

## Commentary on the Book of Daniel

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### Daniel 1

**1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup>The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with 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 treasury of his god.**

In Jehoiakim's fourth year as king (Jeremiah 46:2), or the third year according to Babylonian calculations which didn't count the first year, Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24-25). Judah was being punished by God for failing to repent despite the many warnings God gave them through the prophets. Thus, the Lord gave Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, a pagan nation and the most powerful nation of the day. God would teach Nebuchadnezzar many things through this, for, even though His chosen nation was in captivity, God still used those who were faithful among them to declare His name and mighty power. Nebuchadnezzar, believing that his ability to defeat Judah was a sign that his gods were more powerful than the God of Israel, took the treasures of the house of God and put them into the treasury of his god. He failed to realize that God had given Judah into his hand, and he boasted in the wrong deities and in his own power and ability. He would have to learn that God is over all, even mighty Babylon.

**<sup>3</sup>Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, <sup>4</sup>youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup>The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. <sup>6</sup>Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. <sup>7</sup>Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.**

Nebuchadnezzar ordered Ashpenaz, his chief official, to gather up some of the captives of Israel that he might benefit from the best and brightest of their nation to serve in his kingdom. Those he chose were young men, some of whom were of Jewish nobility and some not. They had no physical or mental defect, were good looking, were extremely intelligent and able to absorb information from all sorts of areas of study and inquiry, and were fit to serve in the king's court. Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to learn the language of the Chaldeans and their literature. By shaping them into Babylonian culture and society, he probably thought that any remnants of their religious past would be forgotten and discarded. For some, this probably worked, but for Daniel,

Azariah, Mishael, and Hananiah, it did not. Ashpenaz even gave them new Babylonian names to try to change their whole identity from servants of God to servants of the Babylonian king and deities. But just because a given name might have pagan roots or reflect the names of pagan deities was not enough to change the hearts of the faithful servants of God who understood that their real identity was bound up in their relationship with God. Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to eat of his food and drink of his wine, and he wanted them to be educated for three years and then enter his personal service.

**<sup>8</sup> But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. <sup>9</sup> Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, <sup>10</sup> and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." <sup>11</sup> But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see." <sup>14</sup> So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. <sup>16</sup> So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.**

God looked out for Daniel and his friends even in a hostile pagan environment. Daniel didn't want to give an inch and start compromising when it was in regard to matters of the heart, of sin, or of testimony to his God. He was uncomfortable eating of the king's chosen delicacies. Perhaps some of the food violated the parameters of the law, perhaps it was sacrificed to idols, or perhaps it was just unhealthy. Daniel didn't want to do anything to damage his testimony, to weaken his judgment, to weaken his body which could also weaken his judgment, or do anything that would reflect negatively upon his God. The Lord granted Daniel favor with the chief official, and he allowed Daniel and his friends to be given the food of his choice, vegetables and water. This was a bold decision and request on the part of Daniel because it could have provoked the king to anger that his Jewish youths were rebelling and not assimilating. But the official agreed to allow Daniel's request to be carried out for a test period of ten days. At the end of the test period, Daniel and his friends were healthier and fitter than the others, and they were allowed to continue to eat as their consciences permitted them and in the fear of God. God gave them the strength to stand against temptation, for even a small little compromise can lead to more and more assimilation with the sinful ways of the world. Daniel demonstrated that, by faith, it is possible to stay pure even in a very corrupt world and even when danger and death lurk.

**<sup>17</sup> As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of literature and wisdom*; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams. <sup>18</sup> Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the**

**officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.**

God equipped these four young men with great intelligence to understand every branch of literature and study. They were more than adequately gifted by God to be who they needed to be and to play the roles that they needed to play. They were so talented and gifted that the king chose them for his personal service, for they impressed him with their wisdom and understanding even more than all the others. Whenever the king consulted them for advice, their wisdom was, according to the king, ten times better than the pagan magicians and advisers in his kingdom. The wisdom of God always gives His servants an advantage over the false "wisdom" of the world, for the world's "wisdom" is foolishness before God. Thus, these four, even though they were but youths and from a foreign land, were able to advance in the king's service and favor and not violate their integrity in the process. Daniel was given special ability by God to understand and interpret dreams and visions, for God knew that he would use this gift to accomplish His purposes in a pagan land and to teach Nebuchadnezzar a profound lesson. Daniel would continue in the king's service all the way until Cyrus of Persia came and conquered Babylon. Clearly, God had a purpose for him to continue to declare His name in a pagan land despite those who tried to harm him.

## **Daniel 2**

**2 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."**

**4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. 6 But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, 9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man**

**on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. 11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.”**

Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream from God, though he did not realize it was from God. The dreams were seriously upsetting to the king, and he was troubled and unable to sleep. So he called all of the pagan “wise” men to him to divine and determine the meaning of the dream. But he threw them a curve ball by giving them an extreme test to avoid any lying and deceit on their parts. He told them that they had to tell him both the dream and its meaning to prove that they were indeed telling the truth and as a means of proving their worth. Unless they did this, they would be killed. If they succeeded, they would be given great honor and standing in the kingdom. But they knew that they had no power or ability to do this thing for the king, and they told him that only a deity could do it.

**12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.**

The king became angry because he didn’t want people serving him who would simply make up a nice story about his dreams. He wanted to know what they actually meant because they were really upsetting him. Thus, he ordered that all the wise men would be killed including Daniel and his three friends.

**14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king’s commander, “For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. 16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.**

Daniel asked Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, what the king was so upset about and why this decree was so urgently being executed. Daniel had the courage to go in and see the king and ask for time to declare to him the interpretation of his dream. God had gifted Daniel for this precise purpose, and He had a desire to keep pursuing Nebuchadnezzar with the truth of His power and dominion.

**17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18 so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said,**

**“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,**

**For wisdom and power belong to Him.**

**21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs;**

**He removes kings and establishes kings;**

**He gives wisdom to wise men**

**And knowledge to men of understanding.**

**22 “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;**

**He knows what is in the darkness,**

**And the light dwells with Him.**

**23 “To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,**

**For You have given me wisdom and power;**

**Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,**

**For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”**

Daniel told his friends of the situation so that they could all pray to God for His insight to be given to Daniel so that he could discern the dream and declare the interpretation to the king. This was literally a matter of life and death, for their lives were on the line if God didn’t deliver. But He did answer their prayers, and God revealed the mystery to Daniel in a night vision. Therefore, Daniel couldn’t help but declare praise to the name of God. He said that wisdom and power belong to God, not to the false deities of Babylon. He said that God is in charge of the times and epochs, during which nations rise and which fall and come and go. He is in charge of kings, and he allows them to come to power and be removed from power. A man is only wise if God gives him the wisdom, and Daniel rightly understood that God’s deliverance and revelation of the dream was not a credit to himself but to His God. God knows all things, even what people dream at night because He is sovereign over all. Nothing is hidden from Him, including Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. God is the only hope of wisdom and insight, and Daniel put his trust and hope in the right place. God delivered, and Daniel worshipped and thanked Him for the insight. This was no fake deity, but it was the God of his fathers, the God of Israel, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The one true God Who has all power gave wisdom and power to Daniel to declare the king’s dream.

**24 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king’s presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king.” 25 Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king’s presence and spoke to him**

as follows: **“I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!”** 26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, **“Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”** 27 Daniel answered before the king and said, **“As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. 28 However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. 29 As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. 30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.**

Daniel rushed to get the captain of the bodyguard to tell him not to kill any of the wise men and to take him into the king’s presence so that he could tell him the dream and its interpretation. Arioch rushed Daniel in to see the king. Arioch made mention that Daniel was a Jew and one of the exiles, and Nebuchadnezzar asked him if he could tell him the dream and its meaning. Daniel said that the God of Israel had given him the understanding to reveal the dream and that it was not something that would point to his own glory. God deserved the glory because God revealed the mystery and made it known for His divine purpose. Daniel was so clear in his explanation that he even was able to tell the king what he was thinking about as the vision came. The king was thinking about the latter days and what would come of his kingdom. The God of heaven knows the mind of man even though the “wisest” of man has no such ability, especially those who seek such wisdom through divination, sorcery, and other pagan means.

**31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.**

Daniel says that in the dream the king saw a great statue, very large, awesome, and of extraordinary splendor. It was in front of the king, implying that the vision pertained to future events. The head was gold, the chest and arms silver, the belly and thighs bronze, and the legs iron, with the feet partly of iron and partly of clay. A stone was cut out without hands, and it crushed the statue on its feet. Then the rest of the statue was crushed at the same time until it

was like chaff. The wind carried the dusty remains away so that not even a trace remained. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. With that, Daniel moved on to the interpretation.

**36 “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. 39 After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. 40 Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41 In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.**

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was the most powerful king of the world of his day. The true God of heaven gave him the kingdom according to His sovereign plan and will, even though Nebuchadnezzar refused to believe that. His rule was allowed by God and given by God. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold. After that, a lesser kingdom would arise, that of the Medes and Persians. The two arms of the statue highlight the fact that there were two peoples that merged into one. Just as silver is less valuable than gold, the kingdom would be inferior in the sense that the king would not have such absolute power. The Law of the Medes and Persians stood even above the king’s decree, unlike Babylon. A third kingdom, the one of bronze, referred to Greece which became the next world power. These were made up of many individual self-governing city-states, so the kingdom was “lesser” in that the king had less absolute power. Next, there was Rome which became the next world power. Its reign was even known as the Iron Age, and Rome exerted and imposed its will on many nations and peoples. Rome was even “lesser” in that it had the people more involved in governing with the senate, for example. The emperor was still powerful, but there were checks on his power with the citizens having many more rights. The two feet as well as the mixed iron and clay point to the kingdom being divided, which it eventually was. Some parts of the kingdom were strong, but some were more vulnerable and brittle. The empire became so expansive that nations and peoples were blended together, but eventually Rome fell from instability on the inside more than from the outside. Even the Jews would be a subset of the many mixed peoples who lived under Roman rule. The Jews, too, still had their own internal religious government, and Rome allowed this, just as iron does not combine with pottery. What is remarkable is that God has the future planned before it

even happens. Nothing came to pass to thwart the vision, but it came to pass over history exactly as described. This speaks to the divine nature of God and the God-breathed nature of His Word.

**44 In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”**

Throughout all of human history including the period of these four kingdoms, God continues to build a kingdom in the hearts of those who put their faith in Him. Faithful men and women of old believed God and were credited with righteousness (Romans 4:3, 5, 9). Now, Christ has built His church, and even the powers of hell cannot stop the gospel from going forward (Matthew 16:18). Hearts and lives will be changed, though sadly, most will refuse to believe. Yet there is a kingdom united throughout the ages and composed of faithful men and women of God. One day, Christ will return to establish an eternal kingdom (Revelation 19). He will rule for a thousand years on earth (Revelation 20), and then He will create a new heavens and earth (Revelation 21-22). His kingdom will endure forever. He is the God of heaven because the kingdom of heaven endures forever and cannot ever be defeated. The God of this eternal kingdom is the One Who has given the dream to the king to help him to see the truth about His power and rule. It is the truth, and even Nebuchadnezzar believed it to be the truth even though he didn't agree with or like the dream.

**46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. 47 The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.**

Nebuchadnezzar foolishly bowed before Daniel as if the wisdom came from Daniel even though Daniel had just said that the wisdom was from God. He even said to bring an offering before Daniel and to burn incense before him as if he was to be worshipped. Obviously, the king missed the point, and Daniel did all that he could do to make his point concerning God's power, strength, wisdom, and dominion. At least the king did at this point acknowledge that Daniel's God was a God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries. But he exalted the messenger rather than the Giver of the revelation, and he did not bow down before God but only before Daniel. Daniel was promoted to ruler over the whole province of Babylon and made the chief prefect of all of the wise men. He was also given many great gifts. As per Daniel's



request, the king appointed Daniel's three friends to be administrators over the province of Babylon while Daniel served in the king's court. Daniel didn't forget his friends who stood by him, who took a stand for truth and purity with him, and who prayed for him for an answer from God. The gifts and promotion didn't make him prideful but grateful to God. He remembered that who he was in God was more important than any promotion or position.

### **Daniel 3**

**Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, 5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. 6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." 7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.**

Clearly, the dream from chapter 2 still didn't sit well with Nebuchadnezzar, and in his pride he hoped to at least visually or symbolically stand against the implications of the dream. He wanted his kingdom to endure forever, and he wasn't interested in being part of the kingdom that would endure forever, God's kingdom. Thus, he built an enormous statue, approximately 9 feet wide and 90 feet tall. The entire statue was gold or at least overlaid with gold. Whether it was solid gold or not is not nearly as important as the message that the king was trying to declare. In the dream, the gold on the statue was only on the head, but Nebuchadnezzar's statue was gold from head to foot. In other words, he was trying to defy God's revelation and declare that his kingdom would last forever. He wanted all the glory and praise for himself, and he wanted people to bow down to the statue. Whether or not the statue was a likeness of him or of a Babylonian deity or something else, what Nebuchadnezzar wanted was worship of himself and of his kingdom and rule. It is one thing to be patriotic and to love one's country, and it is another to worship it as if it and its king are God incarnate. To worship the statue would clearly violate the first and second commandments of Exodus 20 concerning worshipping God above all others and not making an idol (c.f. Revelation 13:15). Yet the statue was made, and the decree was given that death by fire would stand as the consequence for non-compliance. There was extreme

pressure to bow down given that this occurred at a public assembly where everybody was watching everybody including the king, and people from all nations and languages fell down and worshipped, except for a few of the faithful Jews.

**8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. 9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. 11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”**

It appears from verses 7 and 8 that many of the captive Jews fell down and worshipped the statue in fear of their lives, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did not deny the God of their fathers. Daniel is not mentioned in this passage, but there is no reason to believe that he buckled to peer pressure at this point. His testimony was still highly regarded in later chapters, and he had not lost credibility with the king concerning his God. What is clear is that Daniel’s three friends were targeted to make a statement to the king and to advance the career of a few Chaldeans who wanted the king’s favor and were perhaps jealous of the promotions that the three Jews had been given. These Chaldeans told the king that the three Jews should be thrown into the fiery furnace on account of defying the king’s edict. Appealing to the king’s pride, these men said that the Jews disregarded the king as though they were rebellious against Babylon or personally disrespectful. Clearly, they did violate the law, but it wasn’t out of spite for the king. Rather, it was in reverence to their King in heaven.

**13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”**

Their refusal to comply and bow down to the idol which represented Nebuchadnezzar’s great pride and defiance against the eternal reign of God threw him into a great rage. He gave orders for the three men to be brought before him, and he asked them if the accusations against them were true. Without even hearing their response, he told them again to bow down at the sound of the instruments and engage in pagan worship. He even reminded them that they would be thrown into the fiery furnace, and he mocked their God saying that not even a deity could stop

his agenda. He believed that he was the most powerful entity in the world, but the three Jews did not.

**16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”**

The three Jews wisely understood that Nebuchadnezzar wasn't interested in any kind of reasonable exchange, but they could see that he was ready to pour out his rage upon them. They decided simply to say that their God is able to save them from the fire, and they believed that He would do just that. But even if He did not choose to do so for some reason, they wanted it known that nothing would make them change their minds to bow down and worship the golden image. Worshipping a golden image was a legacy of failure for their people (Exodus 32), and it symbolized the very reason that they as a nation were carried off into captivity. But these three were not going to compromise or bow to the king's threats and pressure. They believed that God would show Himself strong by delivering them, but they didn't presume on that precise outcome. What was clear, however, is that regardless of what would happen, they were going to serve their God and declare to the king of the world that He was the King of even him.

**19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. 21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. 22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. 23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.**

The refusal of the three to bow enraged Nebuchadnezzar even further, and his facial expression was altered toward the three men on account of the intense rage. He was ready to have them murdered, and he ordered that the fire of the furnace be heated to seven times more than normal. He commanded some of his best and most courageous warriors to tie up the three Jews and to cast them into the fire. They tied the three Jews up even with all of their outer clothes on, so they should start on fire very quickly as they were forced toward the fire. The valiant warriors who escorted the Jews to the fire were themselves killed by its intense heat, and the Jews fell into the fire tied up. The king would have expected them to be incinerated immediately, but that is not what happened.

**24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, “Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?” They replied to the king, “Certainly, O king.” 25 He said, “Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!” 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. 27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king’s high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.**

The king was astounded to see four men walking around in the fire and not being burned and consumed. The king noted that the fourth person looked like a son of the gods. Whether it was an angel or Jesus Himself, it was clear to the king that something miraculous and divine had just occurred. This was no magic act or sorcery, but it was an act of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They were no longer tied up, and they had been divinely protected from the fire. The king told them to come out from the fire, which they did. The high officials from Babylon gathered around the Jews and saw that the fire had had no effect whatsoever on the men or on their clothing. They didn’t smell like smoke or have anything singed. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that the three Jews served the Most High God, but he did not yet submit to Him as God over him.

**28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.” 30 Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.**

Nebuchadnezzar didn’t bow down to them as he had Daniel, but he blessed their God. He didn’t make God his God, but he did acknowledge their God as having great power and as having delivered His servants who put their trust in Him from the fire. He acknowledged their bravery in refusing to bow to his command and instead offering their bodies up to be burned so that they would not sin against their God. The king made a decree that any who would speak against the God of the Jews would be killed and have his house destroyed. He also saw to it that the three Jews would be prosperous in the province of Babylon. He believed that there was something special and powerful about their God, but he still wouldn’t himself bow down before Him. It is not enough to know about God or to say nice things about Him. God wants repentance and those

who will worship Him above all other things, including self, something Nebuchadnezzar wasn't ready to do.

## **Daniel 4**

**4 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound! 2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.**

**3 "How great are His signs**

**And how mighty are His wonders!**

**His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom**

**And His dominion is from generation to generation.**

A sudden change in tone is evident in chapter four regarding the king as compared to the previous chapters. Nebuchadnezzar, the king who had previously been prone to wrath and violence toward even his own people suddenly says to his kingdom, "May your peace abound." Peace and tranquility had not been the hallmarks of his reign, and this would have caused the people to take notice upon hearing this from Nebuchadnezzar. Then it got really different for those who were used to the pride of the king. He says that it is good to him to declare the signs and wonders that God has done for him. He even refers to God as the Most High, something he refused to acknowledge previously. He wanted to be the most high, but something happened to finally humble him to bow before God Who he finally recognized as having all power, strength, and dominion. He finally resigned himself to the fact that he was but a man and that it was God Whose kingdom endures forever and Whose rule came before him and will continue on after him.

**4 "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. 5 I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 6 So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. 8 But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying, 9 'O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.**

Nebuchadnezzar recounted what had changed him. He had another dream given to him again by God. He again was afraid upon seeing the visions, but instead of going right to Daniel who had interpreted the dream last time, he called upon the pagan "wise" men of Babylon. Again, they

could not interpret the dream. But then Daniel came in who had been given the name Belteshazzar, a reflection of Nebuchadnezzar's god even though Daniel didn't worship his god. He refers to Daniel as having a spirit of the holy gods as if the Jewish God was but one of many. Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar still didn't understand the uniqueness and holiness of God, but he would by the time this narrative was over. He even referred to Daniel as one of the Babylonian magicians as if he was of their same kind. He knew that Daniel was good at understanding visions and their interpretations, but he didn't understand or bow before the God Who gave him the understanding just yet.

**10 'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.**

**11 'The tree grew large and became strong**

**And its height reached to the sky,**

**And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.**

**12 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant,**

**And in it was food for all.**

**The beasts of the field found shade under it,**

**And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,**

**And all living creatures fed themselves from it.**

**13 'I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.**

**14 'He shouted out and spoke as follows:**

**Chop 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.**

**15 'Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,**

**But with a band of iron and bronze around it**

**In the new grass of the field;**

**And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,  
And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.**

**16 “Let his mind be changed from that of a man**

**And let a beast’s mind be given to him,**

**And let seven periods of time pass over him.**

**17 “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers**

**And the decision is a command of the holy ones,**

**In order that the living may know**

**That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,**

**And bestows it on whom He wishes**

**And sets over it the lowliest of men.”**

This time the king gave Daniel the dream, whereas the first time Daniel had to give the king both the dream and the interpretation. The king said that he saw in his vision a tree that was large and strong, seen by the whole earth. It was beautiful, and it provided sustenance to the whole earth. But then an angel came and issued a decree that the tree would be cut down, its fruit taken away, and those who took refuge in it scattered. The stump could remain but with a band of iron and bronze around it. There was also the prophecy of insanity for seven periods of time, likely seven years. There was to be a lesson in all of this, that God is the Most High and that He wants people from all over and from future times to know that He is the king over all of mankind.

**18 This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’**

**19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries! 20 The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth 21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged— 22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23 In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and**

**saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,” 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. 26 And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. 27 Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’**

The king asked Daniel to explain the imagery in the dream and its implications. Daniel, not wishing harm upon the king, said that he would rather the dream be for the king’s enemies, for he realized the severity of what it entailed. He cared about Nebuchadnezzar, and the dream was a frightening judgment. Thus, he was greatly alarmed by it. The vision meant that the king would be given the mind of an animal for seven years. He would be removed from ruling for that time. The future kingdoms would still take Babylon over, but it would not happen yet. God promised that the kingdom would be given back to Nebuchadnezzar for a time after he recognized that God in heaven is in charge and that he is not ultimately in charge. Daniel, knowing that God is merciful, pleaded with the king to turn from his sins that God might relent on this coming judgment. He advised the king to turn from his iniquities and start showing mercy to the poor in case God might change His mind or lessen His punishment.

**28 “All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. 29 Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ 31 While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ 33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.**

Twelve months passed since the vision was given, and nothing happened. God gave the king time to repent and change and start being just with the poor and to fix other areas of cruelty and injustice, but he didn’t change. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar thought that he had gotten away with



his continued evil or that God had forgotten His promised punishment. Maybe the king had forgotten what God had promised. Walking on the roof of his royal palace, the king made a great boast that he had built Babylon by his might and power. He took credit for his kingdom, and he didn't acknowledge God at all. He acknowledged that he did all things for his own majesty and never for the benefit of others or in reverence for God. God hates pride, and at the very moment that Nebuchadnezzar made his great boast, a voice came from heaven reiterating the promise of God that he would be given the mind of an animal and lose his kingship for a time until he acknowledged God as the Most High. He needed to realize that all is from God and that God is sovereign over all. Refusing to be changed by the first vision and the miracle at the fiery furnace, more dramatic steps were required. Immediately, the king became insane and took on the behavior of a wild beast until he even started to look kind of like one. This was the ultimate humbling thing to come to a prideful person, and he was driven away not just from his kingdom but from people in general.

**34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;**

**For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,**

**And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.**

**35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,**

**But He does according to His will in the host of heaven**

**And among the inhabitants of earth;**

**And no one can ward off His hand**

**Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’**

**36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”**

At the end of the time that God had decreed, the king's mind returned to him and he acknowledged and worshipped the God of heaven, finally. First, he looked to heaven, and then his reason came back. God had said that he needed to learn Who was the true authority before the punishment would end, and somehow and somehow while he was behaving like an animal God changed his heart. He praised and honored God, something he had never done himself before. He referred to God as the Most High God and the One Who has all dominion and

authority throughout all ages and times. Compared to God, people are nothing, for only God has all power and authority. He rightly said that God does what He wants and that no one in heaven or on earth can thwart His plan or question His judgment. By God's grace and consistent with the vision, upon his reason returning to him, his nobles and counselors began seeking him out. He was reestablished as king and given surpassing greatness. The difference, however, was clear, for now Nebuchadnezzar praised, exalted, and honored the King of heaven. He recognized rightly that God is able to humble those who, like him, walk in pride, for He is just and the one true God.

## **Daniel 5**

**5 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.**

Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Sadly, he didn't choose to follow God even despite all that his father had gone through. Rather, he indulged the pagan practices and deities of Babylon. He held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles. He ordered that the vessels of silver and gold that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from Jerusalem be used to drink wine at his feast with his many wives and concubines. As they drank from the vessels from the temple of God, they praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. They did not praise God, but they dishonored the temple and God Himself.

**5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. 6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together. 7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.**

As they were feasting and drinking and praising false gods, the fingers of a man's hand appeared and began writing on the wall. The king saw the back of the hand and was deeply frightened to the extent that his hips started to give out and his knees began to knock together. He, like his

father before him before he repented, called upon the diviners, magicians, and sorcerers to try to read the inscription on the wall and explain its meaning. He offered a reward to whoever could do it, promising to clothe them in purple, to give them a necklace of gold, and to put them in a position of third in authority in the kingdom. But, as in the cases with Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, all of the "wise" men of Babylon could not read or interpret the writing. The king grew even more concerned and frightened, and his face became even paler. The nobles gathered around him were confused also and lacked wisdom to help.

**10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners. 12 This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."**

The queen heard about what was happening, and she offered the king an idea. She told him not to be alarmed or frightened because she knew of a man, Daniel, who she believed could interpret the writing. She didn't credit Daniel's God, but she, like Nebuchadnezzar had before his eyes were opened, credited the holy gods, lumping God in with a mixed bag of false gods. She rightly remembered that Daniel had interpreted many things rightly for Nebuchadnezzar when no one else could and that Nebuchadnezzar had appointed him chief of the "wise" men. She bragged about Daniel's wisdom and insight while failing to recognize or acknowledge the power of His God. The queen also noted that Nebuchadnezzar had named him Belteshazzar, as if a Babylonian name gave him more credibility. She beckoned the king to summon him so that he could declare the interpretation.

**13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. 15 Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom." 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him."**

Though Nebuchadnezzar had exalted Daniel, it seems as though Daniel had been more or less forgotten in Belshazzar's kingdom. But the king now turned to Daniel for answers and promised him great rewards and honors if he was able to give the interpretation. However, Daniel was quick to say to the king that he was not interested in the rewards and gifts. Given that Belshazzar's kingdom was just about to come to an end, receiving gifts and honor was really a moot point. More importantly, Daniel was interested in drawing attention to the God Who gives the insight and not in any passing earthly rewards. He said that he would, however, make the interpretation known.

**18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him. 21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.**

Daniel immediately pointed Belshazzar to the Most High God, and he reminded him of how God had to humble his father Nebuchadnezzar because of how he was prideful in his heart. He reminded him of all the nasty details, of the insanity and of the behaving like an animal. But Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is the Most High God and that He is God over even the most powerful of men on the earth. He alone is the true sovereign, but Belshazzar didn't believe this or follow God despite the power and wonder of his father's testimony.

**22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. 24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.**

Belshazzar did not humble his heart despite all that he knew from his father's experiences, but he chose instead to exalt himself against the Lord of heaven. He blasphemed God by bringing out the vessels from His house and using them for pagan worship. He worshipped gods that do not see, hear, or understand, mere creations of man and figments of his imagination. He failed to worship the God in Whose hand was his very life and breath. He thought the kingdom was in his hands, but it was in the hand of God. He thought his life was in his hands, but it, too, was in the

hands of God. Failing to glorify God and humble himself under the mighty hand of God resulted in God manifesting Himself through the hand writing on the wall.

**25 “Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN.’ 26 This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENĒ’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27 ‘TEKĒL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 28 ‘PERĒS’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”**

Daniel read the writing and then interpreted it. He said that God had numbered Belshazzar’s kingdom and put an end to it. He had been weighed on God’s holy scales of justice and found lacking. His kingdom thus had been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians, just as Daniel had prophesied to Nebuchadnezzar back in Daniel 2.

**29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.**

In spite of Daniel saying he didn’t want the rewards or honor of a passing and pagan king, Belshazzar ordered Daniel to be given all that he had offered him. Even up to Belshazzar’s last day on earth, God gave him a clear opportunity to repent. Yet there is no indication in this passage that Belshazzar was moved by the divine warning or that he repented. However, that same night, the word of God came to pass. Belshazzar was killed, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom as Babylon came to an end and the empire of the Medes and Persians took over. Darius was sixty-two at the time.

## **Daniel 6**

**6 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, <sup>2</sup>and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. <sup>3</sup>Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. <sup>4</sup>Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of corruption*, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be found* in him. <sup>5</sup>Then these men said, “We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God.”**

Daniel went from being exiled in a foreign land and learning all of the Babylonian culture and language to now being part of a brand new culture of Persia, the new world empire. But God was still God and still faithful, for His dominion endures from generation to generation. Darius

appointed 120 satraps over the kingdom to rule, and 3 were appointed over them as commissioners. This was to help the king rule and keep control of the kingdom. Daniel was one of the three commissioners. Clearly, God's favor toward Daniel continued even in these tumultuous times. Daniel began to distinguish himself on account of his great wisdom and insight, and Darius was planning to appoint him over the entire kingdom. The other satraps and leaders didn't like this. Perhaps they were jealous or despised the fact that he was Jewish and not of the Medes and Persians. Thus, they tried to find grounds to bring an accusation against him to thwart his promotion, but there was no trace of corruption or negligence on Daniel's part. They realized that they couldn't find any deficiency in Daniel's work ethic or job performance, so they had to find a way to attack him based upon him following the Law of the Lord.

**<sup>6</sup> Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.**

These commissioners and satraps went to the king without Daniel's approval and said that all of them together (implying Daniel also) had consulted and decided that the king should make a law that anyone who prays to any god or man besides Darius himself for thirty days should be cast into the den of lions. The king believed this to be a good idea, for it had to make him feel really good about himself and his throne. He signed the law. Under the law of the Medes and Persians, the king could not revoke the law once it had been established.

**<sup>10</sup> Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously. <sup>11</sup> Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. <sup>12</sup> Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." <sup>13</sup> Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."**

**<sup>14</sup> Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set *his* mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. <sup>15</sup> Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."**

Daniel knew that the document was signed, but he chose not to change his routine of praying three times a day. Daniel knew he would be caught, but he refused to alter his praying to the Lord and thanking Him. The men conspired against him to catch him in the act, and they reported the matter to the king. They reminded the king of the law, and he was distressed because he liked Daniel. He, after all, was the one who wanted to promote him to a position of authority over the men whom he was speaking with. He realized that he could not change the law, so he kept trying to figure out a way around it, even until sunset, in order to find a way to rescue Daniel. But there was nothing he could do to void the law.

**<sup>16</sup> Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."<sup>17</sup> A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.<sup>18</sup> Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.**

The king was forced by the law of the land to throw Daniel into the lion's den. He believed that Daniel's God would deliver him. He put the king's seal and that of the nobles on the mouth of the den so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel's punishment. Darius went back to the palace and fasted the whole night. He refused any entertainment and was unable to sleep out of concern for Daniel.

**<sup>19</sup> Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den.<sup>20</sup> When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"<sup>21</sup> Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!<sup>22</sup> My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."<sup>23</sup> Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.<sup>24</sup> The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.**

The king rushed as soon as the sun rose to see if Daniel was safe. He asked Daniel in a troubled voice if his God had saved his life from the lions. Daniel responded to him that the angel of God had closed the mouths of the lions and kept him safe, for he had done nothing wrong against God. Furthermore, Daniel made sure to tell the king that he had done nothing wrong against him or his rule either. Daniel was taken out of the den, and he was without injury. He trusted God, and God preserved him (Hebrews 11:33). The king was very happy that Daniel was alright, and he gave orders that those who had conspired against Daniel would be cast into the lions' den along with their children and their wives. The lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones even before they hit the bottom of the den. This just shows how vicious and hungry the lions were and how miraculous it was that they didn't harm Daniel at all.

<sup>25</sup> Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and *men of every language* who were living in all the land: “May your peace abound! <sup>26</sup> I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble 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* forever.**

<sup>27</sup> “**He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders  
In heaven and on earth,  
Who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”**

<sup>28</sup> **So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

Darius made a decree that those in his kingdom should not bow down to him but rather to the God of Daniel, for he acknowledged that Daniel’s God is the living God Who endures forever. His kingdom cannot and will not be destroyed, and He delivers and rescues and intervenes on the earth in miraculous ways. Darius clearly understood that a miracle occurred and that the Lord was responsible for saving Daniel. Obviously, no law can force a person to truly repent and follow the Lord by faith, but the point is that even in a pagan kingdom that did not know God the testimony of one godly man was enough by God’s power and grace to supernaturally intervene and declare Himself to the world. God showed Daniel favor through Darius’s reign and even through that of Cyrus. He even used Cyrus to help some exiles return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1), something Isaiah prophesied concerning Cyrus specifically well before the time came to pass (Isaiah 44:28-45:7). The message of Daniel continues unabated that God’s kingdom is above all and that He is the Most High God. Even as a new world power emerged on the scene, the one true God had not changed and was still on the throne and able to change even the hardest hearts and those which are farthest away from Him. He also is faithful to those who love Him, showing them favor and new mercies each day.

## **Daniel 7**

**7 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it. 2 Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’ 6 After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and**



**trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.**

God is sovereign over the affairs of men. He knows what will happen before it happens. He knows what kingdoms will rise and fall, and nothing happens outside of his purview. In Daniel's vision, a glimpse into the future is given concerning four kingdoms and one which would arise later. The first kingdom is Babylon, represented by the lion which stood up. It was powerful, fearful, and ruled harshly from the top down. The second kingdom, represented by the bear, is the Medes and Persians. The Persians were the more powerful entity within that kingdom, which explains the idea of the bear being raised up on one side. The three ribs in its mouth could be explained by the fact that they advanced to the north, west, and south (Daniel 8:4). The leopard with four heads and four wings represents Greece which was divided into four separate entities and ruled by four separate generals. The beast with large iron teeth represents Rome. This beast had ten horns (see notes on v. 23-27). Later on in time a single horn would come out from the old Roman empire and become powerful and make great boasts against God. In the process it would cast down three other kings (see notes on v. 23-27, Daniel 11:42-43). (see also Daniel 2:36-45 for an overview of the four kingdoms mentioned)

**9 "I kept looking**

**Until thrones were set up,**

**And the Ancient of Days took His seat;**

**His vesture was like white snow**

**And the hair of His head like pure wool.**

**His throne was ablaze with flames,**

**Its wheels were a burning fire.**

**10 "A river of fire was flowing**

**And coming out from before Him;**

**Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,**

**And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;**

**The court sat,**

**And the books were opened.**

The kingdoms of men rise and fall, and God is sovereign over all. On a coming day in the future, God the Father, the Ancient of Days, the One Who has no beginning or end and is not bound by time and space, will return to judge the world in Jesus Christ (Revelation 19). Believers will stand before Jesus' bema seat for honor according to what was done by faith in this life (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Unbelievers will face the Great White Throne judgment in which the books will be opened, and it will be evident that they are not in the Book of Life (Revelation 20). Their sin will be held to their account because they refused to bow before Jesus in this life. They will be cast into the lake of fire. When Jesus comes back as Judge, there will be no doubt Who is on the throne. He, being pure and holy, will have an appearance of bright whiteness, and the fire of judgment will accompany Him to judge the wicked. Believers' deeds will be tested by fire to see if they endure the fiery test, but they will never face the fire of God's wrath. Unbelievers will be frightened and forced to bow the knee, recognizing that their doom is sure. There will be myriad believers in heaven serving Christ, and there will be myriads of angels accompanying Him as well (Revelation 5:11). The kingdoms of men come to an end, but Jesus' kingdom is eternal and endures forever (Daniel 4:3, 34; Daniel 7:13-14, 27; Psalm 145:13). Believers will have the privilege of being seated with Christ in heaven and ruling with Him (Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 4:4, 11:16, 20:4; Matthew 19:28)

**11 Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.**

The little horn is the coming antichrist who will be cast along with his false prophet into the lake of fire as will Satan who had raised him up to deceive the masses (Revelation 19:20, 20:10). His boasting will have a fiery end in hell. The other beasts, representing Babylon, the Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome lost their world dominion as history passed them by, but their descendants still exist in their representative geographical areas. They are just not world powers any longer. Until Christ returns, there is opportunity to repent from sin, but that time is finite (Hebrews 9:27).

**13 "I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.**

**14 "And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,**

**That all the peoples, nations and men of every language  
Might serve Him.**

**His dominion is an everlasting dominion**

**Which will not pass away;**

**And His kingdom is one**

**Which will not be destroyed.**

The Son of Man, Jesus, is seen coming before the Father and being given glory and a kingdom. There will be people from every tribe, tongue, and language that serve Him. Much of the world will reject His testimony, but some everywhere will believe. His rule lasts forever and cannot and will not be destroyed ever. He will rule on earth during the millennial kingdom, and He will rule forever with God in heaven for eternity even as God creates a new heaven and earth. (see also Revelation 5:9-10, 7:9)

**15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 16 I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’**

The vision was powerful and distressing to Daniel, and he was alarmed by it. He approached one who was standing by, probably one of the myriad of angels in God’s presence. Daniel wanted clarification, explanation, and understanding to give him peace of mind. Thankfully, God is faithful to explain the vision so that man is not left to guess regarding what God knows that He needs to know. The four beasts are kings which will arise from the earth (see notes on verses 1-8 and Daniel 2:36-45). Their kingdoms will be temporary and passing, but believers will inherit a permanent kingdom because their God is the Highest One with no beginning or end. His kingdom will never end, and His saints get to participate and celebrate His rule, serving and enjoying Him for eternity.

**19 “Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, 20 and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. 21 I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came and**

**judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.**

Daniel was most interested in the fourth beast because of how exceedingly frightening it was. It was markedly different than the other beasts in the vision because of its distinct teeth, claws, and horns. Daniel wanted more insight into the ten horns and the little horn that rose up after them before which three horns fell (see v. 23-27). As the vision continued, Daniel saw the horn wage war with the saints and overpower them for a time. During the tribulation period, the antichrist will persecute the Jews and the tribulation saints (Revelation 7:9-17; 12:13-17; 13:7-10, 15; 18:20, 24). But this time will be shortened for the sake of the saints who are alive at the time (Matthew 24:22), and Jesus Himself will return and pass a favorable judgment on the saints because of their faith in Him. They will take possession of the promised eternal kingdom with Jesus from the millennial kingdom to the ages yet to come.

**23 “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’**

The fourth beast is the fourth kingdom, Rome, which was more expansive than prior kingdoms and different in terms of its governance and the diversity of peoples it allowed within its boundaries. It was fierce and powerful in conquering, but it was different in the freedom it gave to those it conquered. Out of this kingdom, ten kings will arise. This likely is a reference to the ten future kings who give their allegiance to the antichrist (Revelation 17:12-13). The antichrist is the little horn which comes to power after them and gets their allegiance. That this all happens in the geographical region of the old Roman empire is significant. The little horn is different from the rest and from those before him in that he will be backed by Satan himself and supported by a demonic false prophet (Revelation 13). The little horn will conquer and subdue three kings. Three nations subdued include Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia (Daniel 11:43), but there will be other more significant ones as well, Israel included (Daniel 11:41-42) before the kings of the north and the east converge against him (Daniel 11:40, 44). During his time as the most powerful person in the world, antichrist will be so blasphemous to God because of his great pride and defiance against the Most High. He will persecute and make war with those who come to Christ during the tribulation period. He will even try to change the laws pertaining to keeping time, likely changing the calendar to remove any traces of Jewish or Christian history and origin. He hates

Jesus, and his desire is to remove anything that relates to Him or could be traced back to Him. Even the seven day week goes back to Genesis 1 and God's creative acts, and perhaps that will be targeted by him as well. For three and a half years (this timeline of the great tribulation is confirmed in Revelation 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5), God will allow the antichrist to do as he wishes, but his allotted time is short (Revelation 12:12). Even then, God will still call out to man through His witnesses (Revelation 11:3) and even through an angel from heaven with the gospel (Revelation 14:6-7), never giving up hope that some may repent even in the darkest hours of the earth's existence. But at the end of the antichrist's allotted rule, Jesus will return, judge him, and cast him into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). His rule will be taken away and annihilated forever, though his eternal suffering will continue unabated (that is why he is seen still suffering in hell even after the thousand years are ended- Revelation 20:10). The antichrist has one short kingdom, but his eternity is terrible. After the tribulation period, Jesus will rule during the millennial kingdom and into the period of the new heavens and earth (Revelation 20:6), and His saints will rule with Him (Revelation 20:4).

**28 “At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”**

This was the extent of the clarity which Daniel would get at this point in Belshazzar's first year of rule (see v. 1). But more revelation would come two years later in chapter 8. God only gives us as much as we can handle at a time, and Daniel was so alarmed at this point that he was pale and probably near fainting from the intensity and content of the vision.

## **Daniel 8**

**8 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. 2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. 3 Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. 4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself. 5 While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. 6 He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. 7 I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. 8 Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large**

**horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.**

Two years after the vision Daniel summarized in chapter 7, a new vision is given to him. The future narrative begins with a ram and a goat. The ram, which has two horns, one longer than the other, represents the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. It expanded its reign to the north, west, and south. But then came the Greek empire which conquered the Persian empire, and it was represented by the goat. The mighty horn on the goat represented Alexander the Great, but soon after his reign the kingdom was divided and ruled by four generals. The kingdom was not as strong at this point. (see also verses 20-22)

**9 Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. 10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. 11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?” 14 He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”**

During the divided part of the Greek empire, there was a man who was a type of antichrist, and his name was Antiochus Epiphanes IV (see also Daniel 11:20-39). He attacked the Jews and boasted greatly by taking away the regular sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem. He even offered up a pig on the altar, the abomination of desolation, the same thing the future antichrist will do (Daniel 11:31, 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Sadly, many of the Jews went along with him and allowed themselves to be corrupted by various Hellenistic practices thereby defiling the temple on their own. The casting down of some of the host of heaven could also infer some demonic backing to Antiochus' reign of terror (see Daniel 8:24, 10:13, 20). Antiochus also claimed to be god and desired worship (see Daniel 11:20-39). That God allowed this to happen to His chosen nation is not evidence that He is powerless, but it was a divine punishment of God upon His people for sinning against Him. Just as Daniel experienced the effects of his forefathers' sins by being carried off into captivity, the Jews during Antiochus' time would suffer on account of their iniquity before God. Antiochus flung truth to the ground, boasted against God, defiled His sanctuary, and did as he pleased in the holy land of Israel. This divine punishment was to be allowed for approximately six and a half years before the Jews would be able to restore the holy place.

**15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. 16 And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, “Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.” 17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.” 18 Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright. 19 He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.**

An angel who looked like a human being called out to Gabriel, another angel, and said that he should explain the vision to Daniel. So Gabriel came near to Daniel, and Daniel was afraid and fell on his face. Gabriel began explaining to Daniel that the vision pertains to the time of the end. Daniel fell into a deep sleep as he bowed with his face to the ground, but then Gabriel touched him and made him stand up. Gabriel said that he would explain what will happen in the final period of indignation, the appointed time of the end. The future, including the last days of this earth, is not a mystery to God, but it is already known, already determined, and explained thousands of years ahead of the fact.

**20 The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. 21 The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.**

The Medes and Persians come after Babylon, followed by Greece and Alexander the Great. His four generals succeed him and rule over a divided and less powerful kingdom.

**23 “In the latter period of their rule,**

**When the transgressors have run their course,**

**A king will arise,**

**Insolent and skilled in intrigue.**

**24 “His power will be mighty, but not by his own power,**

**And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree**

**And prosper and perform his will;**

**He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.**

**25 “And through his shrewdness**

**He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence;  
And he will magnify himself in his heart,  
And he will destroy many while they are at ease.  
He will even oppose the Prince of princes,  
But he will be broken without human agency.  
26 “The vision of the evenings and mornings**

**Which has been told is true;  
But keep the vision secret,  
For it pertains to many days in the future.”**

This passage refers to a king who comes from the Greek empire, and thus it is not a reference directly to the antichrist who comes from the Roman empire (Daniel 7:23-27). Thus, it must be understood to refer to Antiochus Epiphanes IV and the deceit and destruction he waged against the Jews, defiling their temple and killing many of them (see also Daniel 11:20-39). That said, it is valid to understand Antiochus as a type of antichrist or a foreshadowing of the man to come still in the future. He will also be a man of great deceit and intrigue and a man of war, killing many. The coming antichrist will wage war against the saints and the Jews and defile his peace agreement with them (Daniel 9:27). He will defy God and boast against Him, but Jesus will win and cast Him into the lake of fire. Antiochus' will also have a reign marked by intrigue, deceit and persecution. He will desire worship for himself, oppose God and His people, and have a reign marked by killing and provoking wars. His end, like that of the antichrist, will come not by human agency. History says that Antiochus died of a disease, while the future antichrist will be seized by the armies of God and cast into hell (Revelation 19:20). That is after he and his armies succumb to a divinely orchestrated flesh eating disease (Zechariah 14:12-15). God's Word concerning Antiochus did come to pass, and it will also come to pass in the future concerning the antichrist.

**27 Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.**

Just as in Daniel 7:28, Daniel again is overwhelmed by the vision and exhausted and sick. But he got up and went back to work as a servant of the king in Babylon. Yet even so, the vision continued to astound him, and he still lacked an explanation and anybody who might be able to offer such an explanation. In v. 26, Gabriel told him to keep the vision secret, so this was a burden he had to bear alone. His job was to write down the divine revelation from God so that others could benefit from it later and could see that God knew the end from the beginning.



## Daniel 9

**9 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. 3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.**

God foretold the future scattering of Israel during the captivity in Leviticus 26:34-35 which says, “Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it.” The land was supposed to rest during the Sabbath year (Leviticus 25:4), but Israel ignored God’s commands. Thus, God allowed them to be carried off into captivity so that the land could rest to make up for their lack of obedience. Jeremiah 25:11-12 says, “This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the Lord, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.’” The Lord punished Israel for their wickedness and sent them into captivity in Babylon for seventy years. But after that time was complete, they would be allowed to return home, and God would punish Babylon for its wickedness as Persia would take it over. God pays attention to the wickedness of nations, and He does render judgments whether they realize it or not. Jeremiah 29:10 says, “For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” Even despite their captivity, God still loved Israel and had a plan for their future hope and prosperity (Jeremiah 29:11). He would bring them back, which He did during the rule of King Cyrus of Persia (2 Chronicles 36:21-23, Ezra 1:1-2). He put it in Cyrus’ heart to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem and to let the Jews go back.

**4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.**

**7 “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. 8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To**

**the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.**

Daniel was aware of the covenant of blessing and cursing in Deuteronomy 11:26-32 and Leviticus 26, and he understood that God was just to bring calamity on the people of Israel on account of their wickedness and stubbornness. God gave them many chances to repent and sent many messengers with a call to repent, but they hardened their heart against God and persecuted His messengers. The calamity Jerusalem suffered with the siege by Nebuchadnezzar was a horror upon horror, a great humiliation and torture. But with God there is always hope because of His lovingkindness, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, and that is what Daniel appeals to, hoping and praying for God to restore the joy of Jerusalem. At this time, it was desolate and abandoned, but Daniel prayed that his people could go home and reestablish the house of God (v. 15-19).

**15 “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”**

This intercessory prayer of Daniel’s is very similar to that of Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1:5-10. Both men confess the reality of their sin and the sin of the nation before God. They appeal to His compassion and mercy, and they ask for His forgiveness. They beg God to take action not on their merits or for their sakes but for the sake of the name of God. This is because God’s

people are called by His name and known as His own. Thus, their prayer is for God to restore the temple, His sanctuary, and His city, Jerusalem, for His honor and glory. God would answer their prayer. Cyrus sent the Jews back to rebuild the house of God (Ezra 1:1-2), and Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah back to build the walls (Nehemiah 2).

**20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.**

During Daniel’s prayer, Gabriel returned to him to give him more insight and understanding. Daniel had been praying about the seventy weeks that he read about in Jeremiah, and even before he finished praying, Gabriel was commanded to go to him with an explanation. God knew what Daniel was going to pray for even before He prayed it, and the answer was forthcoming even before he completed his prayer. Daniel was highly esteemed in the sight of God because God delights to support those whose hearts are completely devoted to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). He gives His favor to those Who love Him and walk in faith before Him. This doesn’t mean that their lives will be easy, but it does mean that they will be intimate with Him (James 4:8), have insight according to His Word (Psalm 119:99), and will be used of Him to accomplish His work in the world around them (Ephesians 2:10).

**24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. 25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”**

The prophecy from Jeremiah that Daniel had been meditating on spoke of seventy years of exile in Babylon. But Gabriel is now giving Daniel some new prophetic revelation concerning future times. The number seventy has great significance. Seventy weeks, meaning seventy times seven years, or 490 years are decreed by God to accomplish a series of future events. It will be at the

end of the final seven year period which will complete the 490 years that God will give remnant Israel a heart for Him (Ezekiel 36:22-38). He will put an end to transgression, for there will be no sin in the eternal kingdom of God (Isaiah 26:12-13). Israel's punishment will be complete (Jeremiah 30:11), and an age of eternal righteousness will be ushered in (Isaiah 22:14-15). Prophecy will be completed and fulfilled, sin will be gone, and Jesus will reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem (Revelation 20:6, Zechariah 14). After the millennial kingdom, He will reign forever and create a New Jerusalem for all those who have put their faith in Him (Revelation 21:1-4). His presence will be near to them, and there will be no need for a temple. He will be the temple (Revelation 21:22). From the time that Jerusalem is rebuilt (Ezra 1:1-2) until the time of the Messiah are 69 of the 70 weeks, or 483 years. But that still leaves one week or one seven year period to account for, and that will happen in a time still in the future. The seven year period will begin when the antichrist makes a covenant with Israel for a seven year period. However, three and a half years into the treaty, he will break the covenant and put a stop to their offerings. He will desolate the temple, fulfilling the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation (Daniel 12:11, Matthew 24:15). This timeline is confirmed by Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 which say that the holy city will be treaded under by the antichrist for 42 months or three and a half years (see also Daniel 12:1). He will make war against God's people like a flood (Revelation 12:15-16) and capture the city of Jerusalem. As Zechariah 14:2 says, "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." But shortly thereafter Jesus Himself will return and descend upon the Mount of Olives and make an end of the antichrist and the armies of the earth (Zechariah 14:4). He will save a remnant of Israel and usher in His kingdom (Zechariah 14:5). All of this matters because it shows that God knows the future before it happens, and it shows that Israel plays a central role in terms of human history and concerning the second coming of Christ. It is also important to note that the temple will be rebuilt either before the antichrist comes on the scene or during the first three and a half years of the final seven year period because the antichrist can't stop sacrifices unless they are ongoing. They currently are not, so the rebuilding of the temple will be something to look for as a sign that the end is very near.

## **Daniel 10**

**10 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.**

**2 In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.**

In Cyrus' third year of rule after Babylon had been taken over by Persia, Daniel received a message from God, one of great conflict but true nonetheless. In contrast to earlier messages

where Daniel was overwhelmed and confused, this message he understood. Prior to receiving the vision, he had been mourning for three weeks, not eating any tasty food, meat, or wine. He didn't even use any ointment until the three weeks were completed, perhaps implying that he wasn't keeping himself presentable because of his intense focus before the Lord in prayer and fasting.

**4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. 6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. 7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. 9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.**

Daniel saw a heavenly figure girded in linen and with a belt of pure gold. Whether this was an angel or the preincarnate Christ is not defined for sure, but there are parallels to the image of Christ given in Revelation 1:13-14. That does not mean with certainty that this was a vision of Jesus, for His servants, the angels, could have a similar heavenly appearance. What matters is not precisely who it was as much as what the vision was like and how it moved Daniel and even those who were with him who didn't even see the vision. Those who were with Daniel could perceive that something supernatural was happening, and they ran away and hid out of fear. Daniel was left alone to see the vision, and it took all of his strength away to the extent that he turned pale. The heavenly figure had a body that Daniel described as being like beryl, likely inferring a bright whitish shine corresponding to his face which had the appearance of lightning. His eyes were bright with burning flames, and his arms and feet were like polished bronze. The imagery pointed to holiness, power, authority, and strength. The figure's words were like the sound of a tumult, loud and powerful. Daniel heard what the figure said, and then he fell into a deep sleep with his face to the ground, a posture of humility.

**10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. 12 Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the**

**kings of Persia. 14 Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”**

Then a hand, possibly Gabriel’s, touched Daniel and set him on his hands and knees. Still not standing but being on all fours, he was trembling. The angel called Daniel a man of high esteem, for it must have been known in heaven that Daniel was a man loved by God and who loved Him deeply. God always seeks to support those whose hearts are wholly devoted to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). He told Daniel to stand up, which he did while still trembling. He told him not to be afraid, for God had heard Daniel’s prayer right at the beginning. God, knowing what Daniel was going to pray, answered his request immediately. This angel was dispatched to go to him and give him understanding concerning the passage of Scripture that Daniel was humbly and prayerfully trying to comprehend. In an interesting insight into spiritual warfare, the prince of the kingdom of Persia, likely a powerful demonic force which battled on behalf of paganism to lead people astray and away from the worship of God, opposed this angelic messenger for twenty-one days. They fought and strived against one another for three weeks, but it was only after the powerful archangel Michael (Daniel 12:1, Jude 1:9, Revelation 12:7) came to help that this messenger was able to get to Daniel. The angelic messenger had been left to fight for himself against the powerful forces behind the evil being perpetrated through the mightiest nation of the earth (Ephesians 6:10), but Michael helped him overcome. Satan is always working to deceive the masses and raise up those who stand in opposition to God and His followers as well as His chosen nation Israel. God is always more powerful than the devil, and He made sure that, even as He allowed Persia to rule, that His messenger got to Daniel. God is honored as His followers stand true to Him even amid great paganism and corruption. God had shown Himself powerful through Daniel’s testimony, through the testimony of his three friends, and in His humbling of Nebuchadnezzar. He also moved Cyrus to rebuild the temple. Though spiritual warfare goes on, God is always God and the victor in the end. The angel who had finally gotten to Daniel told him that the message he was about to give him concerned what will happen to the people of God in the latter days.

**15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. 16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.”**

Already, Daniel was overwhelmed and speechless, and he turned his face to the ground. He had not yet even received the message, but the vision was already powerful. But one who resembled a human, likely another angel, touched his lips and helped him speak. Daniel expressed that the vision had already caused him much anguish and taken all of his strength. It was overwhelming to him to be able to even talk with this angelic messenger. He had no strength left and felt as though he couldn’t even breathe enough to be able to speak.

**18 Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. 19 He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” 20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.**

The one of human appearance touched Daniel and gave him strength. God always supplies what His servants need to be able to hear from Him according to His Word and to do His will. The being that looked human but obviously possessed angelic power told Daniel not to be afraid but to be at peace, not afraid, and courageous. He needed to remember that he was highly thought of by those in heaven and that God would uphold him, strengthen him, help him, and work through him to accomplish His will. Daniel received strength and asked that the messenger would speak. The message continues through chapters 11 and 12, but the messenger began by explaining the near future. For a time, it would be the angel's job to fight against the prince of Persia, but soon the prince of Greece would come. God's plan from before the foundation of the world concerning various world powers and the last days was known by this angel according to some heavenly insight he was given. Thankfully, God reveals the truth from heaven through His Word according to what we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). He doesn't keep secret what we need to know (Deuteronomy 29:29). There would be ongoing angelic warfare, and this angel would have many battles to fight. But Michael would stand with him, fighting on his behalf and on the behalf of those who love the Lord. It also seems that Michael has the express responsibility of battling on behalf of the nation of Israel (Daniel 12:1). Angels are ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14) that work for the benefit of the believer in ways that they don't usually get to see (Hebrews 13:2). But as this passage explains, they do fight relentlessly to serve God's people and advance God's plan. Since God is on their side, nothing will be able to thwart His divine plan, but, until the final days, God does allow Satan and his forces to fight against Him. Eventually, Satan will be cast into hell, but for now he is permitted to strive with God and His people. He tempts and deceives them, but God gives believers a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). Even in the midst of persecution, God is strong and faithful to His own (James 4:7).

## **Daniel 11**

**11 “In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him. 2 And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece. 3 And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. 4 But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his**

**authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.**

In this chapter, God gives a vision containing incredibly specific historical details which had not yet come to pass. This should serve the believer well by demonstrating to the utmost God's sovereignty, foreknowledge, planning, authority, and perfect wisdom. Darius, who cared for Daniel, was watched over by this angelic being. The spiritual realm does have a role to play in the world because God is actively involved in the world and in the hearts of those whom He loves. Though he had just spent the previous verse of chapter 10 explaining all of the evil present behind the Persian empire, it is not as if God was powerless to accomplish what He wanted. Even the king was protected by God for God's purposes. Perhaps it was because of Darius' kindness to Daniel that God looked after Darius, thereby also looking out for Daniel.

The timeline begins with Daniel 10:1 as a reference point, that being the reign of Cyrus, first of the kings of Persia. After Cyrus, there would be three more kings (Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius) followed by a fourth, Xerxes, who gain more riches than all of those before him. He would use his riches to strengthen himself and make a move against Greece. He would invade the mainland of Greece but be resisted and have to withdraw. After that time, the power of Persia steadily declined until the time of Alexander the Great of Greece. He conquered the last king of Persia, Darius III. Alexander is the mighty king of verse 3, for he ruled with great authority and did what he pleased. Nobody could stand in his way. But he died early at age 33, and his kingdom was parceled into four separate pieces ruled by his four generals, not his descendants.

Cassander, one of Alexander's generals, killed his wife Roxana and his baby to make sure that no descendants could take over the throne. The other generals were Ptolemy, Antigonus, and Lysimachus. Seleucus took over Antigonus' territory as well as Lysimachus' so that he became the king of the north. They were the Seleucids from Asia minor east to the former Persian and Babylonian territories. In the south, Ptolemy had consolidated power, and he was the effective king of the south, from Egypt up through Palestine. Israel was caught right in the middle of these two battling kings.

**5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed. 6 After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times. 7 But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. 8 Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. 9 Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.**



Ptolemy II came against Antiochus I of the Seleucids, and the battle ended in a virtual stalemate. Antiochus II tried again to invade the Ptolemaic region, but the battle again was not decisive. To broker peace, Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II was given in marriage to Antiochus II. This brought peace for a brief period. In the process Antiochus II had to repudiate his wife Laodice, and she was sent with her son to Ephesus. But he died during a visit to her, and she claimed that he had named her son Seleucus II to be the heir. Ptolemy II died and was succeeded by Berenice's brother Ptolemy III. When Laodice killed Berenice and her infant son, war broke out between the north and south. Her brother Ptolemy III of the south came against the north and took over a large part of it including Syria. A rebellion in Egypt forced him to return to the south, but he did take some plunder along with him, some of which were Egyptian statues that the Persians had taken from them. Seleucus II later took back most of what he had lost in this battle.

**10 “His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress. 11 The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. 12 When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 13 For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.**

When Seleucus II died, Seleucus III became king, and his brother Antiochus III was his general. These sons mobilized a great army, but Seleucus III was murdered after a three year reign. Antiochus III took over, thus fulfilling the prophecy that one of them would keep on coming in war. Antiochus had early success against Ptolemy IV, but Ptolemy IV retaliated and drove him out of Palestine for a time. However, Antiochus III would eventually regain Palestine.

**14 “Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. 15 Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. 16 But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. 17 He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side. 18 Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. 19 So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.**

General Scopus of the Ptolemaic army was cruel to many of the Jews who resisted him. But then Antiochus III and many pro-Seleucid Jews joined forces along with other rebellions against the Ptolemies and marched against the remainder of the southern army led by General Scopus. He took refuge in Sidon, but Antiochus III besieged it. Antiochus III was victorious, and the south had been defeated. The Ptolemies came to an end, and the Seleucids took over. Israel was now in the hand of the Seleucids. Antiochus III gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V as a means of a peace agreement which he dictated. The idea was that Cleopatra would influence Ptolemy V to acclimate to the Seleucid rule and dictates, thus keeping the peace. But she was loyal to her husband rather than to her father, as the Scripture predicted. Antiochus III then turned west toward the Roman empire, and, after capturing some territory, would eventually lose out to Scipio of Rome. This Roman commander put heavy taxes upon Antiochus III as part of the peace treaty including giving up some of their choice young men every year. His son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes was one who was taken to Rome as a hostage. As part of trying to pay the tax, Antiochus III entered the temple at Elymais, perhaps seeking to plunder what was there, but he was killed by insurrectionists.

**20 “Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.**

Seleucus IV, one of Antiochus III’s sons, succeeded him for a short rule. He sent Heliodorus to plunder the temple in Jerusalem, but he didn’t succeed. Heliodorus poisoned Seleucus IV, so his death was not in battle or via an angry uprising.

**21 In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.**

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, after returning from his time as a hostage in Rome (his young nephew Demetrius was traded for him), took over the kingdom from Heliodorus who had tried to take the throne after killing Seleucus IV. The kingdom had not been conferred upon him, but he used flattery and intrigue to gain control. Through mere words and likely great charisma he got the powers and people of influence to go along with his plan. He was able to get King Eumenes II of Pergamos and the Syrian nobles to go along with his plan, likely using flattery and the promise of rewards. It may have been that they thought that they were installing Demetrius, the legitimate heir, when in reality, Epiphanes was taking all power for himself. He preferred to go by the name Epiphanes, meaning “God manifest,” yet many called him “Epimanes,” meaning “the madman.” Clearly, the man had a ridiculous ego thinking that he was a supreme god in a culture of many gods, and thus he was despised by many, especially the Jews who believed in one God Who was not him. His father Antiochus III had started a belief that the ruler was a manifestation of Zeus, something Epiphanes clearly continued.

**22 The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. 23 After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception,**

**and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people. 24 In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. 26 Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. 27 As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time. 28 Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.**

Antiochus IV got control over the empire, and the Jews were put under his control as he tried to convert them to Greek culture. Antiochus IV had great success taking over the Ptolemaic region in Egypt, for he had learned that Ptolemy VI was plotting to retake some of the old northern kingdom. He made a pre-emptive strike, consistent with Scripture's reference to this being in a time of tranquility, and he put the rebellion to rest in short order. He allowed Ptolemy VI to rule as a puppet king. Ptolemy VI and VII tried to co-rule their territory, but they constantly lied to each other and appealed to Rome for help in taking over the other. But they were not the main story, being but puppets of Antiochus IV. He redistributed plunder throughout the land, and he gave lavishly to the various Greek temples to promote the worship of the Greek gods and himself as Zeus incarnate. He wanted to Hellenize the Jews to promote the Greek system of worship so that he could use their system of gods to set himself up with his cult of being god himself. He had appointed a Hellenized Jew who took the Greek name Jason to rule over the temple and transform it from Jewish tradition into Greek tradition, even building a gymnasium and teaching Greek culture. Jason got the position with a bribe, but Menelaus bribed Epiphanes more and got Jason deposed. Jason, believing Epiphanes had been killed in Egypt, came back to get his position back with a small army, and he slaughtered Menelaus and his supporters. Epiphanes, being "god incarnate," couldn't tolerate any uprisings or any chance that his cult would be uprooted. His anger and hate for the Jews continued to rise at the time, and he entered the temple at Jerusalem and stole much of its treasure. But the worst was yet to come for the Jews.

**29 "At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 30 For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. 32 By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. 33 Those who have insight among the**

**people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days. 34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.**

Antiochus IV Epiphanes made another campaign against the Ptolemies of Egypt, but this time he was stopped by Rome and told not to come back. He came back home in great wrath, and he took out his rage on the Jews and Jerusalem (much like the future antichrist will do in Revelation 12:15-17). Epiphanes would show regard for those who rejected the covenant and worship of God, but those who did not would face severe consequences (also much like the future antichrist who will kill those who do not bow to his image- Revelation 13:15). Tens of thousands of Jews were killed in this time just preceding the rise of Judas Macabees and the rebellion he would lead. Epiphanes committed sexual immorality in the temple, killed babies just for being circumcised, built an altar to Zeus, knocked down the walls of Jerusalem, and eventually even sacrificed a pig on the altar in the temple. With the temple sacrifices removed and the death penalty instituted for following the Law of God, this was a time of great testing for the Jews. Some turned away and worshipped false deities, for Epiphanes was smooth with words and able to lead them astray. But the strong in faith could recognize the deception for what it was. Some had insight and helped others stay true to their God, yet it would be at a great cost. Many would die by the sword, by fire, and by captivity. The little help would come in Judas Maccabeus leading the successful rebellion. However, these severe persecutions were allowed by God on account of His people needing to be refined and purified (this sifting of Israel will happen again during the tribulation period- Amos 9:9-10, Isaiah 1:24-31, Malachi 3:3, Jeremiah 30:11). God never abandoned His people, but most of the time they failed to call out to Him and repent, choosing rather to happily accommodate to the pagan realities around them. God always preserved a remnant (and he will again in the last days- Zechariah 14:5, Joel 2:32, Zechariah 13:8-9). However, this period of captivity and warring against those who were more powerful was costly, for even those who were faithful suffered on account of the sins of their brothers and sisters during the persecution. In the end, Israel will be given a heart for God, and they will loath their rejections of Him over the past many centuries (Ezekiel 36:31).

**36 “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. 37 He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. 38 But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. 39 He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.**

These descriptors are consistent with all that has already been described concerning Epiphanes. He was a madman in the sense that he did whatever he wanted and set himself up as god. He used the mythology of Greek gods as a means of creating a new cult religion with himself being Zeus incarnate. He spoke out against the God of the Jews and desecrated His temple. He killed women and children with no mercy in his purge of Jerusalem. He prospered in what he desired, even defiling the temple of God, but eventually he would meet his end, dying of disease a few years later. He enjoyed war and giving plunder to those who helped him fight. His lust for power and war dictated his religious preferences so that religion was a tool to use for his own gain and ultimately for his own ego. He would try to use other people's culture and religion to his personal ends and glory. Those who supported him he would reward, and he was also easily bribed. Thus, he ruled like a madman, totally corrupt, totally prone to anger, and totally unstable. His rule and deceit left his kingdom ravaged. He wasn't the rightful king, and thus it would be a matter of great internal strife for how the kingdom would continue after him. His kingdom would not be significant any longer. These characteristics which described Epiphanes with extreme detail long before he even came to be correspond to the coming antichrist as well. He will also set himself up as god and defile the temple (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), and he will be merciless, a blasphemer, a killer and man of war, heartless, and brutal (Revelation 12-13).

**40 “At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through. 41 He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels. 44 But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. 45 He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.**

The phrase “at the end time” signals a transition here from a type of antichrist in Epiphanes to the future antichrist. The phrase “at that time” in Daniel 12:1 also reinforces a transition to the last days. Furthermore, the Seleucid king, which would be Epiphanes, was the king of the north, but in verses 40-45, there is a different king of the north relative to the central character. Thus, at the end of time near the end of the final seven year period and just before Christ returns to annihilate antichrist's armies and descend upon the Mount of Olives, a little bit of a picture of antichrist's final days are given. Antichrist and his army will be somewhere around the same region that Epiphanes occupied, and he will enter Israel and take it over for a time. An army from the south and an army from the north will oppose him, but he will triumph over them. He will not conquer regions just east of Israel including Moab, Edom, and Ammon. This could be connected to Jesus' warning to the Jews who are alive at this time to run to the mountains to take

refuge (Matthew 24:15-21). It may be that the antichrist's avoiding of these areas is related to God's promise to look after a remnant of His people during the second three and a half years of the tribulation period (Revelation 12:14, Isaiah 26:20, Jeremiah 31:2). Many countries will fall before him as he easily passes through them despite the many ships and forces that come against him. Egypt will fall, and he will gain control of all the precious things belonging to Egypt, just as Epiphanes had done. The Libyans and Ethiopians will be compelled to follow in his footsteps as those defeated before him as well. Revelation 13:7-8 makes it clear that the antichrist will have a worldwide empire, and ten kings will give their allegiance to him (Revelation 17:12-13). Near the end, however, it appears some rebellion takes place as the kings of the north and east come against him (Revelation 16:12). From Daniel, it is clear that the antichrist's conquest extends across northeast Africa, through at least some of the Mediterranean region (the old Roman empire), Israel, and possibly extending northward with his victory over the king of the north, at least initially. There is also a reference to his conquest over "many countries" which are not listed. He will clearly become the supreme and dominant world power who will force everybody to take his mark or be killed (Revelation 13:15). However, his time of power is short-lived as Jesus' return is imminent. He is disturbed by rumors from the east, presumably east of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. He is also disturbed by rumors from the north (perhaps the king of the north has reassembled himself and his army). He, being a man of war just as Epiphanes was, decides to go out and fight against those who defy him. His purpose is to annihilate many, but Jesus will come and annihilate him. Though he will pitch his tents between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea and Mount Zion near Jerusalem, he will soon come to his end. No one will be able to help him, not any of the countless millions that he will lead astray. When Jesus returns on His white horse, death for His foes will be unstoppable (Revelation 19:11-19), and blood will be as high as the horse's bridle throughout the valley of Har-mageddon (Revelation 16:16) and for nearly 200 miles to the east and south (Revelation 14:20). The antichrist will be seized and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

## **Daniel 12**

**12 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4 But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."**

During the last days, Michael, who is responsible for standing guard over Israel, will arise to make a definitive and defeating attack against the enemies of God. But first, great distress will come upon them during the great tribulation, (Zechariah 14:1-2, Jeremiah 30:7, Matthew 24:15-

28), worse than they have ever had up until that point (see also v. 7), and they have had a great deal already, including in modern times and at the hands of Egypt, Babylon, and Greece, among others. A remnant of God's people will be saved in the final hour just before the Lord lays waste to the armies of the earth and the antichrist (Zechariah 14:3-5). There will also be a resurrection of the dead (Revelation 20:4-6). Those whose names are in the Book of Life will go to eternal life with God in heaven, while those who refused to submit to Him in life will go to everlasting pain, destruction, shame, and contempt (Revelation 20:11-15). Those who have insight, meaning those who responded to the truth of God in faith and repentance, will be rewarded in eternity and shine brightly with great honor and glory as they serve, worship, and enjoy God forever (Matthew 13:43, Revelation 2:28, 22:4). This had to be overwhelming to Daniel (v. 8), and he was encouraged to seal up the prophecy, meaning that the word of God to him in the vision would be preserved as part of the holy Scripture for the future. God's Word endures forever, and He has preserved it even to the present day. People now go back and forth, travelling with ease, and knowledge and information are available with ease that has never before been possible. This is important because it means that the future is here and that the coming prophecies are going to happen sooner rather than later.

**5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?" 7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.**

The vision continued with two other angelic beings, one on each side of the river. One asked the other concerning how long it would be until the end of all of the wonders in the revelation just given to Daniel concerning the very last days. The other answered with arms outstretched to heaven in praise and glory to the God of heaven and in His name which is sure, true, and permanent that it would be for three and a half years (Revelation 11:2, 13:5, Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15). God's wrath will be poured out upon the world during the great tribulation period (Revelation 6-16), and Israel will suffer greatly. The antichrist will break his covenant of peace with Israel and will tread the holy land under and accomplish the abomination of desolation just as Epiphanes had done. The power of the holy people, Israel, will be shattered at the end of that time (Zechariah 14:2), and that is when Jesus will return and shatter the antichrist and preserve a remnant of His people (Zechariah 14:3-5). Furthermore, those of His people who died in faith will come back to life for the coming kingdom. Thus, even though the antichrist may have won on earth for a time, he will have lost the war because Jesus keeps His own for eternity and punishes those who do iniquity for eternity as well.

**8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?" 9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed**

**and sealed up until the end time. 10 Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. 11 From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! 13 But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”**

Daniel verbalized the lack of understanding that he had concerning the future events. Given how difficult they are to understand and how he didn't have Revelation or some of the other prophetic books to help him, the angel said just to go his way and live his life. At the proper time, these events would be more understandable. Such is the nature of prophecy. Just as Jesus was able to open the eyes of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus as He showed them how He was prophesied in the Old Testament, they finally saw it when they needed to get it (Luke 24:27). Daniel didn't need to fret about his lack of understanding concerning the last days, but his job was to record the revelation that he was given so that those who needed it later would have it. There will be great trial and tribulation on the earth, and through it all the wicked will not repent (Revelation 16:9, 11, 21). But those who have faith will understand what they need to understand. The second half of the tribulation period, the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21), will be forty two months (Revelation 11:2, 13:5). The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days before they are taken up to heaven (Revelation 11:3). The period from the end of the 1260 days to 1290 days is likely one in which the antichrist meets his end and is cast into the lake of fire. Perhaps the judgment seat of Christ takes place during this time as well as the marriage supper of the Lamb, and then maybe at 1335 days, forty-five days later, the millennial kingdom begins (Revelation 20). The exact unfolding of the events is not given, but it is clear that they will be better events as time passes. This points to eternal rewards and the eternal reign of Christ as the divine calendar concludes. What the Scripture has revealed concerning the future will happen, for God has established it as fact. Nothing can thwart His plan, not even the antichrist. The hope for Daniel and for all of God's people who have put their faith in Him for salvation is that they will be raised again to eternal life for their allotted portion at the end of the age (1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Believers are not left guessing about life after death, nor should they wallow in a lack of hope and certainty about the future. They will be raised again to be with Christ. This is a blessed hope for them (Titus 2:13). Believers from before the tribulation period are seen accompanying Christ as He fulfills His final plans concerning the end of the age, even being seated on thrones before the millennial kingdom begins (Revelation 20:4). There is great hope knowing that believers will be on the winning side (Revelation 20:6) and that God has the end worked out from the beginning. God's people will shine brightly in eternity (Isaiah 60:1) because Jesus will be their Light. Thus, Christians should go their way, like Daniel did, being faithful in their time and place, knowing that the best is yet to come. They can rejoice because they serve a God Whose dominion is everlasting, unlike nations which rise and fall according to God's timetable and divine purpose.