heaven. He saw Jesus Christ, the glorious Son of man. Of course, God could not permit the beast to control the world. He will send His Son to judge the beast and destroy his kingdom, and then to set up His own glorious kingdom, with the saints of God reigning with Him.

This vision complements and supplements the one in chapter 2. There we have man's view of the nations (precious metals), and here we have God's view (ferocious beasts). See Ps. 49:12.

II. The Vision of the Ram and He Goat (8)

This vision is actually an amplification of 7:6, explaining how Greece will conquer Medo-Persia. We are back to the Hebrew language in chapter 8 (to the end of the book; since 2:4, it has been in Chaldean). Chapter 8 takes place two years after chapter 7 and describes the kingdoms that will follow Babylon after it falls. God carried Daniel in a vision to the capital of Persia, the palace in Shushan (see Neh. 1:1). Why Shushan? Because Persia would be the next empire.

The ram (vv. 3–4) represents Medo-Persia in its conquests (v. 20); the emblem of Persia was a ram. Just about the time the ram was through “pushing,” the he goat appeared from the west (v. 5) and leaped swiftly to where the ram was standing. This ram had two horns, one higher than the other, symbolizing the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians the stronger. The he goat had one great horn—Alexander the Great. Now, the he goat attacked the ram, broke the two horns, and became very great (vv. 7–8). This represents Greece's victory over Medo-Persia. But then we see the great horn broken (Alexander's death) and four horns taking its place (the four generals who divided his kingdom and ruled over it).

But here comes a “little horn” again. We met a “little horn” back in 7:8, and now we have another one. The “little horn” in 7:8 represented the Antichrist, the world ruler of the final world empire before the return of Christ to earth. But this “little horn” in 8:9 comes out from one of the four horns; that is, he is a leader who comes out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom. So, this “little horn” is not the Antichrist of the “latter days,” although he has a definite connection with him. This “little horn” conquers nations to the south and east (Egypt, Persia), and then invades Palestine (“the pleasant land”). He not only attacks the Jews politically, but also religiously; for he tries to destroy their faith (v. 10) by stopping the sacrifices in the temple (vv. 11–12). Verse 13 tells us that he will set up “the transgression of desolation” in the temple and defile the temple for 2,300 days. Who was this man? History names him: *Antiochus Epiphanes*, a wicked leader who came out of Syria, one of the four divisions of Alexander's empire. He invaded Palestine and set up a statue to Jupiter in the temple. He even went so far as to sacrifice a pig on the Jewish altar and sprinkle its blood around the courts. Imagine how the orthodox Jews felt about this. History tells us that the temple lay desolate until Dec. 25, 165 B.C., when the Jewish patriot, Judas Maccabeus, rededicated the temple and cleansed it. The total number of days between desecration and dedication was 2,300.

But this does not exhaust the vision's meaning. In vv. 17–26, the interpreting angel makes it clear that the vision reaches to the time of the end, the closing years of Jewish history. Antiochus Epiphanes is but an illustration, a foretaste, of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, the “little horn” of 7:8. Verse 23 calls him “a king of fierce countenance.” This man will make an agreement to protect the Jews for seven years (9:27), but in the middle of this period he will break his promise, invade Palestine, and set himself up as world dictator. See vv. 24–25, 2 Thes. 2:1–12, and Rev. 13. He will take away the daily sacrifices in the temple, set up his own image (this is “the abomination of desolation” of Matt. 24:15), and force the world to worship and obey him. Verse 25 tells us he will use craft and lies to accomplish his purposes. He will even stand up against Christ, the Prince of princes. But this will be a losing battle. He shall be broken “without hand” (see 2:34), defeated at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19). No wonder Daniel was overwhelmed. And so ought we to be as we consider the amazing prophecies of the Word of God.

Daniel 9–12

These closing chapters contain some of the most detailed prophecies in the Bible, and most of them have already been fulfilled. We want to focus our attention in chapter 9, because an understanding of “Daniel’s seventy weeks” is basic to Bible prophecy. This chapter deals with two different periods of time as related to the Jews.

I. **Seventy Years of Captivity (9:1–19)**

A. *The prophecy (vv. 1–2)*

Daniel was a student of the OT Scriptures, particularly those prophecies that related to the destiny of his people. He was now nearly ninety years old. He was reading Jer. 25:1–14, and the Lord caused him to see that his people would be in Babylon for seventy years. Note that God does not give people “visions and dreams” when He can teach them through His Word. Today His Spirit teaches us through the Word. Beware of “new revelations” that are supposed to come from dreams and visions. Daniel realized that the seventy years of captivity were about to close. Babylon invaded Palestine and began its siege in 606 B.C., and Daniel understood the prophecies in the year 539–38 B.C.; so there were but two years left in the seventy years promised by Jeremiah. What an exciting time Daniel had in his Bible study that day!

B. *The prayer (vv. 3–19).*

The Word of God and prayer go together (Acts 6:4). Daniel did not go out and boast about his insight into the Word; in fact, he did not even preach a sermon. He went to his knees in prayer. This is the true attitude of the humble Bible student. It is sad to see “prophetic truth” making boasters instead of prayer warriors out of people. How strange

it was for the people to see the former prime minister wearing sackcloth. Daniel's prayer is one of the greatest examples of intercession in the Bible. He confesses his own sins and the sins of his people. He reviews Bible history and confesses that the nation has been wicked and God has been righteous to judge them. He knew the warnings Moses had given (v. 13, see Lev. 26), and he knew that he and his people deserved far greater disaster than God had sent to them. It is wonderful to see Daniel identifying himself with his sinning nation, though he himself had not been guilty of these sins. After confessing his sins and the sins of the people, Daniel begins to pray for Jerusalem (vv. 16–19). No doubt he had often prayed for the holy city; in fact, this is one reason why God blessed him and made him to prosper (Ps. 122:6–9). But why pray for the prosperity of a desolate city? Because God had promised not only to end the captivity, but also to take the Jews back to their land that they might rebuild their temple. See Jer. 29:10–14 and 30:10–24. In Isa. 44:28, God promised that Cyrus would permit the Jews to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. So, Daniel was laying hold of these great promises and turning them into believing prayers. Now we will see how God answers his prayers. (Note how Daniel's prayer in Dan. 9 is similar to those in Ezra 9 and Neh. 9.)

II. Seventy Weeks of Prophecy (9:20–27)

There was no evening sacrifice being offered in Jerusalem, but Daniel was offering himself and his prayers at the time of the evening offering (see Ps. 141:1–2), and the Angel Gabriel came to give him his answer. Daniel was concerned about Jerusalem and the holy mountain (v. 20). Would the city be restored? Would the temple be rebuilt? Would the nation ever be redeemed from sin and would righteousness ever dwell on the earth? Gabriel had all the answers for Daniel, and we find them in the famous prophecy of the “seventy weeks.”

The number seven has been stamped on Israel from the beginning. They had a Sabbath of days (Ex. 23:12), setting apart the seventh day for honoring God. They also had a sabbath of years (Lev. 25:1–7); they were to let the land lie fallow on the seventh year and give it rest. Because they broke this law, the Israelites went into captivity, one year for each sabbatical year they failed to obey God (2 Chron. 36:21; Lev. 26:33–34). They also had a “sabbath of sabbaths,” with every fiftieth year set apart as the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8–17). But now Daniel was to be introduced to a new series of Sabbaths—seventy “weeks” (seven-year periods), making a total of 490 years of prophetic time for the Jews. (The word “weeks” in v. 24 is actually “sevens”—seventy sevens are determined, making 490 years.) Please note that this 490-year period of time has to do with Jerusalem and the Jews: “your people ... your holy city ...” (v. 24, nkjv). And God has specific purposes to fulfill in this period: the removing of sin and the bringing in of righteousness. The result will be the anointing of the most holy place in the temple, that is, the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to reign in glory from His temple in Jerusalem.

Now for the outline of the 490 years. Verse 25 tells us that the event that will trigger the 490 years is a decree (see Neh. 2:5) permitting the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. (It is interesting that the event that will trigger the last seven years of this period will be the covenant of the Antichrist to protect the Jews. We find a decree at the beginning and at the end of the 490 years.) History tells us there were four

different decrees relating to Jerusalem: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes all made decrees concerning the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1, 6, and 7); and Artaxerxes decreed that Nehemiah could return to rebuild the walls (Neh. 2). This was in 445 B.C., and it is the decree Dan. 9:25 is talking about; it took place nearly 100 years after Daniel received the message from God. Gabriel said that there would be a total of sixty-nine weeks, seven and sixty-two, between the giving of the decree and the arrival of Messiah, the Prince, in Jerusalem ($\times = 483$ years). Keep in mind that "prophetic years" in the Bible are not 365 days, but 360 days long. It has been calculated by scholars that there were 483 prophetic years between the decree in 445 B.C. and the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (cf. *The Coming Prince* by Sir Robert Anderson, Kregel, 1967).

But Gabriel divided these 483 years into two parts—seven weeks ($\times = 49$ years), and sixty-two weeks ($\times = 434$ years). Why? Well, it took forty-nine years to rebuild Jerusalem, and this was done (as Gabriel said) "in troublesome times." Read Nehemiah and see how difficult a task it was to restore the city. Then, 434 years later we come to Messiah, the Prince, who is "cut off" (His death on the cross) for the sins of the world. It was His death on the cross that accomplished the purposes given in v. 24. What followed His death? Did Israel accept Him and His message? No. They lied about Him, persecuted His messengers, stoned Stephen, and refused to acknowledge His kingship. What happened? Rome came and destroyed the city and wrecked the temple. The nation "cut off" Jesus Christ, so He cut them off from being a nation. Until May 14, 1948, Israel was not a free nation.

Rome is called "the people of the prince that shall come." Who is this prince? Not "Messiah the Prince," because that refers to Christ. "The prince that shall come" is Antichrist. He will be the leader of the restored Roman Empire. So, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was but an illustration of a future invasion and destruction to be led by Antichrist. This prince will make an agreement with the Jews to protect them from the other nations, and this agreement will be set for seven years. This final seven years is the completion of Daniel's 490-year period. Between the death of Christ and the signing of this covenant you have the entire Age of the Church, a "great parenthesis" in God's program. The 490 years are in operation only when Israel is in God's will as God's people. When Israel crucified Christ, she was set aside and the "prophetic clock" stopped ticking. But when the Antichrist signs his pact with Israel, then the last seven years of Daniel's "seventy weeks" will start being fulfilled. This seven-year period is known as the Tribulation, or the time of Jacob's trouble. It is described in Rev. 6–19.

After three and a half years, Gog and her allies will invade Palestine (see Ezek. 38–39), and God will judge them. Antichrist will invade the land, break his covenant, and set himself up as world dictator. He will stop all worship at the Jewish temple (see 2 Thes. 2) and force the world to worship him and his image. This is the abomination of desolation (see Matt. 24:15; John 5:43; Rev. 13). How will this period end? Jesus Christ will return to earth, meet the rebel armies at Armageddon, and defeat them (Rev. 19:11–21).