

Daniel – The Man who Feared God

2016 (updated 2024-08; Names and Subject Indexes added)

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Scripture references and quotations are from the following:

- *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (2001), Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society.
- *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (1984), Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update* (1995), LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.
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Divine Time (Dan 1.1-2)

1. Why should we study the book and life of Daniel?
 - 1.1. It is part of God's word, and therefore it can teach us how to live (2 Tim 3.16, 17). Specifically, it teaches us about:
 - 1.1.1. *Comforting Lift* – Daniel is not a biographical (or autobiographical) account, nor is it a historical chronicle. It is not intended to provide us with a continuous record of events from the lives of the Babylonian kings. The events recorded in this book, were intended to encourage the Jews living in captivity and to remind them that God is sovereign over all nations. It gives us the same encouragement when we see crazy things happening around us, such as the expurgation of Christianity from public forums and the coddling of Islam.
 - 1.1.2. *Christian Living* – Daniel is held up as a model of Godly living and wisdom, both in the book of Daniel, but also in the few references to him outside of the Book of Daniel (e.g., Ezk 14.14, 20; Ezk 28.3). His life presents us with examples of Christian living.
 - 1.1.3. *Challenging Lessons* – Daniel faces the serious challenge of living as a Christian (a believer in the true God and his Son, the Messiah, sent from Heaven) in a pagan society, and gives examples of how to stand steadfast in the face of those challenges. The examples from Daniel's life show us that Christians are to be circumspect and wise, and not to be belligerently confrontational when dealing with those who opposed the true religion of Christianity.
 - 1.1.4. *Civic Leadership* – Daniel teaches us about Christian leadership, and especially leadership in a pagan government. His examples of principled leadership can be applied in government, business, and church settings wherever God places us.
 - 1.1.5. *Confirming Light* – Jesus refers to Daniel as an historical figure (Mt 24.15) whose prophecies were to be understood as relevant for his (Jesus') day. The prophetic portions of Daniel teach us about God's providence and his control over the nations. The fulfillment of the prophecies in Daniel vindicates the trustworthiness of Scripture.
2. When do these events occur? (Compare, Jeremiah 25.1)
 - 2.1. Third year of Jehoiakim:
 - 2.1.1. This appears to conflict with Jeremiah's statement that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (Jer 25.1).
 - 2.1.2. However, there are a number of possible alternative explanations:
 - 2.1.2.1. Daniel may be referring to the date on which Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and began the siege, whereas Jeremiah may be referring to a different date, e.g., the beginning of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's father had not died when he began the siege of Jerusalem.
 - 2.1.2.2. The two authors may have been using different calendar systems: Babylonian versus Jewish. The Babylonian calendar began in the spring (March-April) whereas the Jewish calendar began the year in Tishri (September-October).
 - 2.1.2.3. The OT scholar, Keil, suggests that the Hebrew word that is translated 'came' should be translated as 'set out'
 - 2.1.2.4. It may be that Daniel uses the Babylonian method of reckoning the dates of a king's reign whereas Jeremiah uses the method of Palestine. By Jewish reckoning, a king's reign began in the year in which he ascended the throne, even if he reigned for only a short period during that year. In the Babylonian system, the period of the first year was referred to as the ascension year and only the first full year thereafter was called the first year. Jeremiah may have counted Jehoiakim's year of accession (which was only part of a full year) as the first year.

2.2. Year – 605¹ BC

2.3. What is the Mesopotamian historical context leading up to, and following, this date?

- 2.3.1. Assyrian (Akkadian) Empire based in the upper reaches of the Tigris River. Founded around 2350 BC. Re-founded about 1225 BC and covered much of northern Palestine, Syria, parts of northern Iraq and into Turkey and along the Zargos Mountains to the east.
 - 2.3.1.1. The Empire was large and hard to govern and protect. The Scythians were on the NE border in the Caucasus Mountains (between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea). The Medes (NE), Elamites (E) and Persians (SE) were on the East in what is today Iran. The Cimmerians were on the north in Turkey, and Egypt was on the SE beyond Judah.
 - 2.3.1.2. Capital at Asshur on the Tigris (in northern Iraq about 200kms north of modern Baghdad). Nineveh was a bit further north (still in modern Iraq) on the Tigris.
 - 2.3.1.3. Kings such as Shalmaneser [2 Ki 18.9], Sennacherib [2 Ki 18.13], Esarhaddon [2 Ki 19.37], Ashurbanipal.
 - 2.3.1.4. Around 640 BC the Assyrian Empire extended southeast into Babylonia/Chaldea and south-west into Egypt.
- 2.3.2. Neo-Babylonian:
 - 2.3.2.1. Babylon was an ancient kingdom that goes back to the time before Hammurabi (1790–1750 BC). It was founded out of the Sumerian civilization that arose after the Flood.
 - 2.3.2.2. It was focused in the southern part of what is today called Iraq where the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers converge toward the Persian Gulf.
 - 2.3.2.3. It included cities such as: Ur, Erich, Eridu, Kish, Nippur, and Babylon.
 - 2.3.2.4. By around 560 BC the territory of the Assyrian Empire was included in the Babylonian Empire. However, the combined empire had lost some of portions of the territory to the north-east and east into Persia (Iran), to the Median Empire (Medes and Persians).
 - 2.3.2.5. Persian Empire about 500 BC:
 - 2.3.2.5.1. Covered all of ME. From Indus River (including modern Afghanistan and Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, parts of Kazakhstan; reaching the western borders of modern China) through Turkey (including all of Iran, and Iraq) into Macedonia and to Egypt and Libya),
 - 2.3.2.5.2. Its capital was at Susa (which was situated about where the Iraq-Iran border is, in the foothills of the Zargos Mountains, about ~375kms SE of modern Baghdad.
 - 2.3.2.5.3. A highway ran from Susa to Sardis on the Aegean Sea.

2.4. What is happening in the rest of the world around this time?

- 2.4.1. In India, the Brahminic form of Hinduism defines the six stages of the soul (c 690).
- 2.4.2. Kaleus (Caleus) sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar (first recorded sailing) followed within the next century by a circumnavigation of Africa by the Phoenicians that took three years (c 650).
- 2.4.3. Zoroaster/Zarathushtra (c 630-553 BC), founder of the Persian religion.
- 2.4.4. Lao-tse, a Chinese philosopher, was born (c 604).
- 2.4.5. Thales of Miletus: uses geometry to calculate the height of large structures, postulates the necessity of water for life, predicts a solar eclipse from measurement (c 600).
- 2.4.6. Epimenides, a Cretan philosopher from Knossos, creates the logic paradox: “Cretans are always liars” (quoted by Paul; Titus 1.12), (c 660).

¹ Some calculate the date as 606 BC and others calculate it as 604 BC. Note, also, that dates used in this study are based on the traditional dates established by secular scholars, and accepted by most Bible scholars. Dates relating to events in the life of Daniel can be calculated relative to a baseline from the date when Nebuchadnezzar became king (i.e., *assumed* here to be 605 BC). There is, however, some evidence that the dating of events in the Middle East from about 747 BC to 137 BC could need re-calibration. In the notes dealing with chapter 9.24-27 we will consider whether it is necessary to use the re-calibrated dates.

- 2.4.7. Kung Fu-tse (Confucius) (c 551-479) the Chinese philosopher was teaching.
 - 2.4.8. Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (c 551-480 BC) leaves his home to devote himself to philosophy and asceticism and preaches his first sermon in a deer park in the holy city of Benares (c 521). This was followed by his 'Inspiration'.
 - 2.4.9. The Greeks have Solon's laws, the oracle at Delphi and its priestesses are at their height; and Pythagoras (c 580-497) a philosopher and mathematician is writing.
3. From your prior knowledge of the book of Daniel, what events come immediately to mind?
- 1.1. The stories recorded in the book of Daniel are well known because they are exciting. Most children growing up in a Christian home or who attend Sunday School or VBS have heard of Daniel's three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace, or have heard the story of Daniel in the lions' den.
 - 1.2. It is the stories based around the *miracles* that we remember most easily from the book of Daniel. This makes Daniel different from other historical accounts from that time. There are no obvious miracles recorded in these other accounts (e.g., Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, Jeremiah). Daniel is unique among the accounts from the days of the Babylonian Captivity in that it records miracles.
 - 1.3. What are the ages of miracles that appear in the Bible?
 - 1.3.1. *Creation* – The initial age of the pre-Flood world. Includes the miracles of creation week, Enoch's translation, and the animals coming to Noah at the ark, and the Flood.
 - 1.3.2. *Commencement* – The patriarchal age in which God's people are called out of paganism. God worked a miracle for Sarah, rained burning sulphur on Sodom, and turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt.
 - 1.3.3. *Constitution* – The age in which Israel is forged into a nation. Includes the plagues in Egypt and the wonders associated with the Exodus such as the manna, water from the rock, and Samson's extreme strength.
 - 1.3.4. *Commonwealth* – The era of the Jewish monarchy. Includes the miracles associated with the prophets such as Elijah, Elisha and Jonah.
 - 1.3.5. *Captivity* – The time when Judah is in slavery during the Babylonian captivity. Miracles such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, Daniel interpreting dreams and Daniel in the lions' den.
 - 1.3.6. *Christ* – The commencement of the NT Church age. The sign-miracles and wonders that validated Jesus and the apostles who established the NT Church.
 - 1.3.7. *Consummation* – The end of this time-space universe, when Christ returns. The primary miracles of this age will be the resurrection of the dead and the re-creation of the world.
 - 1.4. Daniel's set of miracles is the fifth age of seven in which God's reveals himself through the miraculous. Just as the book of Daniel turns its focus on the future last days, so the placement of the miracles at the time of Daniel, in the progress of redemptive history, tells us that we are near the end (logically, not necessarily chronologically) of God's unfolding plan for revelation and providence. God has started to wrap up history by the time we reach Daniel and the year 605 BC. By the time of Daniel we have passed the half-way point in the history of the world—from a redemptive perspective. It is hard for us to understand this perspective with our Western focus on the 'great' ages that follow: Greek philosophy and Athenian democracy; Roman Empire building; the European kingdoms, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution, colonialism, the World Wars and the Cold War, and the Islamic ascendancy in the West.
4. Why is the first verse of Daniel important for us?
- 4.1. Wil Durant in his world history² refers to the book of Daniel as "vengeful and *legendary*" but then quotes Nebuchadnezzar's words in Daniel 4.30³ as historical.

² Wil Durant, "Our Oriental Heritage," *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 223.

³ Same as above, p. 224.

- 4.2. This verse anchors the book of Daniel in history. It records reality, and does not contain myth. It refers to events that actually happened, or would happen (as predicted), between the time of Daniel and the time of Christ.
- 4.3. Contrast Daniel with the writings of other religions, such as the following (written down about the same general time as the Book of Daniel):
- 4.3.1. “Tell me, O muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatsoever source you may know them.”⁴
- 4.3.2. “Whilst Kakudmin, surnamed Raivata, was absent on his visit to the region of Brahmá, the evil spirits ... destroyed his capital Kuśasthalí. His hundred brothers, through dread of these foes, fled in different directions; and the Kshatriyas, their descendants, settled in many countries. ... Ikshwáku was born from the nostril of the Manu, as he happened to sneeze. He had a hundred sons, of whom the three most distinguished were Vikukshi, Nimi, and Dańda. Fifty of the rest, under Sakuni, were the protectors of the northern countries. Forty-eight were the princes of the south. Upon one of the days called Ashtaka, Ikshwáku being desirous of celebrating ancestral obsequies, ordered Vikukshi to bring him flesh suitable for the offering. The prince accordingly went into the forest, and killed many deer, and other wild animals, for the celebration. Being weary with the chase, and being hungered, he sat down, and ate a hare; after which, being refreshed, he carried the rest of the game to his father. Vášishtha, the family priest of the house of Ikshwáku, was summoned to consecrate the food; but he declared that it was impure, in consequence of Vikukshi's having eaten a hare from amongst it (making it thus, as it were, the residue of his meal). Vikukshi was in consequence abandoned by his offended father, and the epithet Śasáda (hare-eater) was affixed to him by the Guru. On the death of Ikshwáku, the dominion of the earth descended to Śasáda, who was succeeded by his son Puranjaya. In the Treta age a violent war broke out between the gods and the Asuras, in which the former were vanquished. They consequently had recourse to Vishnú for assistance, and propitiated him by their adorations. The eternal ruler of the universe, Náráyańa, had compassion upon them, and said, “What you desire is known unto me. Hear how your wishes shall be fulfilled. There is an illustrious prince named Puranjaya, the son of a royal sage; into his person I will infuse a portion of myself, and having descended upon earth I will in his person subdue all your enemies. Do you therefore endeavour to secure the aid of Puranjaya for the destruction of your foes.”
- Acknowledging with reverence the kindness of the deity, the immortals quitted his presence, the king was attended by his sons, to the number of twenty-one thousand; and all these, with the exception of only three, perished in the engagement, consumed by the fiery breath of Dhundhu. The three who survived were Drídháswa, Chandráswa, and Kapiláswa; and the son and successor of the elder of these was Haryyáswa; his son was [many generations]... Yuvanáswa. Yuvanáswa had no son, at which he was deeply grieved. Whilst residing in the vicinage of the holy Munis, he inspired them with pity for his childless condition, and they instituted a religious rite to procure him progeny. One night during its performance the sages having placed a vessel of consecrated water upon the altar had retired to repose. It was past midnight, when the king awoke, exceedingly thirsty; and unwilling to disturb any of the holy inmates of the dwelling, he looked about for something to drink. In his search he came to the water in the jar, which had been

⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey* (translated by Samuel Butler), c 800 BC.

sanctified and endowed with prolific efficacy by sacred texts, and he drank it. When the Munis rose, and found that the water had been drunk, they inquired who had taken it, and said, “The queen that has drunk this water shall give birth to a mighty and valiant son.” “It was I,” exclaimed the Rájá, “who unwittingly drank the water!” and accordingly in the belly of Yuvanáswa was conceived a child, and it grew, and in due time it ripped open the right side of the Rájá, and was born, and the Ráji, did not die. Upon the birth of the child, “Who will be its nurse?” said the Munis; when, Indra, the king of the gods, appeared, and said, “He shall have me for his nurse” (mám dhásyati); and hence the boy was named Mándhatri. Indra put his fore finger into the mouth of the infant, who sucked it, and drew from it heavenly nectar; and he grew up, and became a mighty monarch, and reduced the seven continental zones under his dominion. And here a verse is recited; “From the rising to the going down of the sun, all that is irradiated by his light, is the land of Mándhatri, the son of Yuvanáswa.”⁵

- 4.3.3. “1. Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathushtra, saying: I have made every land dear (to its people), even though it had no charms whatever in it: had I not made every land dear (to its people), even though it had no charms whatever in it, then the whole living world would have invaded the Airyana Vaeja.
2. The first of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the Airyana Vaeja [the holy land of Zoroastrianism: Zarathushtra was born and founded his religion there], by the Vanguhi Daitya. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the serpent in the river and Winter, a work of the Daevas.
3. There are ten winter months there, two summer months; and those are cold for the waters, cold for the earth, cold for the trees. Winter falls there, the worst of all plagues. ...
4. The second of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the plain which the Sughdhas inhabit. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the locust, which brings death unto cattle and plants.
5. The third of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the strong, holy Mouru. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created plunder and sin.
6. The fourth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the beautiful Bakhdhi with high-lifted banner. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the ants and the ant-hills.
7. The fifth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was Nisaya, that lies between the Mouru and Bakhdhi. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the sin of unbelief.
8. The sixth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the house-deserting Haroyu. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created tears and wailing. ...
10. The eighth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was Urva of the rich pastures. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created the sin of pride.
11. The ninth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was Khnenta which the Vehrkanas inhabit. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created a sin for which there is no atonement, the unnatural sin [pederasty].
12. The tenth of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the beautiful Harahvaiti. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created a sin for which there is no atonement, the burying of the dead.
13. The eleventh of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the bright, glorious Haetumant. Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he

⁵ Extracts from *The Vishnu Purana* (translated by Horace Hayman Wilson, 1840), Book 2, Chapter 2. P 358-363. “The fourth book contains all that the Hindus have of their ancient history.” p. lxxv; www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm

counter-created the evil work of witchcraft.

14. And this is the sign by which it is known, this is that by which it is seen at once: wheresoever they may go and raise a cry of sorcery, there the worst works of witchcraft go forth. From there they come to kill and strike at heart, and they bring locusts as many as they want.”⁶

5. Who was Jehoiakim (or Jehoikim)? (Refer to 2 Kings 23.31-24.7; 2 Chronicles 36.1-8)
 - 5.1. A king of Judah (609-598BC).
 - 5.2. A (younger) son of Josiah from his wife Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah.
 - 5.3. The half-brother of Jehoahaz who reigned as king in Judah for only three months and was deposed by Pharaoh Neco and bound in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath in Egypt where he eventually died.
 - 5.4. Formerly named Eliakim. His name was changed by Pharaoh Neco, who placed him on the throne, to Jehoiakim ('he whom Jehovah/Yahweh has set up').
 - 5.5. A vassal king to Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. He had to pay a heavy tribute levy (NIV footnote: about 3.4 metric tonnes of silver and 34 kilos of gold), presumably annually, that was made available through a taxation of the people of Judah.
 - 5.6. After about three years Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and made Jehoiakim his vassal (2 Ki 24.1). However Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon's suzerainty after about four years.
 - 5.7. He did evil in the eyes of God, for example by being disrespectful of God's prophecy by burning the scroll Jeremiah had written (Jer 36.1-32).
 - 5.8. He was 23 when he was made king and reigned for 11 years, at which point Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah again and captured Jehoiakim and took him to Babylon.
 - 5.9. Nebuchadnezzar appointed his son, Jehoiachin (aged 18) born of his wife Nehushta, to succeed him as a vassal king. But, because of his evil, he left him on the throne for only 3 months and 10 days and then took him captive to Babylon.
 - 5.10. Nebuchadnezzar then appointed as king, Mattaniah (whom he named Zedekiah) a (half-) brother of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, and the uncle of Jehoiachin.
6. Who was Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 6.1. King of Babylon (605-562 BC).
 - 6.2. Or Nebuchadrezzar, which means 'Nabu protect the boundary'.
 - 6.3. Son of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, in 625 BC.
 - 6.4. At the point of besieging Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar was not yet king of Babylon.⁷ On returning from the siege he ascended the throne of his father and became king of Babylon.
 - 6.5. He was the most powerful monarch the world had ever seen until this time. He was king in a succession of warrior-kings from before the time of Hammurabi, of the Assyrian-Babylonian Empire,
 - 6.5.1. He attempted to take Tyre, and besieged the city from 585-573 but was unsuccessful.
 - 6.5.2. In 572-569 he invaded Egypt, defeating Pharaoh Apries/Hophra. The Babylonian's occupied Egypt until 536.
 - 6.6. Nebuchadnezzar appears to have been more than just a conqueror. He seems to have been interested in establishing a more permanent system of territorial government with a significant capital.
 - 6.7. He spent considerable effort and resources, during his long reign, of 43 years undertaking public works projects such as:

⁶ Extracts from Fargard 1 (Sixteen perfect lands created by Ahura Mazda, and as many plagues created by Angra Mainyu) from the *Vendidad*, the sacred writings of Zoroastrianism [a religious philosophy based on the teachings ascribed to Zoroaster (Zarathushtra) that claims the divine authority of Ahura Mazda, proclaimed by Zoroaster to be the one uncreated creator of all] that includes creation myths, rites of purification for sins, cleansing rites, and religious observances; www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd_tc.htm.

⁷ The reference to his being king is similar to saying, "When Queen Elizabeth was a little girl." She wasn't queen when she was a child.

- 6.7.1. Digging canals.
- 6.7.2. Making artificial lakes and reservoirs.
- 6.7.3. Lining the Euphrates with brick (bricks were baked and often faced with coloured glazed enamel and included animals in relief).
- 6.7.4. Building a bridge across the Euphrates (and possibly a tunnel under the river that was 5m wide, 4m high and almost 1km in length).
- 6.7.5. Building large cities and associated public works. Much energy went into building up his capital city—Babylon:
 - 6.7.5.1. He is reputed to have been the king who built the tiered Hanging Gardens (mistakenly shown in medieval art as a ziggurat, or pyramid-like temple tower), which the Greeks included among the Seven Wonders of the World. He is reported to have built the gardens for one of his wives, the daughter of Cyaxares King of the Medes who was not accustomed to the heat and dust of Babylon and pined for her native hills. Slaves worked hydraulic engines that moved water through hollow pillars to the upper terraces where gardens of tall trees, exotic shrubs and fragrant flowers were planted.⁸
 - 6.7.5.2. Diodorus Siculus (c 90-30 BC), a Greek historian, said that “The approach to the Garden sloped like a hillside and the several parts of the structure rose from one another tier on tier. ... which consisted of huge slabs of stone covered with layers of reeds, asphalt and tiles and lead sheets to prevent rotting ... On all this, the earth had been piled ... and was thickly planted with trees of every kind that, by their great size and other charm, gave pleasure to the beholder. ... The water machines [raised] the water in great abundance from the river, although no one outside could see it.”⁹ Note however, that Siculus lived four centuries after the Gardens were destroyed and may not have had an accurate account of them.
 - 6.7.5.3. Herodotus, the Greek historian, refers to Babylon as “the most powerful and renowned” of all cities which “surpasses in splendour any city of the known world.”¹⁰ He goes on to refer to the city as being situated in a wide plain with the Euphrates river flowing through the center of the city and enumerates the dimensions of city wall, which he describes as being “fifty royal cubits wide and two hundred high” (approximately 85 feet and 335 feet) which had “a circuit of some fifty-six miles.”¹¹ He also discusses the construction techniques used to build the buildings, houses, walls and moat. He mentions houses of three and four storeys, a grid-like layout of straight streets, and a seven-tiered ziggurat (e.g., tower, pyramid, or temple). He said that “[t]here is a fortress in the middle of each half of the city: in one, the royal palace surrounded by a wall of great strength, in the other, the temple of Bel, the Babylonian Zeus.”¹² Some archaeologists question whether Herodotus actually visited Babylon, as the remains of the city (e.g., the extent of the foundation of the walls which appear to be closer to 12 miles around) do not seem to match what he described (e.g., with the palace and ziggurat on opposite sides of the river). They question whether it was possible to use mud-brick construction techniques to build such high walls and three- or four-storey buildings. Herodotus does not mention the famous ‘hanging gardens’ of Babylon, but he does refer, in some detail, to the temple of Bel [Marduk], the ‘Babylonian Zeus’, the altars (one of pure gold) outside the temple, the golden statue of Marduk in a shrine near the top of the temple ziggurat, and the ritual of the god (possibly the king acting as the god’s surrogate) meeting with a virgin. Even the foundations of this temple ziggurat no

⁸ Wil Durant, “Our Oriental Heritage,” *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 225.

⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of World History*,

¹⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book I, paragraph 178; classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt.

¹¹ Same as above, paragraphs 178, 179.

¹² Same as above, paragraph 181.

longer exist at the site of Babylon since apparently it was quarried from the time of Alexander the Great, for its baked bricks until all that was left was a hole in the ground.¹³

- 6.8. What is known of his history (Biblical or extra-Biblical) appears to show Nebuchadnezzar as being of a humane disposition compared with the typical cruelty of Assyrian emperors. For example, Jerusalem was spared repeatedly in the face of rebellion and Jeremiah was treated kindly by him. He also repeatedly put in place Jewish kings as vassals to rule over Judah until his patience ran out.
- 6.9. After his death in October, 562 BC, having reigned approximately 43 years, he was succeeded by:
 - 6.9.1. His son Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach; 2 Ki 25.27; Jer 52.31) (561-560 BC).
 - 6.9.2. Neriglissar (or Nergal-shar-usur, or Nergal-sharezer; Jer 39.3, 13) (559-555 BC), son-in-law to Nebuchadnezzar by his marriage to Nitocris. He murdered Evil-Merodach.
 - 6.9.3. Labashi-Marduk (555 BC). Son of Neriglissar, a child-king.
 - 6.9.4. Nabonidus (555-539 BC).¹⁴ His relationship with the previous Chaldean kings of Babylon is uncertain. He may have been at the head of the conspiracy to overthrow the young king Labashi-Marduk. It appears that he substantiated his claim to the throne by marrying the widow of Nergal-sharezer—i.e., Nitocris the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. In 549 BC he left Babylon to live at Tayma, a rich oasis city in Arabia, leaving his son Belshazzar to rule the empire in his place.
 - 6.9.5. Belshazzar (coregent, but may not have actually been crowned king) (549-539 BC). Little is known (e.g., he is only mentioned in the Nabonidus Cylinders) of him outside of what is recorded about him in Daniel 5.1-31.
 - 6.9.6. Cyrus (539-530 BC) Less than a quarter of a century after the death of Nebuchadnezzar Cyrus the Great came from the east and defeated the Assyrian-Babylonian Empire. He led the combined armies of Media and Persia (in modern terms, think of Iran/Afghanistan/Pakistan beating Iraq/Syria/Lebanon/Egypt). It is claimed that his dynasty lasted longer than two and a half millennia.¹⁵ Iran, under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (the Shah of Iran) celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy in 1971. It was toppled eight years later (in 1979) in the Iranian Revolution (also known as the Islamic Revolution) that transformed Iran from a monarchy into an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic.
7. What significant events transpired in that year (605 BC) in Judea?
 - 7.1. Besieging of Jerusalem. Extra-Biblical history does not provide much (if any) additional information about the siege of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar at the time he assumed the throne from his father.
 - 7.1.1. Note: this is not the siege of Jerusalem that led to the destruction of the Temple and the city walls, and the removal of the people into captivity.
 - 7.1.2. The destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC (traditionally 586 BC, and apparently well-attested through comparison of Babylonian astronomical data associated with the

¹³ According to Wikipedia, "There are 32 ziggurats known at, and near, Mesopotamia. Four of them are in Iran, and the rest are mostly in Iraq. The most recent to be discovered was Sialk, in central Iran. One of the best preserved ziggurats is Choqa Zanbil in western Iran, which has survived despite the devastating eight year Iran-Iraq war of the 1980's in which many archaeological sites were destroyed. The Sialk, in Kashan, Iran, is the oldest known ziggurat, dating to the early 3rd millennium BCE. Ziggurat designs ranged from simple bases upon which a temple sat, to marvels of mathematics and construction which spanned several terraced stories and were topped with a temple." en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat.

¹⁴ Labashi-Marduk succeeded his father Nergal-sharezer or Neriglissar. But as he was only a boy, he was considered unfit to rule, and was murdered in a conspiracy only nine months after his inauguration. Nabonidus was consequently chosen as the new king.

¹⁵ Although some argue that the *Shahnameh*, the national epic of the Persians, tells of the last Shah of Persia, who spent his final days hiding in a mill after the conquest of Persia by the Muslims. Refer to: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahnameh for more information on the *Shahnameh*.

years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign¹⁶). Eventually Nebuchadnezzar lost his patience with the rebellions in Jerusalem and destroyed it. The book of Daniel includes the entire reign of Nebuchadnezzar and beyond, to the destruction of the Assyrian-Babylonian Empire by the Medo-Persian Empire.

- 7.1.3. God punished Israel (Judah) for its sin (2 Chron 36.15-19; Jer 52.12-14), in accordance with numerous prophecies (Dt 28.49-68; Is 33.20; Is 64.10; Jer 9.11; Jer 20.5; Jer 26.18).
- 7.2. Captivity of Jehoiakim, God delivered him to Nebuchadnezzar because of his sin (2 Chron 36.5, 6).
- 7.3. The sacking of the Temple, with the removal of *some* of the vessels (articles) from the Temple.
 - 7.3.1. Ezra 1.9-11 lists the articles that were taken. It was a significant amount of wealth, which had been contributed to the Temple by Solomon (2 Ki 24.13) and others.
 - 7.3.2. Was the Ark of the Covenant taken from the Temple at this time? If the Ark was still in the Temple at this time (604 BC) it may have been left there for another 18 years. When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 they plundered the Temple for its remaining artefacts (2 Chron 36.18). The Ark may have been among the articles taken. Or, it may have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar soldiers. However, around this time the Ark entered the realm of legend. Some of the suggestions of what happened to it, include:
 - 7.3.2.1. It was concealed under the Temple mount. There are catacombs and tunnels under the Dome of the Rock but they are closed by Muslims to any archaeological activity.
 - 7.3.2.2. It was removed from Jerusalem in advance of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians and transported to Ethiopia and placed in the care of prince Menelik I (purported to be the son, or descendant, of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. It was removed by Jewish priests during the reign of Manasseh of Judah and taken to a Jewish temple at Elephantine in Egypt (not Tanis where Indiana Jones is supposed to have found it in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*).
 - 7.3.2.3. It was taken by Shishak when he plundered Jerusalem (1 Ki 14.25-26) in 925 BC. With a reduced Egyptian chronology¹⁷, this could have been Thutmose III (others say it was Shoshenq I) who left a pictorial record on his wall in Karnak near Luxor (on the Bubastite Portal to the temple of Amon) of the loot he had captured. In that record are many articles that are similar to the treasures in the temple, including 300 gold shields (1 Ki 6.23) and a golden box with staves that looks like the Ark described in Exodus (Ex 25.10-13).
 - 7.3.2.4. It was miraculously removed by God from the earth.
 - 7.3.2.5. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's armies who took the gold plating from it.
8. Where did Nebuchadnezzar take the vessels (articles) from the Temple in Jerusalem?
 - 8.1. To the treasury of the temple of his god in Babylonia/Shinar.
 - 8.1.1. Where was Shinar (Heb/NKJV)?
 - 8.1.2. First appears in Gen 10.10; Gen 11.2; Gen 14.1, 9; (in NKJV also in Is 11.11 and Zech 5.11 where the NIV uses Babylonia)
 - 8.1.3. It is the older name for the general area of Mesopotamia (Greek for 'between the rivers' μέσος + ποταμός), the plain (Gen 11.2) in Iraq and Syria between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It is probably used here as an intentional archaism to remind the Jews in Babylon (and us) that God controls the nations and the allocation of their territories. Babylon was overstepping its bounds to fulfill God's purposes, but it would be

¹⁶ *Astronomical diary VAT 4956*; la-via.es/english/archivo/vat4956en.htm; 2 Kings 25.2, 8 places the eleventh year of King Zedekiah in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, proving an absolute calendar date for the fall of Jerusalem.

¹⁷ John Ashton and David Down, *Unwrapping the Pharaohs – How Egyptian Archaeology Confirms the Biblical Timeline* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2006), p. 128. For a rebuttal of Ashton and Down's view, see Partick Clarke, "Was Thutmose iii the biblical Shishak? – Claims for the 'Jerusalem' bas-relief at Karnak investigated, *Journal of Creation*, 25(1) 2001, pp. 48-56.

temporary. God controlled Babylon.

9. Who was Nebuchadnezzar's god?
 - 9.1. Possibly Bel (Dan 4.8) or Marduk, the chief god in the Babylonian pantheon; the god of water (storms), vegetation, and judgement. Bel is a title (meaning 'master' or 'lord') more than a name, and is applied to a number of gods in the Babylonian pantheon as a prefix (e.g., Bel Marduk) but when used alone as 'Bel' it could refer to Marduk. Marduk later became equated with the Greek god Zeus (Latin: Jupiter). 'Bel' is equivalent to 'Baal' a Canaanite title and honorific meaning 'master' or 'lord' that is applied to various gods in the Western Levant (as in Baal Zebub).
 - 9.2. Possibly Nabu, since his (Nebuchadnezzar's) name includes a reference to Nabu, as 'Nabu protect the boundary'. Nebo (Is 46.1) is the Hebrew variant spelling of Nabu. Nabu was the Babylonian god of wisdom and writing and patron of the scribes who was worshipped as the son of Marduk and his consort, Sarpanitum.
10. What is the significance of his taking the articles to the temple of his god?
 - 10.1. He was giving a tribute to his god; thanking his god for protection or asking for future favours.
 - 10.2. Placing the articles in the temple of his god would be viewed as a sign that his god could conquer the God of Judah.
 - 10.3. The concept of giving tribute to a god is derived from the legitimate tribute that is owed to the true God by all men in the form of a tithe.
 - 10.3.1. The purpose of the tithe is to remind us that God is sovereign, that he owns everything (Job 41.11; Ps 50.10), and that we are his subjects.
 - 10.3.2. As subjects in God's kingdom, we are required to pay an ongoing tribute of a portion of all of our life to God.¹⁸ This tribute is an obligation of the covenant (between God and man), in addition to obedience to his law, and is to be paid with our: life (e.g., firstborn are to be ransomed, the life-blood belongs to God), worship, possessions (tithes), and time (the Sabbath).
 - 10.3.3. The requirement to tithe of our income to God continues to be a requirement today.¹⁹
 - 10.4. Men have perverted tithing, as they have perverted all aspects of the true religion and worship.
 - 10.4.1. They give honour to their false gods in the form of idols. What are some modern examples?
 - 10.4.2. Offerings of flowers and fruit placed in front of statues of Buddha, even in 'Western' homes.
 - 10.4.3. Offerings of flowers, trinkets, etc. placed at a memorial for Princess Diana.
 - 10.4.4. They have turned tithes and offerings into a payment system, whereby they believe that if they give offerings to God, he in turn should pay them with salvation or blessings.
11. Is this the end of the Temple articles?
 - 11.1. They reappear in chapter 5.2-4 and 23 (539 BC), where they are used for a drinking party and used to praise pagan gods in idolatrous revelry.
 - 11.2. They reappear again in Ezra 1.7-11 (539 or 538 BC), where they are returned to the Jews by Cyrus.
 - 11.3. God had prophesied, through Jeremiah, that the Temple articles would be preserved and returned to Jerusalem (Jer 27.21-22; Jer 28.3, 6).
 - 11.4. The symbolism should not be missed: what was paid in tribute to a false pagan deity would be

¹⁸ See: James R. Hughes, *The Principle of the Portion*, 2002-11; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

¹⁹ See: "Appendix J – Tithing vs Free-Will Offerings" in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

returned to its rightful owner, the God of the universe. God will not be mocked and plundered. What is rightfully his, he will demand and exact in the end.

12. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 12.1. *Providence* – In verse 2, Daniel tells us that the “Lord delivered” both the king and the Temple articles into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. This reminds us that:
 - 12.1.1. God is in control of the nations and of all events that transpire on this earth. A key message of the book of Daniel—from God’s dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, through his dealings with subsequent rulers, to the prophecies of his disposition of nations that follow until the time of his supreme king Jesus Christ—God raises up and disposes the nations (Dan 2.21). Just as King Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilling God’s purposes, so also do kings, dictators, presidents, and prime ministers today.
 - 12.1.2. God is working out his plan and redemptive purposes. His purposes are not arbitrary or capricious. They are directed to one primary purpose—to save a people for himself.
 - 12.2. *Purity* – God demands religious purity from his people. When his people drift away from observance of true worship and follow pagan gods and indulge in materialism they should expect to suffer the consequences.
 - 12.2.1. That God permitted the ransacking of the Temple, his holy dwelling place on earth, is an indication that the people had placed a superstitious faith in the Temple and its articles and were no longer focusing their lives on serving God.
 - 12.2.2. We must be cautious that we do not make religious observance into a mere ritual or place our faith in faith or religious practice. We must, in particular, never venerate the physical objects associate with worship (buildings, cups, pulpits, etc.) Our faith must be in a living person not in a material object of veneration. Our only hope is in God (Ps 32.10; Jer 14.22; 1 Tim 1.1). Our faith must be in the living and true God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ.
 - 12.3. *Punishment* – Nebuchadnezzar was the means, or instrument, God used to execute punishment on his disobedient people.
 - 12.3.1. Moses had warned the people, about a thousand years before, that captivity would be the consequence of disobedience (Dt 28.15-68; esp. 41, 48-57).
 - 12.3.2. The northern kingdom (Israel) had been taken into captivity in 722 BC as a warning to the southern kingdom (Judah).
 - 12.3.3. The southern kingdom heeded the warning for a time, but then drifted into debauchery and idolatry. The particular sins that led to the captivity were neglect of the Sabbaths (Jer 17.19-27; Jer 34.8-22) and idolatry (Jer 7.30-31).
 - 12.3.4. God will tolerate individual, congregational, and national sin only to a certain point and then he will bring it under judgement. For those who are his people, this judgement will come in the form of chastisement to bring them back to their God (Rev 2-3).

Daniel’s Training (Dan 1.3-21)

Selection (Dan 1.3-7)

1. Who was Ashpenaz?
 - 1.1. An official of Nebuchadnezzar’s staff. He is mentioned only in this chapter by name.
 - 1.2. The particular title that he is given (Dan 1.7-11, 18) is (*rab-saris*) “chief, or master of his eunuchs” (NKJV/ESV). The Hebrew root for this term appears to mean ‘castrated’ or ‘emasculated’. However, it is not clear that this means that the individual in the position was himself in this condition (e.g., Potiphar is given the same title [Gen 37.36; Gen 39.1] and was married) or that it always has to be translated this way. The NIV translates the verse as “chief of his court officials”. Elsewhere, the NKJV and ESV use similar translations to the NIV in Daniel 1.3 (Gen 37.36; Gen 39.1; 1 Sam 8.15; 1 Ki 22.9).

- 1.3. The name Ashpenaz appears to be a Persian name rather than Akkadian. If this is so, he may have been a slave who was captured in war and who had gained a position of trust, respect, and authority in the Babylonian. It should not surprise us that a foreigner would have a position of authority in the royal court. This appears to have been standard practice in the ancient NE. Daniel and his friends are examples of foreigners being given positions of power, as is Nehemiah in later times, and Joseph over a thousand years earlier.
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar order Ashpenaz to do?
- 2.1. Bring some of the young men from Israel's aristocracy (royal family and nobility) into the court, for training.
- 2.2. The English translations say "Israelites" or "children of Israel" or "people of Israel". Although these are valid translations in most instances, the Hebrew says "sons of Israel," and, in this case, should probably be translated in this way. It is unlikely that women or girls were included in this conscription. If anything captive females, who were virgins and girls, would have been added to the royal harem, they would not have been given instruction to become future court officials.
- 2.3. The boys and young men who were brought in to the court for training were likely among the hostages (to guarantee Israel's submission to Babylon) who were taken captive at the time of the siege when Nebuchadnezzar had subjugated Jehoiakim (2 Ki 24.1). Members of the nobility were likely taken captive as a warning to Jehoiakim of what would happen to him and the rest of the nation if they rebelled against their suzerain.
- 2.4. We should not read too much into the fact that young men from Judah were brought in for training. For example, we should not assume that Nebuchadnezzar had any particular or initial opinion of the skills of his Hebrew/Jewish slaves or hostages. Nebuchadnezzar (and ancient kings in general) would have looked for young men of potential talent and skill from among any of their subjugated nations (note Dan 1.6, 10 imply that young men from other nations were also being trained at the same time). It was only after a period of training and assessment that Nebuchadnezzar and his court officials would determine who should be brought into royal service.
- 2.5. We also do not have to assume that Daniel and his friends were castrated (as Josephus suggests²⁰) because Ashpenaz was the 'chief of the eunuchs'. As we noted, above, the term *rab-saris* may mean 'court official'.
3. What qualifications were required of the young men who were selected? Why?
- 3.1. *Young men*. It is possible that he chose young men, rather than the older, wise, men to serve in his court because he expected to find them easier to mould into model civil servants for the Babylonian Empire. Older men would better remember how things were before their captivity and would probably have been more nationalistic and resistant to serving Nebuchadnezzar.
- 3.1.1. We are not told their exact age, but they were probably in the 13-19 age range.
- 3.1.2. Plato refers to the Persian custom of beginning tutoring at age 14.²¹
- 3.1.3. Xenophon mentions that Persian youths completed their training about the age of sixteen or seventeen, and then they would take their place as young men.²²
- Government run schooling is considered a prime means of indoctrination of youth. For example, Germany does not permit home schooling because, since the time of Hitler, the view has been that attendance at schools meeting government curriculum standards will produce compliant citizens. In Venezuela in 2007, Hugo Chavez introduced a new program of socialistic education for the "formation of a new man".²³

²⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 10; chapter 10, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-10.htm

²¹ Plato, *Alcibiades*, 1:121e; praxeology.net/alcibiades3.htm

²² Xenophon, *Cyropaedia – The Education of Cyrus*, book 1, chapter 2, paragraph 8. www.gutenberg.org/files/2085/2085-h/2085-h.htm

²³ "Education in Venezuela -- Fatherland, socialism or death," *Economist*, 2007-10-11; www.economist.com/world/la/dis-playstory.cfm?story_id=9947046

- 3.2. *Members of the royal family or nobility.* The members of the nobility were more likely to have had some formal education and training (e.g., taught to read and write) than sons of peasants (even though Jewish society [the people of the Book] put more emphasis on education than parallel societies). It was also the prevailing view among people in the ANE that sons and daughters of the nobility had special gifts (even being descended from the gods) that the population as a whole did not have. There was a caste system in place that was fairly rigorously applied, consisting of: nobility; priests; trained military; artisans and tradesmen; peasants and labourers (mostly slaves captured in war from among the lower classes of a subjugated nation). The remnants of this caste system still exists among Hindus in India (where the Brahmins are in the highest caste and the Dalits [outcast or untouchables] are in the lowest caste), and among Muslims.
- 3.3. *No physical defect and handsome.* The ANE was as much impressed by physical appearances as is modern society with its cultish worship of movie stars, athletes, and beauty pageant contestants.
- 3.3.1. It seems, according to some commentators, that the ANE rulers considered physical soundness and handsome features indispensable in those destined for court service.²⁴
- 3.3.2. For example, consider Eliab (1 Sam 16.6-7) and Absalom (2 Sam 14.25-26).
- 3.3.3. However, this is not the criteria God uses for electing those whom he will save and use in his kingdom (1 Sam 16.6-7; Ps 147.10, 11 [those who fear him]; Prov 31.10-31; 1 Cor 1.28-29; 1 Pt 3.3).
- 3.3.4. The OT ceremonial system required outward perfection in the priests (Lev 21.17-23) and elements used in sacrifice (Ex 12.5). This had a spiritual significance and pointed to sanctification. The Babylonian and ANE emphasis on selecting only those without physical defects may have been a perversion of God's requirements applied in the temporal realm of pagan ritual.
- 3.4. *Intelligent.* They were to show "aptitude for every kind of learning" and be "well informed," and "quick to understand." We are not told how the Ashpenaz determined their intelligence, knowledge, and aptitude. They may have had tests, the ancient equivalent to IQ tests or SAT exams, similar to the exams which were used in the Chinese civil service for over a millennium (almost 1,300 years, ending in 1906).
- 3.5. *Qualified to serve in the king's palace.* It is not clear what additional qualifications are included in this descriptive phrase. It may be that this is a summary qualification. It may be that they were qualified to serve in the king's palace because they were handsome and intelligent young men of noble birth. It may also be that what is in focus here is a demonstration of leadership potential or an assessment of their integrity.
4. What attributes or qualifications are missing from the list that should be included, from a Biblical perspective, in qualified civic leaders?
- 4.1. Spiritual and moral qualifications.
- 4.2. What does Jethro tell Moses should be the primary criteria for the selection of delegated judges? (Ex 18.21; Dt 1.13-18)
- 4.2.1. Men who fear God, and are trustworthy, wise, understanding and respected; and who hate dishonest gain.
- 4.3. What do you notice about the Biblical qualifications for civic leadership, compared with those for Elders/Deacons?
- 4.3.1. Capable men (experienced, skilled) [self-controlled (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.8); able to teach is a specific skill required of Elders (1 Tim 3.2, 5; Titus 1.9); not a recent convert (1 Tim 3.6); manages own family well, children obey (1 Tim 3.4-5; Titus 1.6)].
- 4.3.2. Men who fear God [upright, holy (Titus 1.8); keep hold of the deep truths (Titus 1.9)].
- 4.3.3. Trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain [not lovers of money (1 Tim 3.3); do not

²⁴ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 41.

- pursue dishonest gain (Titus 1.7)].
- 4.3.4. Wise and understanding (both in the worldly sense, but also in the spiritual sense) [love what is good (Titus 1.8); disciplined (Titus 1.8); temperate (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.7)].
- 4.3.5. Respected [not violent or quarrelsome, gentle (1 Tim 3.3; Titus 1.7); have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim 3.7); not overbearing (Titus 1.7); not quick tempered (Titus 1.7); above reproach, blameless (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.6); respectable (1 Tim 3.2); not given to drunkenness (1 Tim 3.3; Titus 1.7)].
- 4.3.6. The Biblical requirements are essentially the same (although the specific skills might be somewhat different) for someone who is in a responsible position in the state as someone who is in a responsible position in the Church.
- 4.4. What are some possible implications of applying these Biblical qualifications?
 - 4.4.1. We won't accept the idea that a man's personal life (e.g., his divorces, adulterous affairs, sexual escapades, drug problems, family difficulties) have no bearing on his ability to perform in a public office. How a man administers his private moral life has a direct bearing on how he will administer his public ethic.
 - 4.4.2. We should take seriously the Biblical qualifications for civic office when we are voting for elected officials.
 - 4.4.3. Does this mean that there should be a 'spiritual' test for those who are appointed to public office?
 - 4.4.3.1. This is extremely difficult to work out (essentially impractical) in a fallen world.²⁵
 - 4.4.3.2. We cannot have reformed government without reformed hearts. Those who go by the name of 'Christian Reconstructionists' put too much emphasis on reformation of the state. A reformed state will be a natural outworking of a pervasive Christian influence in society.
- 5. Why did Nebuchadnezzar want these young men assembled for training?
 - 5.1. The text says that they would 'serve in the king's palace' and to 'enter the king's service' [4, 5].
 - 5.2. What classes of service might this include?
 - 5.2.1. Scribes, recorders, chroniclers, historians
 - 5.2.2. Supervisors of administrative staff for palace and city functions (supply provisions and manage maintenance and construction)
 - 5.2.3. Judges and governors
 - 5.2.4. Diplomats to subject and non-subject nations.
 - 5.3. The young men would have already known the languages of their respective former nations and could provide services in an empire composed of many subject nations and cultural/linguistic groups.
 - 5.4. Nebuchadnezzar was not afraid to bring in 'new-blood' to work in his civil service. This would have the advantage of making his 'cabinet' more representative of the peoples in his empire and also would have allowed for new ideas to advance his administration.
- 6. How were the young men to be prepared for their service in government?
 - 6.1. They were to be taught the *language* of the Babylonians (the Chaldeans).
 - 6.1.1. 'Chaldea' is a transliteration/anglicization of the Greek word 'Chaldaia' (Χαλδαία) that probably comes from Assyrian 'Kaldu' (Hebrew: Kasdim). It is the general designation for the people and civilizations that lived in the lower Mesopotamian valley (between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) regardless of what the actual kingdom or dynasty was called at a particular time.
 - 6.1.2. The language of the Babylonians was primarily Aramaic although they also spoke Akkadian (and they may have had to learn other languages that were spoken and written

²⁵ See: "Appendix F – Relationship Between Church and State (Considerations)" in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

in earlier kingdoms, going as far back as the Sumerians).

6.1.2.1. Aramaic became the language of diplomacy and government throughout the Mesopotamian valley around 1000 BC.

6.1.2.2. It displaced older languages like Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Babylonian, etc.

6.1.2.3. The Semitic language family includes: Akkadian, Assyrian (Syriac appears to have developed from this), Babylonian, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic.

6.1.2.4. Much of the book of Daniel is written in Aramaic (Dan 2.4-7.28) as are a few other passages of the OT (Gen 31.47; Jer 10.10-11; Ezra 4.8-6, 18; Ezra 7.12-26)

6.1.2.5. At the time of Jesus, the remnants of ancient Aramaic was the common spoken language of Palestine, although Greek had had significant influence from about 325BC, and Latin was becoming increasingly common. Jesus probably spoke a dialect of Aramaic and some words in the NT are derived from Aramaic, e.g., *Talitha Cumi*, *Maranatha*, and *Golgotha*.

6.1.3. The alphabetic script of the Babylonians:

6.1.3.1. The Sumerians, after 2400 BC, used pictographs that evolved into a semi-phonetic cuneiform script (signs created in wet clay, with a wedged stylus).

6.1.3.2. For writing on skins and papyrus, an alphabetic script was developed in the Mesopotamian valley (sometime around 2000 BC).

6.1.3.3. At the time of Daniel, the Jews used an alphabetic script that was similar to that used by the Canaanites and Phoenicians (it is angular and prong like, like 'W' and 'Y', and has symbols that look like flags and squares. You can see similarities to, what later became, the Greek and then the Latin alphabets.

6.1.3.4. The script that we think of today as Hebrew is in fact not 'Hebrew'. It is based on the script that was used by the Babylonians to record the Aramaic language at the time of Daniel. During the Babylonian Captivity (Exile) the Jews transferred their writings to the Aramaic alphabetic script and developed it into the more nearly square form we know today. You can think of this as similar to how French and English both use the Latin alphabet to record written versions of their language.

6.2. They were to be taught the *literature* of the Babylonians (the Chaldeans). What might have been included in the literature that they had to learn?

6.2.1. We are not given any details as to what was included within the category of 'literature'. Some commentators, concerned to maintain the intellectual and spiritual purity of Daniel, suggest that this literature did not include the religious writings of the Babylonians (i.e., they were not taught the religion of the Babylonians).

6.2.1.1. They argue that if Daniel and his friends would not defile their bodies with meat sacrificed to false God's, they certainly would not defile themselves by intellectually ingesting false religious teachings.

6.2.1.2. This view presents a significant difficulty, since there is no possibility that we can separate the Babylonian literature from their religious writings. In general, in the ancient world (as in Islam today), it was inconceivable that a society, culture, or nation could have a secular (i.e., non-religious) government and educational system. Religion permeated all aspects of society. For example, kings were deified, priests served as part of the kings' staff, philosophy and religion were intimately intertwined, and religious rituals and festivals were tightly integrated into civic ceremonies.

6.2.1.3. It is only since the (so-called) Enlightenment that people have developed the idea that societies and governments can be religiously neutral. Of course, this is a naïve view. It is impossible for any society or government to be religiously neutral. If the society or government does not espouse Christianity (or Islam, Shintoism, Hinduism, Communism, etc. as the official state religion) then it must (there ultimately can be no such thing as religious neutrality or pluralism)

- endorse secular humanism and the religious myths of Darwinianism.
- 6.2.2. They undoubtedly had to memorize the legal codes from different previous administrations such as from the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Amorites, including Hammurabi's (c 1810-1750 BC; ruled 1790–1750 BC) Code from an earlier Babylonian Empire.
- 6.2.3. They likely learned the history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and those that preceded it, through the chronicles that court scribes kept as records of kings' accomplishments.
- 6.2.4. They likely also studied topics such as the following:
- 6.2.4.1. Sumerian/Babylonian mathematics – Knowledge of Babylonian mathematics is derived from clay tablets, written in cuneiform script, that go back to around 1800 BC. Topics covered, include fractions, reciprocals, algebra, quadratic and cubic equations, the Pythagorean theorem (known before Pythagoras), trigonometric functions, formulas for calculating area and volume, and the use of square roots (e.g., the square root of 2 was accurately calculated to six decimal places). The Babylonian system of mathematics was a sexagesimal (base-60) numeral system. We still have remnants of this system in our division of time into 60 minutes in an hour and 60 seconds in a minute, and the division of circles into 360 (60×6) degrees. The Babylonians had a place-value system, where digits were written in different columns to represent their relative value (similar to our base ten system). They also had worked out dates for eclipses and a sophisticated system for calculating the length of a year.²⁶
 - 6.2.4.2. The prevailing principles of running a semi-agrarian economy
 - 6.2.4.3. The arts of negotiation and diplomacy
 - 6.2.4.4. Current strategies for conducting warfare.
- 6.2.5. They probably studied the Sumerian and Assyrian myths and legends:
- 6.2.5.1. Sumerian and Akkadian creation stories such as *Enlil and Ninlil: The Begetting of Nanna* and *The Journey of Nanna to Nippur*.
 - 6.2.5.2. The *Enuma Elish*, the Assyrian creation story. Creation begins with a male fresh water ocean-god, Apsu, and a female salt water ocean-god mating to produce lesser deities. One of these gods, Marduk the storm god, fought with Tiamat and her dragon children. Marduk killed Tiamat and the upper half of her body became the sky and the lower half the earth. Men were produced from the blood of Kingu, Tiamat's field marshal, who was also killed during the war.
 - 6.2.5.3. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* which includes an account of a great human hero that challenged the gods and an account of a flood with some similarities to the account in Genesis.
- 6.2.6. They probably also learned about astronomy/astrology and fortune-telling. In Babylonia culture (derived from Sumerian culture) astrology (along with reading livers of sacrificed animals) was part of the official cultic observance used by priests and kings for determining the will of the gods. The Babylonians did not have a system of 'natural laws' in either physics or chemistry. They held superstitious views about why things occur as they do (e.g., floods, famine, disease, deaths), and attributed events to the direct intervention of various gods. Although, they did have some applied knowledge of physical principles such as the use of the lever, and in the areas of metallurgy and ceramics (e.g., glazes), they did not connect these principles with general 'laws' of causation behind natural events. They were at the opposite extreme from many materialists today, in that they held to direct intervention by the gods in the events of the world.
- 6.2.7. They may have been taught the hymns and worship ceremonies connected with the rites and festivals of the cultic practices in the worship of the Babylonian pantheon.

²⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_mathematics

- 6.2.8. They may have also learned the religious writings of Zoroastrianism called the Avesta.
- 6.2.8.1. The Avesta (probably meaning ‘praise of god’) includes a collection of creation myths, rites of purification for sins, cleansing rites, and religious observances (much of these writings have been lost over the past 2,000 years).
- 6.2.8.2. Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion of Persia (Iran) that would cover the entire ME 100 years later during the time of the Persian Empire. However, at the time of these events (following 605 BC) it was already gaining a presence beyond Persia in Babylon and India.
- 6.2.8.3. Principle beliefs:
- 6.2.8.3.1. According to the Gathas, possibly composed by Zoroaster, devotion is to be given to no other divinity besides Ahura Mazda the creator of everything, visible and invisible (i.e., a form of monotheism).
- 6.2.8.3.2. Daena is the eternal Law which was revealed to humanity through the *Mathra-Spenta* ‘Holy Words’ (i.e., a divinely revealed moral law).
- 6.2.8.3.3. Asha the equitable law or master plan of the universe governing the course of everything (i.e., it appears to have a form of providence or fate; however see the next item below).
- 6.2.8.3.4. The Gathas emphasizes the importance of deeds and actions. Asceticism and fleeing from the experiences of life (including pleasure, duties, responsibilities and social obligations) is frowned upon in Zoroastrianism. In addition, there is an emphasis on the importance of moral choice and a rejection of predestination. Humans are responsible for all situations and how they act toward one another. Rewards and punishment are directly dependent on how one lives his life. Zoroastrian morality is summed up in the simple phrase, “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” (i.e., a works-based ‘salvation’).
- 6.2.8.3.5. Zoroastrianism has the concepts of heaven, hell, and personal and final judgement. However, personal judgement is not final. At the end of time, when evil is finally defeated, all souls will be ultimately reunited with their Fravashi (guardian spirit) (i.e., a form of universalism and pantheism).
- 6.2.8.4. As of 2007 Zoroastrianism had probably fewer than 200,000 adherents worldwide, with its largest concentrations in India and Iran. A few prominent Parsis in 2007 included the Indian industrialist and philanthropic Tata family, conductor Zubin Mehta, rock artist Freddie Mercury (Farrokh Bulsara) [d 1991], and English cricketer Ronnie Irani.
- 6.3. They were to be provided with a special diet (or food and wine) from the king’s own provisions and table.
- 6.3.1. The word used in the Hebrew for ‘food’ is not one of the common words used to represent food eaten at a meal, such as ‘bread’ or ‘flesh/meat’. Rather it is, apparently, a Persian word that seems to have the sense of ‘fine’ or ‘rich’ food. It is used only in this verse and in Daniel 11.26.
- 6.3.2. Why is this provision of food called out in the account? The provision of special food is probably mentioned for the following reasons:
- 6.3.2.1. It was atypical. Most students through the millennia have had to fend for themselves. Either they or their parents have to provide their food. Records from ancient times, through the Greek and Roman period and into the Middle Ages and early Modern era indicate that students have often subsisted on a meagre diet. There are examples of students protesting and even rioting in every era over the cost of food, lodging and tuition.
- 6.3.2.2. The young men were treated as part of the royal staff, even though they were in training. It gave them a special status to share the food of the king (2 Sam 9.7,

10, 11, 13; 2 Ki 25.29, 30).

6.3.2.3. As a literary device to set up the situation and highlight the resolve of Daniel in verses 8-17.

6.4. They were to attend the court school for three years.

6.4.1. It appears that three years was considered the standard period for court training in the ancient Near East. The Persian practice, as prescribed in the Zoroastrian Avesta, was for a student or disciple to study for three years in order to become a priest. It may have been the same for court officials.

6.4.2. Plato refers to the Persian custom of beginning tutoring at age 14²⁷ and Xenophon mentions that Persian youths completed their training about the age of sixteen or seventeen.²⁸ This would seem to support the three-year duration for the training period.

6.4.3. It is interesting, although there is likely no direct connection, that Jesus' training of the apostles took three years, and that Paul appears to have been engaged in a similar period of post-conversion training (Gal 1.17, 18).

7. Which young men are mentioned by name? Why were their names changed?

7.1. The four Jewish men mentioned (there may have been others selected for training) are:

Meanings of the Names of Daniel's Three Friends			
Hebrew Name	Meaning [from Hebrew]	Babylonian Name	Meaning [from Akkadian]
Daniel	God has judged or God is my judge	Belteshazzar	Lady, protect the king or guard his life! or, possibly, keeper of the hidden treasures
Hananiah	Yahweh has been gracious	Shadrach	I am fearful (of a god) or, possibly, the sun is my inspiration
Mishael	Who is what God is? or he that is the strong God	Meshach	I am despised, contemptible, humbled (before my god) or of the goddess Shach (Venus)
Azariah	Yahweh has helped or Yahweh is my helper	Abednego	Servant of Nebo (Nego being a Hebrew variation of the Babylonian name of the god Nebo ²⁹)

7.1.1. All four names include references to the personal name of God, Jehovah/Yahweh (*iah*), or the Hebrew name for God (*el*) of Israel, which suggests that the young men came from God-fearing families.

7.2. Their names were changed:

7.2.1. Because in ancient times names were more than just convenient labels; they had cultural and religious significance (Gen 2.20, 23; Gen 3.20; Gen 17.5).

7.2.2. It was the custom, in the ANE, to change a person's name when he or she started in a new role (e.g., Gen 17.5; Gen 41.45; 2 Sam 12.24, 25; 2 Ki 23.34; 2 Ki 24.17; Est 2.7). There are also NT examples: Peter (Jn 1.42); Rev 2.17.

7.2.3. Because all four names include references to the personal name of God this would have been considered unacceptable, and even offensive, in the Babylonian court that worshiped a pantheon of different gods; and probably took offense at the exclusiveness of Biblical Judaism. They accepted pluralism, including all forms of false religions. However, their pluralism could not leave room for the true religion.

7.2.4. To obliterate any testimony to the God of Israel from the Babylonian court. [The ACLU—Akkadian/Astrologers Court Liturgical Union—was at work in Daniel's day removing all references to the true God from the public forum, just as it is today!]

7.2.5. To remove references to their Jewish origin and give them names considered suitable for the Babylonian court.

7.2.6. To show his (Ashpenaz's) authority over them and to make them appear to be subject to

²⁷ Plato, *Alcibiades*, 1:121e; praxeology.net/alcibiades3.htm

²⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia – The Education of Cyrus*, book 1, chapter 2, paragraph 8. www.gutenberg.org/files/2085/2085-h/2085-h.htm

²⁹ Nebo (see, Is 46.1) or Nabu was the Babylonian god of wisdom and writing and patron of the scribes.

the Babylonian gods.

7.2.7. In an attempt to acculturate them into Babylon and make them forget the place and religion of their origin. Calvin: “[T]heir names were changed; so that by all means the king might blot out of their hearts the remembrance of their own race, and they might forget their own origin.”³⁰

7.3. Observations about name usage:

7.3.1. The Aramaic portion of Daniel is from Daniel 2.4-7.28. These six chapters cover material that is of direct relevance to the Gentile nations. The rest of the book is written in Hebrew.

7.3.2. Daniel’s name Belteshazzar, is mentioned ten times in the book of Daniel (Dan 2.26; Dan 4.8-9, 18-19 [3 times]; Dan 5.12). In other words, he is called by his Babylonian name only in the Aramaic section of the book (with one exception; Dan 10.1). Although he is mostly referred to, in both sections by his Hebrew name.

7.3.3. His three companions are only mentioned again, after chapter 1, by their Hebrew names only in Dan 2.17. In Dan 2.49 and in (the very well known) chapter 3 they are mentioned by their Babylonian names.

8. Who was Daniel?

8.1. Other than what we are told in the book of Daniel about Daniel, there isn’t much else said about him in the rest of Scripture. In those other passages, we learn:

8.1.1. Ezekiel 14.14, 20: He was righteous man; considered on the same level as Noah and Job.

8.1.2. Ezekiel 28.3: He was a wise man, wiser than those of his age.

8.1.2.1. Ezekiel and Daniel were contemporaries.

8.1.2.2. The material in Ezekiel could have been written ~12 years after Daniel was deported (Dan 8:1 compared with Dan 1:2, gives the year 592 BC), but could also have been written as late as 30 years after Daniel’s deportation (sometime around 575 BC, before the destruction of Tyre, after a 13 year siege, by Nebuchadnezzar, in 573 BC)

8.1.2.3. While it may seem surprising that Daniel could have gained such a reputation in a relatively short period, it is still conceivable that he did. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles had gained significant reputations for righteousness and wisdom within a few years.

8.1.2.4. At least one scholar³¹ has suggested that Ezekiel is referring to an ancient Daniel from the age of the patriarchs, who is mentioned in the Ras Shamra tablets from Syria containing ancient Canaanite myths and legends (e.g., the Aqhat Epic). These tablets were written in Ugaritic (a Semitic language written with cuneiform alphabetic characters, sometime during the 14th to 12th centuries BC).³²

8.1.2.5. However, it is inconceivable that Ezekiel would draw into his account a mythical/legendary character from Canaanite writings, whom he would place on par with Noah and Job; especially considering that Jews would not have considered Canaanites to be righteous or wise, in the godly sense.

8.1.3. Mathew 24.15: He was a prophet.

8.1.3.1. Jesus calls Daniel a prophet.

8.1.3.2. In quoting from the book of Daniel, Jesus confirms the inclusion of the book in the OT canon of Scripture. [We will look at the Daniel’s reference to the abomination of desolation that Jesus mentions when we study chapters 9, 11 and 12 (Dan 9.27; Dan 11.31; Dan 12.11).]

8.1.3.3. He was not a prophet in the way Elijah or Isaiah were, who were raised up to

³⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html

³¹ John Day, “The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the Hero of the Book of Daniel,” *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 30, (Apr., 1980), pp. 174-184. John Day is responding to: H. H. P. Dressler, “The Identification of the Ugaritic DNIL with the Daniel of Ezekiel,” *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 29 (1979), pp. 152-161.

³² For further analysis, see: Daniel B. Wallace, *Who is Ezekiel's Daniel?* www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1576

- speak to Israel (Dt 18.18). But Daniel had the prophetic gift, and his message was to the pagan nations and their courts like Jonah.
- 8.1.3.4. God did not speak directly to Daniel as he did to Moses (Num 12.7-8). He was given prophetic visions and dreams. Much of his prophetic messages are in the form of imagery and symbolism.
- 8.2. So far, we have learned that Daniel was:
- 8.2.1. Of the nobility or even the royal line (Dan 1.3). If he was of the royal line he was descended from David.
 - 8.2.2. Handsome, without any physical defects (Dan 1.4)
 - 8.2.3. Intelligent, well informed, showing an aptitude for learning, and wise (Dan 1.4; Ezk 28.3)
 - 8.2.4. Qualified to serve in a palace (Dan 1.4)
 - 8.2.5. Righteous—meaning God fearing, worshipful, and obedient to the law of God (Ezk 14.14, 20)
 - 8.2.6. A prophet (Mt 24.15)
- 8.3. We won't look ahead at this time to derive additional attributes about Daniel. But even what we have learned thus far about Daniel, indicates that we are dealing with an exceptional man raised up by God for an exceptional age.
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 9.1. From one perspective God uses the weak things of this world to confound or put to shame the worldly-wise (1 Cor 1.27).
- 9.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar selected young Jewish slaves (essentially) to be part of his royal staff and planned to train out of them any recollection of their heritage. Yet these young men would put to shame the entire assemblage of the religious rites, councils of leaders, and academic learning of the Babylonians.
 - 9.1.2. God cannot be mocked by the modern equivalents in our society: secular humanism and Darwinianism; cradle-to-grave socialistic systems; and the political correctness of the universities. He can, and will, raise up Christians who will shame all these worldly systems.
 - 9.1.3. We see examples of this in the confrontation between ID and modern 'science'; the self-defeating support of abortion in the Roe Effect, and the, similarly, self-defeating results of feminists and homosexuals who leave no progeny (demographics is destiny!).
- 9.2. Although God uses the weak things of this world to confound the worldly-wise, this does not provide us with an opportunity to be deliberately 'weak'. Instead, we (Christians) should stand out in our age as those who pursue excellence and deliver quality, because we serve God and not self (1 Cor 10.31).
- 9.2.1. We get the impression from our first considerations of Daniel and his friends, that they were capable individuals who, even at a relatively young age, showed outstanding promise.
 - 9.2.2. Today's Christian youth should stand far above their peers in key attributes such as honesty, reliability, dedication, discipline, and wisdom (applied knowledge).
 - 9.2.3. Likewise, God is calling each of us to excel in whatever tasks we undertake.
 - 9.2.4. As the Western world crumbles further into the futility of post-modernism and is sucked into the vortex of Islamism, Christian young people and adults can have tremendous influence and witness for Christ through living out the Christian life. Our decorum will set us apart from the two extremes found in our culture: the debauched depravity of the neo-pagans and the fanatical fatalism of Islam.
- 9.3. Daniel gives us an interesting insight into questions raised by some about the propriety of Christians sending their children to schools funded by governments or of obtaining a secular education.
- 9.3.1. Based on Daniel's willingness to attend the Babylonian government run and funded school system (which was also a propaganda machine for the state government and pagan

- state religion) we can derive some principles for guiding our thinking and practice.
- 9.3.1.1. Some apologists for Daniel attempt to get around his attendance at the pagan school by suggesting that he did not ‘defile’ himself with the mythological teachings of the Babylonians, just as he did not defile himself with the physical food of the Babylonians. I believe that that idea is mistaken. As we noted when considering verse 4, his course of study included pagan mythology and religion.
 - 9.3.1.2. Others suggest that the account is merely providing an historical record of what happened. They say that we cannot draw moral lessons from this particular historical account of Daniel’s practice.
 - 9.3.2. Daniel is presented to us in Scripture as an exemplar of righteousness who would have nothing to do with pagan religious *practices*. His life is presented to us as a model for practical Christian living. His attendance at a pagan school cannot, therefore, be relegated to an insignificant fact, but has to be considered in the context of his representation as a type for the Christian life in a pagan society.
 - 9.3.2.1. A parallel to Daniel is Moses who was instructed in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was considered mighty for God in his words and actions (Acts 7.22).
 - 9.3.2.2. It is possible that Daniel used Moses’ example to guide him in his obedience to God. In the same way, we can use the example of Moses and Daniel to guide our thinking.
 - 9.3.3. Based on Daniel’s example, we can conclude that attendance at a government-run school or a school that teaches pagan philosophies is not morally wrong for a Christian.
 - 9.3.3.1. We may believe that governments should not be funding educational systems; even though it was the New England Puritans in Massachusetts who initiated (in 1647) the practice of municipal funding of elementary schooling³³, which has now become almost a universal practice.
 - 9.3.3.2. We may also believe that it is best for youth in Christian families to be educated at home or in private (i.e., non-government funded) schools that are run by a board of Christian parents.
 - 9.3.3.3. It does not logically follow, however, from these beliefs that it is wrong for children of Christian parents to attend a public (i.e., government funded) school or to study, for example, the works of Aristotle, Homer’s legends, or to study about the theories of evolution.
 - 9.3.3.4. Based on this consideration, we must be careful not to condemn families that utilize the public school system. There are some denominations that *require* their Elders, and possibly even their members, to home-school their children or to send their children to private schools run by Christians. This requirement is going beyond the requirements of God.
 - 9.3.4. Studying the world’s teachings without accepting or believing in them can help Christians to become aware of the world’s thinking and the foolishness of it. Some of those who study the world’s systems of philosophy, religion, pseudo-science and psychology are able to become apologists for defending the true religion.
 - 9.3.4.1. However, this does not mean that all children should study all aspects of pagan systems. Some children are not old enough to be able to discern between truth and error and some will always be too easily influenced by falsehood.
 - 9.3.4.2. This also does not necessarily mean that children should be sent to a government-run school to study the world’s foolishness. Not all young people from Christian families are able to withstand the onslaught of pagan teachings.
 - 9.3.4.3. Parents must exercise great discretion and care in their determination of which of their children can be sent to a pagan school or study pagan teachings without succumbing to the temptations engendered by such attendance.

³³ Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop—America’s Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 311.

- 9.3.5. We must also note that even though government-run schools have a faulty philosophy of education, this does not mean that everything that they teach is counter-factual. Because of God's general grace, and in spite of their faulty worldview, many non-Christians are able to teach effectively and correctly many subjects from skating to mathematics and engineering to cooking.
- 9.4. Today most people would not take seriously the myths of Babylon and would consider them nothing more than silly stories. The Babylonians were not stupid people and yet they took their myths seriously. This is a reminder to us:
 - 9.4.1. That the world without Christ is always going to invent myths and legends to replace God, his teachings, and his precepts and laws.
 - 9.4.2. To be extremely cautious of falling into the trap of accepting the latest cosmological myth (such as the Big Bang), biological myth (such as Darwinianism), psychological myth (such as the innate goodness of man), or sociological myth (such as the view that society can correct all misbehaviour through education).
 - 9.4.3. That although men today think they are modern and beyond superstition, they are just as ignorant of truth as were the administrators in Nebuchadnezzar's court.

Stand (Dan 1.8-16)

1. What resolution did Daniel make? Why? (8)
 - 1.1. He resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. He determined that he would not eat the food from the king's table (Dan 1.5).
 - 1.2. Resolved/purposed: The Hebrew reads: "he placed on his heart" which is viewed as an idiom and is translated in a more abstract form into modern English: the NKJV has "purposed in his heart;" the NIV and ESV have "solemnly resolved". None of the translations are totally literal, although the NKJV retains the idea of heart.
2. Why did he make this resolution not to defile himself?
 - 2.1. Many commentators state that the reason Daniel refused to eat the king's food was because it hadn't been prepared in the proper way, according to Jewish practice (i.e., by draining the blood from the meat; based on their understanding or interpretation of Gen 9.4; Dt 12.23-25), or that the meat was from unclean animals (e.g., pigs; Lev 11.1-47; Dt 14.3-20).
 - 2.1.1. It is possible that these considerations were part of the reason he stayed clear of the meat.
 - 2.1.1.1. Although it is also possible that the Babylonians practiced sacrificial blood-letting as part of their ceremonial rites, so the blood would have been drained from the meat.
 - 2.1.1.2. Also, even if some of the meat was unclean (e.g., pork), there may have been options as the king's feasts undoubtedly had something for everyone's taste, since not everyone would have liked all the food portions served at a feast, and feasts in those days included alternatives (1 Ki 4.22-23; Neh 5.18). Daniel could have selected goat, beef, lamb or deer meat if pork were being served.
 - 2.1.1.2.1. The idea of 'clean' animals was not an exclusively Jewish concept (Gen 7.2, 8; Gen 8.20), and it is possible that the Babylonians did not serve pork. Amy Dockser Marcus argues that pork was not used as part of the diet throughout the ME.³⁴
 - 2.1.1.2.2. However, pork probably did form part of the regular diet of the Babylonians since many pig bones have been found in city excavations.³⁵
 - 2.1.1.2.3. In addition, we know that pigs were raised in ME (presumably for

³⁴ Amy Dockser Marcus; *The View From Nebo* (UK: Back Bay Books, 2001), p. 23. However, some of her methods and conclusions are suspect; so this may also be the case with her conclusions about the dietary use of pig meat.

³⁵ For example, Elizabeth C. Stone, Paul Zimansky, "Mashkan-shapir and the Anatomy of an Old Babylonian City," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Dec., 1992), pp. 212-218.

- dietary purposes) at the time of Jesus (Mt 8.30-32; Lk 15.15, 16), and the practice was probably not much different from 600 years before.
- 2.1.2. Daniel's refusal to eat the meat, also, does not explain why he wouldn't drink the wine from the king's table. Some suggest that the Babylonian's drank 'strong' wine, whereas the Jews diluted it. This seems to be a specious argument as there is absolutely nothing in Scripture that speaks of diluting wine, and the proponents of this view are reading into the meaning of 'strong drink' (e.g., Prov 20.1 in the NKJV and ESV) which the NIV translates as beer (or fermented drink).
- 2.2. The primary reason, likely in focus, is that the food and wine were consecrated to idols and eating and drinking would have been to participate in, and would be viewed as endorsing, a pagan religious ritual. The meat served at the king's table would have been dedicated to a false god through sacrifice, and the wine would have been declared sacred through a libation of pouring. Sharing in the meal would have been sharing in the sacrifice and libation and honouring the idol (Ex 34.15; Acts 15.20; 1 Cor 10.20, 21).
- 2.3. Daniel, is set forth as a contrast to the captive Judean King, Jehoiachin, who did evil in the eyes of God (2 Ki 24.8, 9), and accepted rations from Nebuchadnezzar's table (2 Ki 25.29-30). To Jehoiachin, attending the king's feasts and filling his belly with rich fare was of more importance than the matter of directly, or indirectly, participating in false worship.
3. How does Daniel's response to this pagan practice differ from how he has responded to the previous pagan practices we have, so far, encountered in this chapter?
- 3.1. Daniel and his friends were confronted with three significant pagan influences: their course of education, their changed names, and pagan worship rituals.
- 3.2. It is at the latter of these three that they drew the line of noncompliance and non-compromise.
- 3.3. We must note, and will consider it when we derive lessons from this section (8-16), that it was with respect to false worship that Daniel drew the line.
- 3.4. Sadly, many in the Church today have little concern for respecting the true forms of worship that God requires but make a big deal out of avoiding other matters that may or may not be a moral issue. For example:
- 3.4.1. They object to their children watching a particular movie or listening to a particular song but they don't object to participating in false worship in the church through the use of drama or hymns of merely human composition.
- 3.4.2. They object to Christians drinking alcohol but are happy to participate in the festivals introduced into the Church from paganism, such as the those associated with Saturnalia (e.g., putting an evergreen tree in the church foyer, decorating it with candles/lights, and putting presents under it [along with a crèche]).
- 3.4.3. They would make a point about buying only 'Fair Trade Certified' coffee but would not object to the ordination of women or to having a woman filling the office of Elder and preaching in the congregation.
- 3.4.4. They make one's view about prophecy and end-times a standard for fellowship, but don't believe that misusing God's time by going to a restaurant or shopping on the Lord's Day is an offence.
4. How did Daniel approach the execution of his resolution? (8)
- 4.1. He asked for permission to avoid partaking of the meat and wine that had been offered to idols.
- 4.1.1. We are to understand from this that his tone was one of deference and submission to those in authority over him.
- 4.1.2. He did not demand that the Babylonian court administrative system and religious cult conform to God's laws (although they should have).
- 4.2. At this point Daniel is acting as the spokesman for all four of the young men.
- 4.2.1. This is an important point that should not be missed as it is relevant to Daniel's approach to the matter.

- 4.2.2. It does not indicate that the other three (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah/Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were not also resolved in this matter. We know that they also had strong convictions not to participate in false worship (chapter 3).
 - 4.2.3. Rather, his approaching the official in charge was to meet one-on-one. This allowed Daniel to discuss the matter with the official without putting him on the defensive. This could not have happened if a group delegation had showed up at his office door.
 - 4.2.4. Daniel shows wisdom (at a relatively young age) about the dynamics of human relationships and how to approach those in positions of power.
5. What did Daniel have supporting him as he made his request of the chief official? (9)
- 5.1. He approached the problem in the will and power of God, and with an understanding that his petition had some likelihood of success from a human-perspective.
 - 5.2. He knew that if his request was in accordance with God's will then whatever transpired would be what God wanted for him. God works all things for the good of his people who act in accordance with his will—i.e., those who love him (Rom 8.28).
6. What behaviour traits had, likely, been displayed by Daniel in the short time that the chief official had known him that would help make the chief official favourable to Daniel and his request?
- 6.1. It is reported here (9), that the chief official was favourably disposed to Daniel.
 - 6.1.1. Ultimately it was God who was in control and had made the chief official like or respect Daniel.
 - 6.1.2. However, Daniel was the responsible agent who had already shown grace, composure, and discipline and had gained the favour of the chief official.
 - 6.1.3. It should not surprise us that in such a short time (possibly hours or at most a few days) Daniel had gained this standing. People form first impressions of others within about 30 seconds of meeting them. Also, a typical job interview that lasts ½-1 hour is used as a key determinant in the selection of people for many responsible positions.
 - 6.1.4. Daniel reports the attitude of the official as '*hesed*' (kindness) translated 'favour,' and sympathy ('compassion' or 'brotherhood'). It appears that a strong bond of loyalty had already developed between Daniel and the court official.
 - 6.2. Even in the manner in which he asked for permission to desist from partaking of the king's fare, display's these traits.
 - 6.2.1. He was gracious in his approach. He was not belligerent, rude, or fanatical.
 - 6.2.2. He came across as a man of principle.
 - 6.2.2.1. A scene in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, has similarities to what may have happened in the case of Daniel.
 - 6.2.2.2. Eric Liddell is appearing before the Olympic Committee and the Prince of Wales attempts to cajole him into running in the 100M heat on Sunday, with an appeal to God and country: "There are times when we are asked to make sacrifices in the name of that loyalty. And without them our allegiance is worthless. As I see it, for you, this is such a time."
 - 6.2.2.3. After Lord Lindsay offers his place in the 400M to Liddell, the Duke of Sutherland says "He did have us beaten, and thank God he did. ... The 'lad', as you call him, is a true man of principles and a true athlete. His speed is a mere extension of his life, its force. We sought to sever his running from himself."
 - 6.2.2.4. The Duke of Sutherland recognized from that brief (apocryphal?) meeting, a man of principle.
 - 6.2.2.5. Notice that Eric Liddell was dealing with a matter related to God's honour in worship (keeping the Sabbath holy), just as Daniel was dealing with God's honour in worship (not bowing to an idol).
7. What objection and concern was raised by the chief official? (10)

- 7.1. His objection was that if Daniel, and his friends, did not partake of the assigned food and drink they might show signs of malnourishment compared with their peers in the training program.
 - 7.1.1. “Looking worse” includes the idea of being dejected or out of humour. The verbal form means ‘to storm’.
 - 7.1.2. The diet of the king would have been quite rich. For active young men it would have made them look filled-out compared with most people who had a meagre diet and would often have looked gaunt and impoverished.
- 7.2. His concern was that he would lose his head for not having carried out his duties adequately.
 - 7.2.1. Kings in the ancient world had a notorious reputation for having little patience with anyone who appeared to be going contrary to their will. Biblical examples, include:
 - 7.2.1.1. Pharaoh who had his cupbearer and baker imprisoned at the time of Joseph and removed the head of the baker.
 - 7.2.1.2. Pharaoh who had the children killed at the time of Moses.
 - 7.2.1.3. Jehoram who, on gaining the rule over Judah, killed all his brothers and other princes (2 Chron 21.4).
 - 7.2.1.4. Herod who had the children killed at the time of Christ and (extra-Biblically) had killed his brother-in-law, his wife, his mother in law and a number of his sons. Augustus Caesar is reported to have said that he “would rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son!”
 - 7.2.1.5. John the Baptist losing his head for calling Herod an adulterer (Mt 14.3-11).
 - 7.2.2. Ironically, Nebuchadnezzar appears to have been of a more humane disposition than typical of the cruelty of Assyrian emperors.
- 8. How did Daniel overcome the objection? (11-13)
 - 8.1. He proposed a short test or experiment to determine if his suggestion would be a problem and thus to overcome the practical objection.
 - 8.1.1. He proposed the use of the ‘scientific method’³⁶ through an experiment with a control group and a test group.
 - 8.1.2. The test was to have Daniel and his friends—the test sample—fed a different diet for a period of 10 days and then to compare the results of their diet against the results of those in the ‘control’ group—the rest of the young men in training.
 - 8.1.3. The 10 days may have been a round number implying an unspecified period of time (Dan 1.20; Amos 5.3; Zech 8.23).
 - 8.2. The specific diet that he proposed consisted of vegetables and water.
 - 8.2.1. The vegetables and water were to be *substitutes* for the meat and wine used as cultic offerings. This does not mean that they would eat nothing (although the NIV adds ‘nothing’ in verse 12, this is not in the Hebrew) other than vegetables and drink only water, any more than at the king’s feast people ate only meat and drank only wine.
 - 8.2.2. Vegetables in general are included, not just legumes as implied by the KJV. The word used here (only here and in verse 16) for vegetables, is closely related to the word (used in Lev 11.37 and Is 61.11) that refers to ‘things sown’ including grain.
 - 8.2.3. Their diet, therefore, would probably have consisted of breads (wheat, rye, and barley; rice was apparently introduced from further east during the Hellenistic era³⁷ a couple of centuries after the time of Daniel), beans, lentils, and nuts (e.g., pistachio nuts and almonds; Gen 43.11). It likely also included fruits (e.g., olives, pomegranates, figs, dates, raisins and apples; all of which are mentioned in the OT) and dairy products (e.g., cheese, curds and yoghurts; Gen 18.8; Dt 32.14; 2 Sam 17.29).
 - 8.2.4. This means that, in general, vegetables were not offered to idols by the Babylonians in

³⁶ “Scientific method is a body of techniques for investigating phenomena and acquiring new knowledge, as well as for correcting and integrating previous knowledge. It is based on gathering observable, empirical and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning, the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses.”

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method

³⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice

contrast to the *kenzen* offerings in Buddhism. *Kenzen* is an offering of a vegetarian meal to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism with four trays that include bowls of rice, a cup of soup, a bowl of beans, a plate of boiled vegetables, and a plate of pickles.

- 8.2.5. We are not to understand the diet proposed by Daniel as an endorsement of vegetarianism. There is nothing evil in eating meat. In fact, to the contrary, eating meat is required by God as part of the observance of the covenant meal in the Passover and is required of us as a symbol or token of the covenant made between God and man.³⁸
- 8.3. There are different views about the nutritional value of the diet proposed by Daniel.
 - 8.3.1. Some argue that Daniel and his friends would not have been able to stay healthy on a long-term diet consisting merely of vegetables and water without God's intervention and they attribute their success to a miracle. However, a planned vegetarian diet can provide sufficient amounts of protein, iron, calcium and vitamins; especially if it is augmented with dairy products (e.g., cheese) and eggs. As noted above, it is more likely that their diet included more than just vegetables.
 - 8.3.2. Others argue that the rich fare of meat and wine (which often excluded fresh vegetables) provided at the royal feasts would have been unhealthy and fattening, and that Daniel's proposal was just common sense. They state that it isn't surprising, therefore, that Daniel and his friends would have been healthier than their peers. However, the fuller knowledge that we have today about a balanced, healthy diet and the notion of eating from the four (or five) food groups, would have been largely unconsidered in Daniel's day.
 - 8.3.3. We are not to conclude that the diet suggested by Daniel displayed particular wisdom on his part, or that it required a specific miracle to be effective. Rather we are to focus on the important decision by Daniel and his friends to avoid anything that would imply that they were participating in, or supporting, false religious practices. The items of food in the substitution are not really the important consideration, but rather it is the fact that they were abstaining from endorsing an evil practice—consuming food offered to idols.
9. Is Daniel's suggested test presumptuous or a form of a wager?
 - 9.1. As noted above, the diet he proposed does not necessarily require a miracle to be effective. So he is not assuming that God will work a miracle on his behalf. He is merely being faithful to God by refusing to do something that would be perceived as supporting a false religion.
 - 9.2. Daniel's decision was based on three key facts, that Daniel knew clearly:
 - 9.2.1. It would be a sin to participate in eating meat that he knew was offered to idols and would lead others to believe that he endorsed the false religious practices.
 - 9.2.2. God called him to obey without equivocation; regardless of the outcome.
 - 9.2.3. God was in control of events and that whatever happened was exactly what God had planned.
 - 9.3. There is nothing in the text that suggests that Daniel is testing God, or presenting a wager to the Babylonian authorities. He is simply being faithful and leaving the results to God—whatever they may be.
 - 9.4. Daniel may have had a revelation from God, in a dream or vision (as he was given visions and the ability to interpret dreams, 17, etc.), similar to what Paul received during the storm, about the safety of those onboard, before the shipwreck on Malta (Acts 27.21-26). If he had this vision, God may have assured him of the outcome.
 - 9.5. Daniel pointed out that there was no great risk in trying his proposed test for a short period of ten-days. (12)
 - 9.5.1. He proposed a brief period for the test as a means of overcoming their fears.
 - 9.5.2. The officials would have realized that not too much could go wrong in ten days. They likely did not have to present Daniel and his friends to the king for a few years, so a negative outcome from a ten-day trial could be easily corrected in sufficient time to

³⁸ James R. Hughes, *Why Did God Permit Man to Eat Meat?* 2004; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

prevent dire long-term results from their perspective.

- 9.5.3. The unspoken implication in Daniel's proposal (13) is that if, at the end of ten days, their condition was considered to be worse than that of their peers, then they would be willing to accept the consequences and revert to the diet of their peers.

10. Whom did Daniel approach among the Babylonian officials with his request? (8-11)

10.1. He asked for permission from the steward or guard to try the test for ten days. The word used here (*melzar*) appears only in the Hebrew OT in this verse. It has been translated as "guard", "steward", or "official" (Greek: treated as a proper noun/name; in Theodotion as Amelsad; in the Septuagint (LXX) as Abiezri).

10.1.1. The translations (NIV, ESV, NKJV) have "Daniel *said*". This is a correct translation. However in English it has a firmness or sense of demand that may not be present in the Hebrew. It is possible that we should view Daniel's response more as a request than a statement. An alternate (equally valid translation) is, "Daniel replied" or "Daniel answered" (Gen 18.30; Gen 38.18; 2 Chron 31.10; etc.)

10.2. Why did Daniel approach the steward (or guard)?

10.2.1. The steward or guard mentioned in verse 11 is a different individual from the chief of the eunuchs Ashpenaz (3, 11).

10.2.2. Some argue that since Ashpenaz raised an objection and denied Daniel's request, he went around the chief official and approached the steward (or guard) who had been placed immediately over the four youths to supervise their training, and requested the ten-day trial.

10.2.3. It could, however, be that Daniel was in front of *both* Ashpenaz and the steward (or guard). It is unlikely that Daniel would (or could) have appeared before the chief of the eunuchs (i.e., the leading official in the Nebuchadnezzar's court) without his immediate supervisor being present. A slave, captive, or hostage youth did not just walk into the presence of a senior court official and receive an audience and ask for a boon. Daniel would have been accompanied by the subordinate official (the steward or guard) who had immediate charge of his training or feeding and care.

10.2.4. It is quite likely that his initial request of the chief of the eunuchs was made through, or at least in the presence of, the steward (or guard).

10.2.5. In this context, it appears that when the chief of the eunuchs raised a concern, Daniel, in his presence, turned to the person who had immediate charge of his development and proposed the ten-day trial.

10.2.6. This is a much more likely scenario, than to suggest that Daniel connived with a subordinate to the chief of the eunuchs or that he tried to get around the concern or decision of the chief of the eunuchs by going to another official. We do not need to conclude that Daniel failed to get permission not to eat the food presented before idols, in his first attempt and then tried with a second person. If the chief of the eunuchs was concerned about the possible consequences of not following the prescribed royal diet, we can be sure that a subordinate official would not have agreed with the plan of a young slave (captive, or hostage) from a rebellious nation.

10.3. In summary, Daniel's approach was:

10.3.1. *Respectful* – He approached the officials with respect for the positions of authority. He was not insubordinate.

10.3.2. *Requesting* – He asked for their permission to pursue his alternate course of action. He did not demand his rights, or even God's rights; but rather presented his petition as a request.

10.3.3. *Responsive* – He had prepared a means of convincing the officials. He was prepared to handle objections to his proposed test.

10.3.4. *Reasonable* – He proposed a means of testing his proposal (i.e., a brief period) that could not be challenged except by someone who was being totally uncooperative. As

we noted previously, he used an empirical means of demonstrating the success of his proposed diet.

10.3.5. *Reverent* – He based his approach to the officials on a trust and fear of God. He was sure that he was doing the right thing for the right reasons.

11. Would Daniel have eaten the king's food if he had not been granted the exemption?

11.1. From what we know of Daniel as recorded in later parts of this book, it is unlikely that he would have. He was consistent throughout his lifetime to the principles of godliness.

11.2. However, we should not strain ourselves on hypotheticals. The fact is that he was acting in the will of God and trusted that God would provide for their circumstances.

12. What was the outcome of Daniel's proposal? (14-16)

12.1. The Babylonian officials agreed to his proposal to test the alternative diet for ten days (14). God worked graciously (through what is often called 'common grace' but I prefer to call it 'general grace') and asserted his power over the Babylonian officials. The heart of kings (all rulers and government officials) is in the hand of God (Prov 21.1).

12.2. The diet that Daniel and his friends ate made them appear healthier than their peers (15).

12.2.1. Literally, the Hebrew says, "good/better in appearance and fatter of flesh". The term 'fat', when used in the Bible does not necessarily mean 'obese' but rather can have the simple idea of healthy (e.g., Ezk 34.20; Zech 11.16).

12.2.2. As we noted previously, whether the diet was naturally healthier or miraculously healthier for Daniel and his companions does not need to be debated.

12.2.3. The food that had been sacrificed to idols was proven to be of less value than the diet God provided to the godly men. The Babylonian gods were, in effect, shown to have less power than Yahweh.

12.3. Daniel and his friends were permitted to continue their vegetable-based diet (16).

12.3.1. Daniel's test was proven a success and his request was granted.

12.3.1.1. God blessed and prospered Daniel because he was obedient to his commands and trusted in him.

12.3.2. Daniel and his three friends were able to avoid participating in pagan worship practices.

12.3.3. Daniel was established, through this incident, as a leader, a man of principle, and a wise man.

12.3.3.1. We know that first impressions and publicly visible actions carry a lot of weight. For example, if a president of the United States is seen tripping on the stairs to Marine One, he is 'forever' viewed by the media as a bumbling fool. If a new manager comes into a company and fires a few incompetent staff, he 'forever' has the reputation of being tough. In the same way, if a person in a newly formed work unit makes an astute observation or gives wise advice in a meeting (especially if it is done in a way that is not perceived to be designed to impress people) and his comments are recognized by the boss, from then on people will look to him for further guidance and will listen with care to what he says.

12.3.4. Daniel's refusal to eat the diet of meat sacrificed to an idol and drink wine, of which a portion had been poured to an idol as a libation, must have occurred within the first day or two of his tenure in the Babylonian training school. So, from that moment forward he would have been perceived as one who was willing to challenge the status quo and as a man who knew how to tactfully and wisely achieve his goals.

13. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

13.1. *Priority of obedience* – Daniel shows the importance of being obedient to those in authority over us. What are the two aspects of Daniel's obedience?

- 13.1.1. He was, first, obedient to God. He would not do anything that he knew was wrong and that would displease God, regardless of who commanded him to do it or what might be the potential outcome.
- 13.1.2. He was, second, obedient to the human authorities placed over him. Daniel respected and obeyed the king and his appointed officials and the teachers who instructed him (even though they were pagans steeped in false religions). His respect was for their position of authority as instituted by God (Rom 13.1-7; Titus 3.1; 1 Pt 2.13-17), not for the faulty religious foundation on which they based their authority and instruction.
- 13.1.3. Daniel and his friends were obedient to the human authorities in every matter, unless it contradicted God's authority (Dan 3.12, 16-18; Acts 4.19-20; Acts 5.29). They were not young rebels resisting all authority. They understood what the real issues were, and when it was necessary to resist human authority.
- 13.2. *Purity of observance* – Daniel teaches us that we must be discerning about what constitutes false worship.
 - 13.2.1. Someone else, in a situation similar to Daniel's, might have said, "I don't believe that idols are anything and I don't worship them, therefore eating meat and drinking wine used in oblations to false gods are nothing. I can worship Yahweh and eat the meat and drink the wine of king Nebuchadnezzar."
 - 13.2.2. What is the faulty logic in this kind of interpretation or approach to worship? True worship includes not only doing what is right in worship, but also avoiding doing what is wrong in worship.
 - 13.2.3. What does this imply? It means that when we come to consider questions about what are right and wrong practices in worship we must consider what God has defined (explicitly or implicitly through example and sound inference) as the elements, modes and circumstances of true worship.³⁹ We must ensure that we include in worship only what God has prescribed. We must exclude from worship, and avoid participation in, any practice that God has *proscribed* and exclude from worship any practice that he has not explicitly *prescribed*.
 - 13.2.4. How can we apply the example of Daniel in our own situation today? A few examples (which many in the Church today won't understand) include:
 - 13.2.4.1. Opening a store on Sunday in order to meet sales targets is a form of idol worship. The idol in this case is material gain. We are to cease commercial activity on the Lord's Day (Ex 20.8-11).⁴⁰
 - 13.2.4.2. Neglecting to tithe on income. The idol in this case is the selfish clinging to financial well-being that God has provided. Tithing is a required of all mankind (Mal 3.10) to remind us that we are a subject to the Great King⁴¹
 - 13.2.4.3. Singing human-composed hymns (instead of the Psalms) as worship. The idol in this case is the vain imagination of humans. We are to present only the best sacrifices of praise to God, which are the God-breathed words from the songbook of the Church, the Psalms.⁴²
 - 13.2.5. Participating in the worship practices or religious rites of a false god was what Daniel carefully avoided.
 - 13.2.5.1. Some commentators on Daniel cannot understand that the real issue, for Daniel when he refused to eat the meat and drink the wine of the Babylonian court, was false worship not the avoidance of the meat of unclean animals (since that doesn't explain why he also avoided the wine).

³⁹ See: Chapter 6 – "Elements, Modes and Circumstances of Worship" In: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁴⁰ James R. Hughes, *The Sabbath: A Universal and Enduring Ordinance of God*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁴¹ See: Appendix J – "Tithing vs Free-Will Offerings" in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁴² See: Chapter 9 – "The Psalter: the Hymnbook of the Church" in: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 13.2.5.2. People in the Church today do not understand the importance of true and pure worship (Jn 4.24) and often compromise in this area.
- 13.2.5.3. Eating food sacrificed to an idol is a denial of the true God. Therefore, false worship is the ultimate sin.
- 13.2.6. We will again consider the importance, for Daniel and his friends, of maintaining purity in worship when we study later portions of the book of Daniel (e.g., chapters 3 and 6).
- 13.3. *Promise obtained* – God has told us not to fear men but to trust him in every situation (Ps 25.2-3; Ps 56.11; Ps 62.8).
 - 13.3.1. If we are obedient to what he has commanded, he will provide for us and protect us.
 - 13.3.2. This does not mean that we will never face hardship or persecution. In fact, the opposite may be true. Jesus says that it is inevitable that persecution will come upon his people (Mt 5.10-12; Jn 15.21), because the world hates him, and God's truth.
 - 13.3.3. Rather, it means that:
 - 13.3.3.1. God will provide means for us to escape from sin, no matter how difficult the circumstances he sends in his providence (1 Cor 10.13; James 5.11).
 - 13.3.3.2. God will ultimately vindicate and honour his people, even if they are abused in this life (Ps 135.14).
- 13.4. *Perceived as obliging* – We are to live quiet and holy lives in the midst of a pagan society, and thereby gain a good reputation with those whom we serve (1 Tim 3.7; Eph 6.5-8; Col 3.22-24). Daniel gives us good principles for acting in any situation when dealing with government officials or when interacting with authorities in an employment setting. We should be (as we noted above):
 - 13.4.1. *Respectful* – He approached the officials with respect for the positions of authority. He was not insubordinate.
 - 13.4.2. *Requesting* – He asked for their permission to pursue his alternate course of action. He did not demand his rights, or even God's rights; but rather presented his petition as a request.
 - 13.4.3. *Responsive* – He had prepared a means of convincing the officials. He was prepared to handle objections to his proposed test.
 - 13.4.4. *Reasonable* – He proposed a means of testing his proposal (i.e., a brief period) that could not be challenged except by someone who was being totally uncooperative. As we noted previously, he used an empirical means of demonstrating the success of his proposed diet.
 - 13.4.5. *Reverent* – He based his approach to the officials on a trust and fear of God. He was sure that he was doing the right thing for the right reasons.

Station (Dan 1.17-21)

- 1. How did God bless the faithfulness of Daniel and his friends in their education?
 - 1.1. God gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.
 - 1.1.1. Knowledge and understanding are gifts from God (Eccl 2.26; 1 Kings 3.9-12 [Solomon]; James 3.17).
 - 1.1.1.1. The world thinks that knowledge and understanding are either inherited (in the genes) or the product of our environment. While both play a part in an individual's abilities, ultimately God provides knowledge and understanding.
 - 1.1.1.2. There are people who are blessed with the best genes or educational environment who become intellectual, moral, or practical fools.
 - 1.1.1.3. In contrast, there are individuals who come from challenging backgrounds, who rise above their inherited capacities and environmental hindrances and become wise and discerning.
 - 1.1.1.4. The single, most critical factor isn't faculties or family but a fear of God.
 - 1.1.2. They were able to pass the 'civil servants' exams' of their day. They were able, at least, to

regurgitate successfully their learning about the language and literature of the Babylonians (4). It is interesting, however, that the account does not speak only of the “the language and literature of the Babylonians”. Rather, the account says, “all/all kinds of literature”. What is the implication?

- 1.1.2.1. They had a broader knowledge of reality than was provided by their Babylonian schooling.
- 1.1.2.2. They would have been better educated because of studying the Biblical alternative to humanistic worldviews.
- 1.1.2.3. They would have had to develop an ability to think and debate critically because they would not have accepted the Babylonian religious and philosophical systems.
- 1.1.2.4. They would have learned how to formulate arguments and an apologetic for Biblical truth in a hostile environment.
- 1.1.3. What would they have had available to them as instruction that a typical student (from Babylon or the surrounding nations) would not have had?
 - 1.1.3.1. As children of the Covenant and the nobility of the Jews, they had been favoured with a learning environment that would have included much of the OT. This provided them with a perspective on reality that they could never have obtained from the “language and literature of the Babylonians” alone.
 - 1.1.3.2. What important lessons in reality did they obtain from the Scriptures, that had been provided by God by the time of Daniel:
 - 1.1.3.2.1. Pentateuch – creation, origin of sin, origin of the nations, God’s law
 - 1.1.3.2.2. Job – God’s providential sovereignty and the ‘problem of evil’
 - 1.1.3.2.3. Ecclesiastes – the meaning of life
 - 1.1.3.2.4. History – God’s control over the events of history and his ownership of the nations
 - 1.1.3.2.5. Isaiah – God’s plans for providing a saviour
 - 1.1.3.2.6. Proverbs – Guidance for a wise life
 - 1.1.3.2.7. Psalms – (in addition to all of the above) the Holy Spirit’s guide book to the soul and attributes of a gracious God
- 1.1.4. How can modern Christian youth be prepared with a Biblical worldview that gives them an advantage over their non-Christian peers, which is equivalent to the learning situation of Daniel and his three companions?
 - 1.1.4.1. By studying the Bible, not only as providing the way of salvation, as the *primary* source for: theology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, history, ethics and morality, sociology and human relationships, political theory, and (even!) science. Consider the following examples:
 - 1.1.4.2. Philosophy – A university student who has studied only the worldly philosophers from Plato to Bertrand Russell cannot provide a consistent worldview because he will reject the reality of God and his creation. What are some of the basic questions that *no* non-Christian system of philosophy can answer adequately?
 - 1.1.4.2.1. Why is there anything instead of nothing? [Gen 1.1]
 - 1.1.4.2.2. Is the universe eternal? [Gen 1.1; 2 Pt 3.12]
 - 1.1.4.2.3. Why does the universe appear to have been designed? [Gen 1.1-31]
 - 1.1.4.2.4. Is their replicability of nature, or will the future be like the past? (The ‘problem’ of induction⁴³) [Gen 1.1-31; Gen 8.22; Ps 90.2; Ps 102.27; James 1.17]
 - 1.1.4.2.5. Why are their particulars and not just a universal? [Gen 1.1-31]
 - 1.1.4.2.6. Does God exist? [Gen 1.1]
 - 1.1.4.2.7. What is the nature of God? [Jn 4.24; Job 11.7-9; Ps 90.2; Ex 3.14; Ps

⁴³ The search for a justification for inductive reasoning has confounded non-Christian philosophers. David Hume, for example, noted the problem that everyday reasoning depends on patterns of repeated experience rather than deductively valid arguments.

- 147.5; Rev 4.8; Ex 34.6, 7]
- 1.1.4.2.8. How did personality arise? [Gen 1.27]
- 1.1.4.2.9. How do I know I really exist? [Gen 1.1]
- 1.1.4.2.10. Is there really an external world (i.e., relative to my mind⁴⁴)? [Gen 1.1-31]
- 1.1.4.2.11. How do I know that other minds exist? [Gen 1.27]
- 1.1.4.2.12. Is man different from animals? If so, why? [Gen 1.26; 1 Cor 15.39]
- 1.1.4.2.13. Why do animals and men die and not live beyond a certain maximum point? [Gen 3.17-18]
- 1.1.4.2.14. Why does man reproduce sexually and not asexually? How did sexual reproduction arise? [Gen 1.27, 28; Gen 2.18-25]
- 1.1.4.2.15. Why am I able to communicate with other people? [Gen 1.27]
- 1.1.4.2.16. How did language develop? [Gen 1.27; Gen 11.1-9]
- 1.1.4.2.17. How do we deal with the brain-mind distinction? What is 'soul'?⁴⁵ [Gen 2.7; Eccl 12.7; Mt 10.28; Lk 23.43]
- 1.1.4.2.18. Why are there principles of mathematics and logic? [Gen 1.14-19; Is 40.22; Ps 19.1-4]
- 1.1.4.2.19. Why are the laws of mathematics universal and necessarily true? [As above]
- 1.1.4.2.20. Why is there a correspondence between mathematics and the natural world? [Gen 1.1-31]
- 1.1.4.2.21. Is anything true? [Jn 3.33; 1 Jn 5.20]
- 1.1.4.2.22. Why are the principles of beauty universal? [Gen 1.31-2.1; with Gen 1.27]
- 1.1.4.2.23. Why is there religion? Why does man seek after a god? [Ps 19.1; Rom 1.19-20; Acts 17.26-26]
- 1.1.4.2.24. Does man have a purpose in existence? [Gen 1.27, 28; 1 Cor 10.31; 1 Pt 4.11]
- 1.1.4.2.25. Is there such a thing as an evil or good action? [Ex 20.1-18]
- 1.1.4.2.26. Why is there evil? [Gen 3.1-7]
- 1.1.4.2.27. How can we deal with the 'problem of evil'⁴⁶?
- 1.1.4.2.28. How can we deal with the problem of evil—man's sin? [Jn 3.16]
- 1.1.4.2.29. Can there be a universal system of ethics for morality? [Ex 20.1-18; Ps 96.10; Acts 17.24-31; Rom 1.18-32]
- 1.1.4.2.30. What is the meaning of work? [Gen 2.15; Ps 128.2; Eph 4.28]

⁴⁴ The movies in the *Matrix* series explored this philosophical problem.

⁴⁵ Theories of the mind fall into three basic categories: Monistic Materialism (Raw Materialism which holds that nothing but matter exists or Epiphenomenalism which holds that matter configures into 'mind'), Monistic Idealism (Absolute Idealism which holds that nothing but mind exists or Moderate Idealism that holds that matter emanates from mind), Dualism (Parallelism which holds that mind and matter exist but do not interact or Interactionism that holds that mind and matter exist independent of one another and interact in some way)

⁴⁶ When considering God's providential control over all events, someone might ask why God would plan, decree, and permit (i.e., not restrain; Gen 20.6) evil such as a person being born blind or a terrorist attack. David Hume, quoting Epicurus, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) says: "Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?" This analysis has been re-stated by many atheists since Hume. However, there is no 'problem of evil' unless evil really exists. Without God's moral standard, there is no evil. All other definitions of 'evil' are purely subjective. One man's evil can be another man's good. The 'problem of evil' turns out to be a problem for Hume, all atheists, and all unbelievers. In order to argue that something is evil they must first show that something *can* be evil (i.e., that the existence of evil is meaningful) and not just inconvenient, unpleasant, or against their own wills. Moral indignation against atrocities is inconsistent within their materialistic naturalistic philosophy. The unbeliever has to work from a Christian presupposition to declare something as evil. The real problem of evil is a logical problem for the unbeliever. How then, as Christians, can we answer Hume's challenge? We can set out the following presuppositions:

- God is completely and only good. (Ps 25.8; Ps 119.68).
- God can do anything except what is against his nature (e.g., deny truth).
- Evil exists by definition (against God's law) and actually (evil happens).
- God plans, decrees, and permits evil (such as man being born blind) for reasons which are morally commendable and good.

The final presupposition is the one missed by Hume. As a set, there is no logical contradiction in these four statements.

- 1.1.4.2.31. What is marriage, and why do people marry? [Gen 2.18-25; Mk 10.6-9]
- 1.1.4.3. Science – A university student who has studied science from a materialistic and uniformitarian perspective cannot answer questions that a Christian child could answer:
- 1.1.4.3.1. How could man and dinosaurs have co-existed (as is shown by some historical artefacts, even though modern ‘science’ rejects the evidence)? [Gen 1.1-31; Gen 7.2; Gen 8.17, 18]
- 1.1.4.3.2. Where did oil and natural gas come from? [Gen 7.1-8.22]
- 1.1.4.3.3. Why is there global warming today (if there is)? [Gen 7.1-8.22]
- 1.1.4.3.4. How do species originate? [Gen 1.20-24; Gen 7.2; Gen 8.17, 18]
- 1.1.4.3.5. Why is there similar structures and mechanisms in quite distinct classes of animals (e.g., fins in fish and sharks; wings on bats and birds; eyes in insects and fish; etc.)? [Gen 1.20-24]
- 1.1.4.3.6. Why do men speak different languages and why are linguists stumped when they try to find a common ancestor for all language? [Gen 11.1-9] “Do materialists really think that language just “evolved”, like finches’ beaks, or have they simply never thought about the matter rationally? Where’s the evidence? How could it come about that human beings all agreed that particular grunts carried particular connotations? How could it have come about that groups of anthropoid apes developed the amazing morphological complexity of a single sentence, let alone the whole grammatical mystery which has engaged Chomsky and others in our lifetime and linguists for time out of mind? No, the existence of language is one of the many phenomena—of which love and music are the two strongest—which suggest that human beings are very much more than collections of meat.”⁴⁷
- 1.1.4.3.7. Why are sub-atomic particles uniform? Why do all the electrons in the universe have exactly the same mass and charge, and exactly the opposite charge to all protons?
- 1.1.4.3.8. What is matter composed of? [Col 1.16, 17]
Jesus literally holds the universe together. If you decompose an atom, what do you find? Smaller sub-atomic particles such as electrons, protons, and neutrons. If you decompose sub-atomic particles, what do you find? Even smaller constituents of matter like quarks. Of what are quarks composed? Those conducting elementary particle physics don’t know. Some postulate the existence of *preons*, ‘point-like’ (i.e., with zero dimensions) particles. Others have postulated ‘string theory’ (one-dimensional components). At the bottom where will this decomposition end? Possibly the analysis of gluons, which hold quarks together, points to the conclusion. Apparently, gluons themselves “need something to interact by. That turns out to be ‘instantons’⁴⁸ [which are] solutions to mathematical equations but ... have no materiality. Instantons are mathematical, but have a physical effect: in their presence the gluons feel forces. So nothing can affect something. [Instantons are] mathematical beings that teeter on the edge of reality and affect the behavior of objects.”⁴⁹ At root, the entire universe exists and is held together by thought. The mathematical thoughts of Jesus

⁴⁷ A. N. Wilson, "Why I believe again", *New Statesman*, 2009-04-02; www.newstatesman.com/religion/2009/04/conversion-experience-atheism

⁴⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instanton

⁴⁹ *Science News*, vol 113, no 15, 1978; quoted in Larry L Zimmerman, *Truth and the Transcendent*, p. 45.

hold the universe in existence.

1.1.4.4. History – A university student who has studied history in the past fifteen years, or so, has been subjected to a deconstructionist approach to reality. He is confronted with relativism and revisionism. Also, he has no objective means for assessing whether or not he is being presented with a reasonably accurate view of the past. His professors generally claim to believe that the study of history is subject to the whim of the interpreter and that history has no single interpretation or didactic purpose. In contrast, a Christian who has been grounded in the objective history of Scripture will likely also have been introduced to the non-politically correct interpretation of history.

1.1.4.4.1. History is not subject to selective revision by atheists, black activists (e.g., the reinterpretation of Lincoln's views about slavery), feminists, homosexuals, or political liberals.

1.1.4.4.2. History is not circular, is linear with an end, and has a purpose. It is focused on three Christ-centric events: Creation, Cross, and Consummation.

1.1.4.4.3. The events of history can be factually discerned and individual perspectives can be tested against facts that can be interpreted in common way.

1.1.4.4.4. History can teach us lessons because mankind (being created in the image of God) responds in similar ways to external events that are similar.

1.1.5. Daniel and his friends were like Solomon (1 Ki 4:29-34). They were wiser than the wise men of the nations of the East because they knew that there is such a thing as absolute and objective truth and could discern truth from falsehood. This enabled them to discern the errors in the Babylonian system for interpreting reality.

1.1.5.1. For example, we know that they did not accept/believe the falsehood that the king or idols (e.g., Dan 3:1-30) were gods.

1.1.5.2. Since all truth is God's truth, it can be found even in the false systems of the world; e.g., astrology then, and Evolution now. For example, the astrologers were able to predict solar and lunar eclipses accurately and Evolutionists are able to describe accurately the life history of different species of birds; etc. But only a person working from a Biblical worldview is able to discern truth from error. This is true wisdom.

1.1.5.3. Their ability to discern truth from error would have made them valuable advisors of the king. In what areas would their worldview have clearly shown that they were wiser than their peers among the students and the wise men?

1.1.5.3.1. They would not have believed that the Fates, false gods, or astrological/astronomical events controlled the events on earth.

1.1.5.3.2. They would not have believed in fortune-telling using sheep entrails or cast bone fragments.

1.1.5.3.3. They would not have been prone to accept common superstitions that the mass of mankind accepts (e.g., sneezing expels part of the soul, spilling salt would result in bad luck, knocking on wood [sacred oak] will bring good luck, etc.)

1.1.5.3.4. They knew that offering produce, blood or meat, or human life could not placate the anger of the gods.

1.1.6. Is there any reason to conclude that the understanding of the four young men was the result of a supernatural act on God's part?

1.1.6.1. The passage says that God gave them their knowledge and understanding. This may imply that God acted in a supernatural way to help them learn. However, on the other hand, it is not necessary to attribute their endowment to a specific

miracle (i.e., an extraordinary intervention on the part of God). We need to distinguish between:

- 1.1.6.1.1. God's gracious provisions in providence for all mankind and, in particular, his people (examples include: Eliezer happening to ask for water of Abraham's relative, Rebecca; the stone from David's sling hitting Goliath's forehead; Paul surviving a shipwreck on a beach in Malta; etc.).
- 1.1.6.1.2. God's direct intervention in the events of history that suspends *natural* (i.e., the normal manner in which God unfolds his providence) processes (e.g., the world-wide Flood; the widow's never emptying jar of flour as long as there was a famine and she fed Elijah; sending time backward on the sundial/steps of Hezekiah; etc.).
- 1.1.6.2. There is no reason to conclude that their understanding was the result of a miracle or that their ability to study and learn was supernatural. The contrast between the two parts of verse 17 seems to suggest the opposite. It appears, that Daniel alone was given something that the others did not have—the ability to understand visions and dreams. This seems to indicate that the basic learning of the four of them was natural or ordinary within the general provisions of God's general and Covenantal grace.
- 1.1.6.3. Nor, should we conclude that they gained their wisdom and understanding as the automatic result of an ascetic life. However, they would have had more applied discipline and dedication, based on their belief that they served the true God. Therefore, they would not have been as prone to the profligacy and decadence of their peers because they would have seen a greater purpose in their lives and been cognizant of their being the 'representatives' of the God and Judah, even while being hostages or slaves.
- 1.1.6.4. The level of understanding that they achieved is available to any diligent student who learns about the world while filtering that learning through a Biblical theology, cosmology, anthropology, sociology, soteriology, polity, and eschatology.
- 1.2. God gave Daniel a special (extra ordinary and supernatural) ability to "understand visions and dreams of all kinds."
 - 1.2.1. Dreams, in ancient civilizations, were thought to reveal the future. Therefore, a person who could understand and interpret dreams was believed to be able to foretell future events.
 - 1.2.1.1. Natural dreams do not in fact foretell the future.
 - 1.2.1.1.1. Satan does not have the ability to foretell or reveal the future.
 - 1.2.1.1.2. Natural dreams from the subconscious world of sleep are not revelatory.
 - 1.2.1.2. The supposed ability, called *oneirocritics*⁵⁰, to interpret dreams, is nothing more than mysticism in false religious⁵¹ or psychobabble (e.g., in Freudian dream analysis⁵²).

⁵⁰ *Oneirocritica* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) is a book (in five volumes) on dream interpretation that was written by the Greek Artemidorus in the 2nd century AD. It explains the meaning of visions such as animals in dreams (such as a fox indicating a hidden attack and a wolf indicating an open attack by an enemy). He claims that his interpretations are based on empirical validation from dream fulfillments.

⁵¹ Found in Jewish Kabbalah, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam in different forms. In Islam, Abu Hurayrah, who narrated Muhammad, said, "There are three types of dreams: a righteous dream which is glad tidings from Allah, the dream which causes sadness is from Shaitan, and a dream from the ramblings of the mind."

⁵² *The Interpretation of Dreams* is a book by Sigmund Freud, first published in German in 1899/1900. Freud believed that dreams were the "royal road to the unconscious" and were 'wish fulfillment' attempts by the unconscious to resolve psychological conflicts, usually repressed in the past. He states in chapter one: "In the following pages, I shall demonstrate that there is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and that on the application of this technique, every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance, and one which may be assigned to a specific place in the psychic activities of the waking state. Further, I shall endeavour to elucidate the processes which underlie the strangeness and obscurity

- 1.2.2. Why is the ability to interpret visions and dreams a supernatural gift?
 - 1.2.2.1. Visions and dreams as prophetic revelations come only from God. In Scripture, visions and dreams are associated with the prophetic office (Num 12.6).
 - 1.2.2.2. The giving of prophetic dreams and visions, and the ability to interpret them, is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Dan 2.28; Joel 2.28).
 - 1.2.2.3. [Note: *If* people have dreams (premonitions) that are accurate (for example, a person dreams or senses that a relative or friend has died, and discovers days later that the person did die at the exact time of the dream/thought) this may be attributable to the supra-natural (i.e., above the physical realm). It *may* be a direct revelation from God or it may be the communicative abilities of man's spiritual component breaking free temporarily from the physical relationship with the body.]
- 1.2.3. What does this tell us about Daniel?
 - 1.2.3.1. He was a prophet (Mt 24.15).
 - 1.2.3.2. In his prophetic office he may have been, effectively, in the class called Nazirite. A Nazirite devoted himself through self-imposed discipline to perform a service for God (Num 6.1–21). A Nazirite abstained from drinking wine, allowed his hair to grow, and avoided contact with dead bodies. Samson was an example who was consecrated through a vow of his mother (Judges 13.5; Judges 16.17). Daniel consecrated himself through his own vow.
 - 1.2.3.3. He was given a double portion of blessing. His three friends were blessed with wisdom and understanding. Daniel had this blessing, plus the blessing of a calling to serve God as a prophet.
 - 1.2.3.4. The statement in verse 17 about Daniel's ability "to understand visions and dreams of all kinds" is a literary device to set up the subsequent narrative which records Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.
- 1.2.4. Daniel's ability to understand and interpret visions and dreams made him invaluable throughout Nebuchadnezzar's long reign and the reign of the kings that followed.
 - 1.2.4.1. We find this gift immediately applied in chapter 2—to the saving of lives—and again in chapter 4.
 - 1.2.4.2. We also find him applying his gift foretelling the future from chapter 7 onward. In these chapters we are provided with explicit information for the arrival of the Messiah. This helps to vindicate our belief that God is the ultimate author of Scripture and that he is in control of all the events of history.
2. What did the chief official do with Daniel and his friends at the end of their training period?
 - 2.1. He presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 2.2. What might be the modern equivalence of this presentation?
 - 2.2.1. It may have been similar to a graduation ceremony.
 - 2.2.2. However, it is more likely to have been a final interview to assess the effectiveness of their training—i.e., their final exam.
 - 2.2.2.1. This may be how we are to understand the king's speaking with them. The NKJV has 'interviewed' whereas the NIV and ESV translate the verb 'to speak' as 'talked' and 'spoke'.
 - 2.2.2.2. In addition, in verse 20, we read that the king questioned (examined/inquired) them. This indicates that they were not participating in a casual conversation with the king.
 - 2.2.3. It could have been similar to defending a PhD in an oral examination or the final interview in the process of an appointment of an employee to a senior high-level

of dreams, and to deduce from these processes the nature of the psychic forces whose conflict or co-operation is responsible for our dreams."

executive, account management,, or company ‘ambassador’ position.

3. What did Nebuchadnezzar discover about Daniel and his friends?
 - 3.1. He found no one who could equal them in knowledge/wisdom and understanding, and found them to be ‘ten times’ better than magicians and enchanters/astrologers of the kingdom.
 - 3.1.1. The reference to ‘ten times’ is likely a literary device or idiom (Gen 31.7; Num 14.22; Neh 4.12; Job 19.3) meaning something like ‘greatly above’ or ‘vastly superior’ which is used to indicate that their knowledge and understanding excelled, by a significant amount, the abilities of the their peers and the incumbent officials serving the king.
 - 3.2. It wasn’t their physical appearance that stood out, but their intellectual capacity.
 - 3.2.1. It is likely that the concessions made by the chief official about their diet had not been discussed with the king.
 - 3.3. The king discovered that what God had prepared was the best.
 - 3.3.1. Although men hate Christianity and ridicule those who are faithful Christians, they appreciate the results of a disciplined Christian life. For example, they like having honest employees who can be trusted to protect their interests and work diligently.
4. To what group of officials does the recorder compare Daniel and his friends?
 - 4.1. They were found to be better than the magicians and enchanters/astrologers.
 - 4.2. What is peculiar about this comparison?
 - 4.2.1. The comparison includes officers of the court whose duties were in the realm of soothsaying, fortune-telling and religious rites.
 - 4.2.2. The comparison does not appear to include court administrators, judges, and territorial administrators—other roles of those who were standing and serving in the king’s palace.
 - 4.2.3. It may be that this list of terms includes all the other offices—although this is unlikely as other types of officials are listed separately in other places in the book (Dan 3.2, 3).
 - 4.2.4. It may be that the ‘magicians and enchanters’ held the most important, senior, or most trusted positions in the court, like the mythical/legendary Merlin was to King Arthur (compare with, Est 1.14).
 - 4.3. The king consulted magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, and diviners.
 - 4.3.1. ‘Magicians’ refers to men who ‘held the book’ and practiced as apothecaries and alchemists (e.g., with herbs, chemicals and metals). It may have included early physicians. Outside of Daniel (Gen 41.8, 24; Ex 7.11, 22; Ex 8.7, 14-15, 18-19; Ex 9.11) is only used to refer to Egyptian magicians.
 - 4.3.2. ‘Enchanters’ (used only in Dan 1.20; Dan 2.21) may refer to those who used incantations to perform exorcisms, interpreted dreams, maintained the religious liturgy, and developed the myths and legends of the Babylonian religion.
 - 4.3.3. ‘Sorcerers’ (Dan 2.2) is probably an Akkadian loanword. In its verbal form, it appears to mean, “to bewitch” or “to cast a spell.” As a noun it is used four other times in the OT (Ex 7.11; Ex 22.18; Dt 18.10; Mal 3.5).
 - 4.3.4. ‘Astrologers,’ (Dan 2.2, 4, 5; etc.) rendered ‘Chaldeans’ in some translations, seems to refer to a priestly class in the Babylonian religion who studied omens through changes of the stars which were objects of worship.
 - 4.3.5. ‘Diviners’ (Dan 2.27; Dan 4.7; Dan 5.7, 11) appear to be those who sought to ascertain or decree the fate of others through the interpretation of fissures and orifices in animal entrails.
 - 4.4. The practices of these ‘wise men’ may have overlapped. Several times Daniel appears to refer to these officials under a general title of ‘wise men’ (Dan 2.12-14, 18, 24, 48; Dan 4.6, 18; Dan 5.7-8, 15).
5. What potential difficulty does this statement (20) present for us?
 - 5.1. It seems to imply that Daniel and his friends were skilled in the arts of the magicians and

enchanters.

5.2. Does this statement, in fact, imply that Daniel and his friends participated in the occult?

5.2.1. Given Daniel's unwillingness to compromise with false religious practices by eating meat sacrificed to idols and drinking wine poured out as a libation to idols, it is extremely unlikely that he would have turned to false gods, demons, or *jinn*s; or supposed extra-terrestrial forces in the cosmos for guidance and direction. Similarly, it is unlikely that his three friends, who were willing to give up their lives rather than to bow down to a carved image, would have been willing to consult with spirits.

5.2.2. A solution to this apparent problem is that their knowledge of true religion gave them insights into human behaviour and natural phenomenon that the superstitious magicians and enchanters could never have had. It would be similar to a Christian psychiatric counsellor today, who understands the causes and nature of guilt from a Biblical perspective, being better able to deal with a client's depression caused by guilt.

5.2.2.1. For example, a woman who has had an abortion and who is feeling guilt resulting from this action will not be able to find real and lasting help from non-Christian counsellors. They will counsel her to ignore the guilt, attempt to teach her that the action was not immoral and therefore her guilt is nothing more than a latent vestige of a pre-modern culture, help her find ways to stop thinking about the guilt (hide from it), or prescribe drugs to make her forget the action.

5.2.2.2. In contrast, a Christian counsellor can lead the woman to a realization that the guilt is valid because the action was wrong before God. She can then help the woman confess her sin to God and receive true forgiveness in Christ.

5.2.2.3. The *Toronto Star* reported, "One in four working Canadians say they suffer from depression—the highest prevalence ever reported, according to a poll ... by Ipsos Reid."⁵³ It is not surprising to find this level of depression when people do not have a Christian basis for dealing with relational problems and their associated guilt. The 'answer' according to most people would be for the government to fund mental health care programs or for businesses to provide counselling services as part of the employee benefits package; whereas the real solution is for people to receive Christ as saviour.

5.3. In 'every matter' that the king questioned/examined them he found them superior to their peers because their wisdom was founded upon the fear and knowledge of God.

5.3.1. They were like Solomon, whose wisdom was proverbial (1 Ki 4.29-34) because it was founded upon the fear and knowledge of God (Eccl 12.13).

5.3.1.1. Solomon's knowledge was God-given (1 Ki 3.12). The truly wise person is the one who first has wisdom from God. It is only when a person has wisdom from God that he can gain valid knowledge of the world—how it works, how man relates to it, and how men are to relate with one another (1 Kings 4.32-33).

5.3.2. We already considered (when we looked at verse 17) the importance of having a Biblical worldview as a foundation for philosophy, science, and history, etc.. No matter how much knowledge a person has about the things in this world, he can never have a proper perspective on reality without the foundation that can only be provided through the Bible. Without the Bible, man's theological, ontological, epistemological, psychological, and ethical knowledge is going to be deficient. God's general grace permits men to function without acknowledging their debt to revelation and divine knowledge; but their knowledge of the created realm, derived without an appreciation of God's role in providing true knowledge, will always be deficient. If a person's theological, ontological, epistemological, psychological, and ethical knowledge is deficient so will be his philosophical, scientific, historical, and technological knowledge.

5.3.3. Some modern philosophers think, and claim, that proponents of religious ideas are unable

⁵³ Andrea Gordon, Working with depression: Canadians say they get acceptance, awareness for their depression while on the job in the country's largest poll of workplace mental health, *Toronto Star*, 2007-11-20; www.thestar.com/living/article/277845

to be scientifically rational. Some also claim that religious beliefs actually prevent a person from being rational and they claim that religion is dangerous for the advance of civilization.⁵⁴ There is, actually, an element of truth in what they are saying. Any adherent of a false religion such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam cannot be consistent to his religious presuppositions and be scientifically rational. Their false religions are irrational and superstitious, and this must have an effect on their understanding of the created realm.

5.3.4. However, it is the other way around with Christianity—only a person who accepts the teachings of Biblical Christianity can be rational and scientific. There is no contradiction between being rational and scientific and being a Christian; in fact, it is the opposite, *only* a Christian can be truly rational and scientific (Dt 4.6-8; Job 28.8; Ps 111.10; Ps 119.99, 100; 2 Tim 3.15, 16; James 1.5).

5.3.5. Daniel's (and his friend's) wisdom was from God. Daniel was effectively a second Solomon (Ezk 28.3). Whether or not his wisdom was provided supernaturally is beside the point. The key point is that his wisdom from God enabled him to be more competent than all the wise men of his age.

6. What was the outcome of their training?

6.1. They entered the service of the king.

6.2. They “Stood before the king.” This is a Hebrew idiom that can be translated as “served the king”.

6.3. The promise of scripture is that anyone who excels in his work will be recognized, even by kings (Prov 22.29).

7. How long did Daniel serve in the courts of the Babylonian-Persian kings?

7.1. We are not told how long his three friends served or lived; although we know they were around for some time into Nebuchadnezzar's reign because of the incident with the fiery furnace (chapter 3).

7.2. In Daniel's case, we are told that he served at least until the first year of Cyrus.

7.2.1. He was probably taken captive in 606 BC.

7.2.2. Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC.

7.2.3. However Daniel was still alive in ~536 BC (Dan 10.1).

7.2.4. If we assume he was 13 when he was taken captive then he lived to be at least 82, but could have been older when taken captive and could have lived longer than the last dated events recorded in the book of Daniel.

7.3. We do not need to conclude that Daniel's service ended in the year that Cyrus ascended the throne or issued his edict. The use of the word ‘until’ does not necessarily imply the cessation of an action once the particular state has been reached or event has occurred (e.g., Gen 8.5, the waters continued to abate after the tenth month; Lk 2.37, Anna did not stop being a widow at age 84; 1 Cor 15.25, Jesus does not stop reigning once his enemies are conquered). Daniel may well have served in Cyrus' court as well as in those that preceded.

7.4. This is a brief statement (21) but it indicates that he had many years of faithful service even as captive slave/hostage. He was serving God, through his service to the great kings of the ancient world.

7.5. Daniel lived throughout the entire period of the Babylonian Exile. He saw the destruction of the old Jewish order and the beginning of the new era prophesied by Isaiah (Is 44.28; Is 45:1).

7.5.1. He had seen the rise of the greatest kingdom on earth to that point—the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar and had lived to see its demise and destruction (Prov 29.16).

⁵⁴ E.g.: Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*; Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*; Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*; Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*; Victor Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis*.

- 7.5.2. In total, Daniel lived through a portion of the reigns of seven different kings: Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC); Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach) (561-560 BC); Neriglissar (or Nergal-shar-usur, or Nergal-sharezer) (559-555 BC); Labashi-Marduk (555 BC); Nabonidus (555-539 BC); Belshazzar (549-539 BC); Cyrus (539-530 BC).
 - 7.5.3. He saw the rise, reign, and ruin of the greatest pagan kingdom in history—to that point and possibly ever. He clearly understood the meaning of the words that he proclaimed in praise of God: “He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.” (Dan 2.21)
 - 7.5.4. Being able to see the decree for the return from Exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem was a great reward for Daniel, in recognition of his faithfulness to God.
8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 8.1. To be useful we must be faithful.
 - 8.1.1. In the natural realm, the most useful people are those who are faithful:
 - 8.1.1.1. In business, a person who cheats or does sloppy work soon brings his company into disrepute or is fired. The faithful employee is the one who works diligently and produces quality results.
 - 8.1.1.2. In sports, an athlete who misses workouts or is careless in play causes his team to lose games. The faithful player is the one who works hard and executes the plays precisely.
 - 8.1.1.3. In the military, in a time of war, the soldier who is a coward or does not carry his share of the load can be the cause of casualties. The faithful soldier is brave and puts the welfare of his buddies above his own.
 - 8.1.1.4. In families, a husband or wife who is selfish or cheats destroys the family and drags it through the mess of a divorce. The faithful spouse provides for his/her family and raises up the next generation.
 - 8.1.2. In God’s kingdom it is the same thing.
 - 8.1.2.1. Unfaithful seminary professors, Pastors/Elders, or Sunday School teachers can lead their flocks into damnation. Teachers who proclaim the Word of God faithfully lead many to righteousness (Dan 12.3).
 - 8.1.2.2. Unfaithful members of congregations cause discord and disrupt the peace of the congregation. Faithful members of the congregation build up and encourage their brothers and attract the unsaved to the Gospel.
 - 8.1.3. Christians serving faithfully, in the fear of God, in any domain are the most useful and valuable members of their community, whether in a family, church, school, company, or country.
 - 8.1.4. Christians should live in such a way that they maintain a sharp and clear identity as followers of the one true God. One of the key ways this can be accomplished is through living faithfully for God in whatever callings we have from God.
 - 8.2. The wisest person in any discipline (e.g., science, engineering, carpentry, philosophy, medicine, law, economics, finance, theology, etc.) will *always* be the one with advanced knowledge (physical, psychological, metaphysical) who tempers that knowledge with a knowledge of God and his principles, as provided in the Bible. The truly godly person will *always* be wiser than a person of equal knowledge and skill who does not know God. This difference will become more obvious as unbelievers drift further from the Biblical principles on which Western culture was established into superstition and false religions.
 - 8.2.1. Never be ashamed of the Christian worldview—it is the only worldview which can provide a basis for building sustainable societies and civilizations!
 - 8.2.2. Contrary to what men think, civilizations have not, and cannot, grown out of unbiblical worldviews. The ancient civilizations (Sumerian, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Greek, Roman, Aztec, Mayan, Incan) were founded on a vestigial knowledge of the truth that was handed down from Shem. As men moved further away from God and from the

people of God (ancient Israel) who had the oracles of God (Rom 3.2) they deteriorated into extreme forms of polytheistic paganism and animism. After the fall of Rome, it was Christianity that created modern Western civilization⁵⁵ as the ancient civilizations of the Middle East were being sucked dry by Islam and the civilizations in Japan, China, and India were decaying into chaos and morbidity.

8.3. God said, “Those who honor me, I will honor” (1 Sam 2.30).

8.3.1. Daniel was determined to honour God while living in a milieu where people did not follow God’s standards.

8.3.2. God, in turn, honoured Daniel’s obedience with wisdom, recognition, and promotion.

8.3.3. As a general principle, obedience brings blessing and righteousness is the prerequisite for enjoying covenantal blessings (Ex 15.26; Lev 26.1-13; Dt 4.40; Dt 28.1-14; Dt 29.9; Dt 30.15-20; Josh 1.8).

8.4. The Church in all ages is to be the light of God to the nations (Is 42.6; Is 49.6; Is 51.4; Is 60.1-3; Mt 5.14; Acts 13.47; 1 Pt 2.9). In the OT the lampstand in the Tabernacle reminded the people of God’s illuminating light to the world through the Church. In the NT the preaching of the Gospel is the light that brings illumination to the world (Rev 1.12, 13, 20; Rev 2.5). Daniel, the man who feared God, was the primary light of God to the Gentiles of his day.

Dreamed Tidings (Dan 2.1-49)

Summons (Dan 2.1-6)

1. When Did Daniel begin his work in Nebuchadnezzar’s court?

1.1. In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, 603 BC.

1.2. Does this present an apparent contradiction with 1.5?

1.2.1. Some interpreters ask, “How could Daniel be interpreting dreams while still in training?”

1.2.2. Liberal ‘scholars’ say that there is an inconsistency between chapter 1 and 2 pointing to a later compiler of the book who got things mixed up.

1.2.3. Matthew Henry suggests that a possible solution is that Daniel so excelled in his training that he was promoted out of the training program early. This idea seems to be contradicted by 1.18 where the four young men graduated together.

1.3. What might be a possible solution to this apparent inconsistency?

1.3.1. People get wrapped up in this apparent inconsistency when there are at least two simple *possible* explanations:

1.3.2. One possible explanation is as follows:

1.3.2.1. We noted that the account of Daniel began before Nebuchadnezzar had actually become king. His father was still alive at the time Daniel was taken into captivity as a hostage.

1.3.2.2. We noted that it was in 606 BC that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and took captives. He wasn’t king at that time.

1.3.2.3. If he became king later, in 605 BC, then the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (603 BC) was actually the third year of Daniel’s training.

First year of Daniel’s training (605 BC)	605 Accession of Nebuchadnezzar to the throne (part of a year)
Second year of training (604 BC)	604 First full year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign
Third year of training (603 BC). Possibly their training came to an end prior to the New Year’s celebrations [this would have actually been in late winter 602 ⁵⁶]	603 Second full year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign; The dream occurred near the end of the year shortly after Daniel and his friends had graduated; possibly at the time the New Years’ celebrations were approaching.

1.3.3. A different possible explanation is as follows:

⁵⁵ See for example, Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

⁵⁶ Note: the Babylonian years began in first day of the month Nisannu (March/April) on the vernal equinox (the first day of spring), so Julian calendar year reckonings are approximate.

1.3.3.1. When we considered chapter 1.17-21 we noted that Daniel was probably taken as a hostage in 606 BC.⁵⁷

1.3.3.2. If Daniel was taken hostage this early then the following sequence could apply:

First year of Daniel's training (606-605 BC)	605 Accession of Nebuchadnezzar to the throne (part of a year)
Second year of training (605-604 BC)	604 First full year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign
Third year of training (604-603 BC)	603 Second full year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; the year in which the dream occurred.

1.4. Whatever the explanation is, it is not that there is an error in Daniel 2.1.

1.4.1. If there are still problems in reconciling the dates between chapter 1.1 and 2.1, it is because we do not have all the facts and don't understand fully what was happening in ancient Babylon in 603 BC.

1.4.2. The answer is not found in supposed errors in the Bible, or that the book of Daniel was a mishmash composed centuries later by some unknown scribe.

1.4.3. We need to conclude: "In such cases there is only one legitimate course, viz., to cling faithfully to the statement of the Bible, and to wait patiently for additional light."⁵⁸

2. What was the event that triggered Daniel's rise to prominence?

2.1. "Nebuchadnezzar had dreams"

2.1.1. Literally: "he dreamed dreams". This could be interpreted as "he dreamed an important dream".

2.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar may have had different dreams that troubled him, but he recalled only one in particular clearly.

2.1.3. Alternately, the plural may mean that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed the same dream on a number of occasions or that the image was revealed to him through a progression of dreams.

2.1.4. Alternately the passage could be translated: "Nebuchadnezzar was in a state in which an important dream came to him".

2.2. When we considered 1.17 we noted that dreams in ancient civilizations were thought to reveal the future.

2.2.1. Dreams were thought to communicate messages from the gods.

2.2.2. Natural dreams cannot predict the future.

2.2.3. Satan does not have the ability to foretell the future, so even if he or his demons can cause us to dream unsettling dreams these cannot predict the future.

3. What was the nature of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

3.1. The account informs us that: "his mind [Heb: 'spirit', as in ESV] was troubled and he could not sleep"

3.2. It was a troubling dream.

3.2.1. What in particular was troubling about it?

3.2.2. When we consider the account of the dream given by Daniel, it doesn't have the elements of a nightmare that we are familiar with (e.g., being chased and not able to run, falling, being buried alive, drowning, being attacked by wild animals or people, going outside in our underwear, etc.).

3.2.3. What would have made it troubling to Nebuchadnezzar (look ahead to 31-35)?

3.2.3.1. *A great and mighty statue* – Images or statues in the ancient world were used as idols for worship of deities or for reverence and worship of humans. The greater the image, the more impressive the god or human being represented. We aren't told the height of the image, but can guess that it was very large. Considering that it was possible for him to build an image sixty cubits high (Dan 3.1), or

⁵⁷ Section: 7.2.1.

⁵⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Ann Arbor: Baker, 1950), pp. 131-132.

about 8 storeys, the image in his dream must have been significantly higher to have intimidated him.

3.2.3.2. *A statue of exceeding brightness* – In most ancient pantheons, there is an association between light and the gods. The more important gods are associated with bright lights (e.g., the sun or light—Re and Shu [Egypt], An or Gibil [Sumerian], Utu [Sumerian], Tutu/Shamash/Girru [Akkadian], Huehuateotl [Aztec], goddess Mazu [China], goddess Lakshmi [Hindu, India], Hyperion and Apollo [Greek]). The presence of light signals the presence of energy, implies power, and commands attention. The brightest bearer of light was the sun, which was usually given a prominent place in the ancient pantheons. A statue of exceeding brightness would have implied a god greater than all the other gods in Nebuchadnezzar's pantheon or a king greater than Nebuchadnezzar himself.

3.2.3.3. *A statue that was of awesome/frightening appearance* – [Hebrew: 'awesome' (NIV/NKJV) and 'frightening' or 'causing terror' [ESV]; used also in Dan 4.2; Dan 5.19; Dan 6.27; Dan 7.7, 19] We are not told what in particular engendered fear in Nebuchadnezzar. It certainly could have been the height and brightness of the image, but it was likely the appearance of the image. For example, the face on the head may have had a cruel, cold gaze. The arms may have been folded across the chest to give the impression of confidence, and the legs spread slightly apart in a stance of defiance. Whatever it was about the image, it scared Nebuchadnezzar more than anything he had seen in his experience as a conqueror and ruler.

3.2.3.4. *A stone cut out by no human hand that struck the image ... and broke it in pieces ...* – The on-going scene with the stone appearing that broke the image to pieces would have also been frightening. The ancient kings believed that their deities were all-powerful. Something, as simple as a natural stone (i.e., not cut out with human hands), that could destroy their gods and scatter them to the wind as chaff, implied a much greater force or power than their gods.

3.3. It caused him to lose sleep.

3.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar didn't understand the meaning of his dream, but he understood that it was important.

3.3.1.1. A great and mighty statue implied that someone great was being honoured. He would have wanted to know who it was who deserved such honour that the largest image imaginable was displayed.

3.3.1.2. He would have considered himself to be the greatest king in the world and would have been confronted by an image that implied that someone was greater. This would have been troubling and he would have wanted to know who the image represented.

3.3.2. The power of this image, which Nebuchadnezzar probably believed pointed to a great deity, was perceived by him as being significant and caused him to be perplexed.

3.3.2.1. He thought so much about what he had seen that he was not able to sleep properly.

3.3.2.2. He may have dreamed the same dream over a few nights and awoken from the dream each night, and then been unable to get back to sleep. Alternatively, he may have found that his mind was so focused on trying to discern the meaning of the dream that he was unable to fall asleep easily for a few nights after he had had the dream.

3.3.2.3. Regardless of the immediate cause, his sleep was disrupted by thinking about the meaning of the disturbing image that he had seen in the dream.

4. How did Nebuchadnezzar proceed to solve his troubles?

4.1. He (commanded they be) summoned his wise men (Dan 2.12, 13, 14, 18, 24, 27, 48; also used

- in: Dan 4.6, 18; Dan 5.7, 8, 15) to give him the interpretation of the dream.
- 4.2. What classes of wise men are mentioned?
- 4.2.1. The list depends on which translation you are using.
- 4.2.1.1. *Magicians* – (NIV/ESV: Dan 1.20; Dan 2.2, 10, 27; Dan 4.7, 9; Dan 5.11)
Scholars who ‘held the book’ and worked wonders (e.g., with herbs, chemicals and metals). This class may have included the alchemists, apothecaries and doctors.
- 4.2.1.2. *Enchanters* – (NIV/ESV: Dan 1.20; Dan 2.2, 10, 27; Dan 4.7, 9; Dan 5.7, 11, 15)
Those who used incantations to perform exorcisms, interpreted dreams, maintained the religious liturgy, and developed the myths and legends of the Babylonian religion.
- 4.2.1.3. *Sorcerers* – (NIV/ESV: Dan 2.2) Those who practiced incantations (e.g., cursing enemies). Sorcerers are not mentioned again in Daniel. From the Akkadian for ‘bewitch’ or ‘cast a spell.’
- 4.2.1.4. *Astrologers/Chaldeans* – (NIV/ESV: Dan 2.2, 4, 5, 10, 27; Dan 3.8; Dan 4.7; Dan 5.7, 11) Those who interpreted signs (as omens) in the heavens to predict the future and tell fortunes. This class would likely have included the early astronomers. The term Chaldean, here, is not used in an ethnic sense as in Genesis 11.28, etc. (clearly, the king did not call for all the Babylonians who were from the lower-Mesopotamian tribes) but rather to refer to an office or class of wise man.
- 4.2.1.5. *Diviner* – (NIV: Dan 2.27; Dan 4.7; Dan 5.7, 11) Those who used entrails of animals to predict the future and tell fortunes, and called up dead spirits (1 Sam 28.8).
- 4.2.2. All of the classes probably belonged to the generic genus of wise man and ‘priest’
- 4.2.3. All of the classes likely worked together in fulfilling a number of the advisory and consultative roles of the king. He would have had other advisors for matters dealing with law, the economy, building projects, and the execution of war.
- 4.2.4. There is likely much overlap among the roles with some men filling more than one role.
- 4.3. Why did he summon these classes of men?
- 4.3.1. He wanted them to tell him what he had dreamed. That is to:
- 4.3.1.1. Interpret his dream. To provide the meaning and significance of the dream, and give the meaning of the message from the gods.
- 4.3.1.2. Recount his dream before interpreting it. As we will see, he asked the wise men to first tell him what he had dreamed and then interpret it (6). He was intending to use their professed ability to recount the dream as an indicator of their truthfulness in providing its meaning. Anyone of them who could read his deepest thoughts would likely be able also to provide the meaning of them.
- 4.4. Why did he summon all these classes of fortune-tellers?
- 4.4.1. They all professed to be wise and that they were able to interpret omens and foretell the future, by one means or another.
- 4.4.2. Likely, if one method used by one group failed to produce an answer (or a *suitable* answer), he could consult with another group of wise men and, hopefully, reveal the dream’s meaning and significance. [Note: this is similar to how modern Evolutionists work—if they don’t like one explanation of origins, they conjure up another. For example, they claim that whales originated from hippopotamuses, sheep, or deer. They are clueless, but postulate myths in the same way as Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men.]
- 4.5. The OT Jews were prohibited from consulting: sorcerers (Dt 18.10; Jer 27.9; Mal 3.5); astrologers (Is 47.13); and diviners (Dt 18.10, 14; 2 Ki 17.17; Is 44.25).
- 4.6. The Magi were the Persian equivalent of the Chaldeans or, generically, ‘wise men’. The best known Magi are the “wise men from the east” in the NT (Mt 2.1, 7, 16):
- 4.6.1. Singular magus/magon (e.g., Elymas [Acts 13.6, 8]; or Simon Magus [Acts 8.9-24]),

from Greek μάγος, from Old Persian *maguš* and Proto-Kurdish *mâgî*);

4.6.2. Herodotus (ca 484 BC – ca 425 BC), a Greek historian from Ionia who wrote about the Greco-Persian wars and the culture of the Persians, refers to the Magi as the priestly caste of the Persians who were said to be able to interpret dreams:

4.6.2.1. “This vision he [Astyages, the son of Cyaxares] laid before such of the Magi as had the gift of interpreting dreams, who expounded its meaning to him in full, whereat he was greatly terrified.”⁵⁹

4.6.2.2. “Such was the mode in which Astyages punished Harpagus: afterwards, proceeding to consider what he should do with Cyrus, his grandchild, he sent for the Magi, who formerly interpreted his dream in the way which alarmed him so much, and asked them how they had expounded it.”⁶⁰

4.6.2.3. “After Xerxes had thus determined to go forth to the war, there appeared to him in his sleep yet a third vision. The Magi were consulted upon it, and said that its meaning reached to the whole earth, and that all mankind would become his servants. Now the vision which the king saw was this: he dreamt that he was crowned with a branch of an olive tree, and that boughs spread out from the olive branch and covered the whole earth; then suddenly the garland, as it lay upon his brow, vanished.”⁶¹

4.6.3. Marco Polo (1254-1325), a Venetian trader and explorer, reports that he visited the gravesite of the Magi (who came to see the baby Jesus) during his travels in Iran, in the district of Saveh south of Tehran:

4.6.3.1. “In Persia is the city of Saba, from which the Three Magi set out when they went to worship Jesus Christ; and in this city they are buried, in three very large and beautiful monuments, side by side. And above them there is a square building, carefully kept. The bodies are still entire, with the hair and beard remaining. ... Messer Marco Polo asked a great many questions of the people of that city as to those Three Magi, but never one could he find that knew aught of the matter, except that these were three kings who were buried there in days of old. ... [At another place the people] relate that in old times three kings of that country went away to worship a Prophet that was born, and they carried with them three manner of offerings, Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrh;” He goes on to recount the legend of why the three kings took the gifts and of their visit to the baby Jesus.”⁶²

5. What appears to be the relationship between the wise men and Nebuchadnezzar? (2)

5.1. “They came in and stood before the king.”

5.1.1. As in Daniel 1.5 and 1.9 this reference to their standing before the king may be an idiom for serving the king. The one Hebrew word (עָמַד) can take many meanings, including:

5.1.1.1. stand, be in a standing attitude (1 Sam 26.13)

5.1.1.2. take a stand against or oppose (Ezra 10.15)

5.1.1.3. present oneself before (Gen 43.15)

5.1.1.4. attend as a servant of (1 Sam 16.22)

5.1.1.5. delay (Gen 45.9)

5.2. It may be that we are to understand this reference—they stood before the king—to mean that they presented themselves to the king or attended to him as servants. However, it may also be a reference to their actually standing in his presence.

5.3. If in fact that they *stood*, this would seem to be important.

5.4. In comparison Absalom the son of the king bowed before the king (2 Sam 14.33), Bathsheba,

⁵⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 1; classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt

⁶⁰ As above.

⁶¹ As above, Book 7.

⁶² Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Chapter XIII – “Of the Great Country of Persia; with some account of the Three Kings,” www.gutenberg.org/files/10636/10636-8.txt

the king's most loved wife bowed before him (1 Ki 1.16, 31); Nathan the prophet bowed before the king (1 Ki 1.23); see also 2 Sam 18.28; Ps 45.11.

5.5. It was commonly accepted throughout the kingdoms of the ancient world that subjects (including near relatives and trusted advisors) were to bow before royalty.

5.5.1. Kings, in general, were considered to be divine or, at least, of divine descent and were considered to have absolute authority. For example, "In Egypt, from at least 1630 BC onwards, people perceived the king as the image of god because he was the son of god. The emphasis was not physical appearance. ... What is stressed is that the behaviour of the king reflects the behaviour of his god. The king as the image of god reflects the characteristics and essential notions of the god."⁶³

5.5.2. Ancient literature, sculptures and paintings from the ancient ME depict subjects (including other kings) bowing, kneeling, prostrate, or crawling before the king.

5.5.2.1. Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC) is depicted in a black obelisk, found at Calah and now in the British Museum, as receiving presents from Jehu, King of Judah. It shows Jehu prostrate before the king. This is probably the only surviving picture or sculpture of an Israelite king.⁶⁴

5.5.2.2. A letter from an Egyptian vassal notifying the Pharaoh that his instructions have been followed, states the following: "To the king, my lord, my god, my Sun, the Sun from the sky: Message of Yapahu, the ruler of Gezer, your servant, the dirt at your feet. I indeed prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, my god, my Sun...seven times and seven times, on the stomach and on the back. I am indeed guarding the place of the king, my lord, the Sun of the sky, where I am, and all the things the king, my lord, has written me, I am indeed carrying out—everything! Who am I, a dog, and what is my house...and what is anything I have, that the orders of the king, my lord, the Sun from the sky, should not obey constantly?"⁶⁵

5.5.2.3. In the Abû-Simbel Tableau from the 12th century BC, Rameses II is depicted in colossal size sitting on his throne and receiving homage from his officials after a victory in battle against the Hittites.⁶⁶

5.6. If, they stood in Nebuchadnezzar's presence, the wise men may have been acting in a more familiar manner than was commonly expected or accepted.

5.6.1. It could be that Nebuchadnezzar was more relaxed about royal protocol. It has been noted by historians that he was not as tyrannical and despotic as most of the non-Israelite kings of the AME.

5.6.2. However, it is more likely that the wise men were acting in a proud manner.

5.6.2.1. They were proud that they had been called into the king's presence.

5.6.2.2. They believed that they alone could provide the answers he needed to what was troubling him.

5.6.2.3. They had come to the self-deluded conclusion that they were indispensable and that they were worthy of honour and respect, even from the king.

5.7. The statement that "they came in and stood before the king" seems to be setting the scene for the confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and the wise men that will follow in the rest of the chapter.

5.7.1. Nebuchadnezzar is going to call their bluff: "You think you are such hot shots then tell me what I dreamed and what its meaning is. If you can't, then you are charlatans and you will forfeit your lives!"

6. How did Nebuchadnezzar ask the wise men to provide the meaning of his dream? (3)

⁶³ Peter J. Gentry, 'Rethinking the "Sure Mercies of David" in Isaiah 55:3', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 69, Fall 2007, p. 284.

⁶⁴ prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/images/blackob.jpg

⁶⁵ William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992., pp. 368-69 as cited in: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaten#_note-12.

⁶⁶ digital.library.upenn.edu/women/edwards/pharaohs/pharaohs-6.html

- 6.1. ‘He said to them, “I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.”’
- 6.2. Josephus suggested that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the content of his dream and was asking the wise men to remind him of what he had dreamed.⁶⁷
 - 6.2.1. This suggestion can be supported by a misreading of the KJV translation of verse 5 (“the thing is gone from me”).
 - 6.2.2. Matthew Henry in his commentary on this passage also perpetuates this view.
 - 6.2.3. However, modern translations (NIV, ESV, NKJV) express the meaning of the Hebrew more clearly (literally: “this matter from me is certain/firm”).
- 6.3. Nebuchadnezzar had not forgotten his dream. Rather, he was testing the wise men (9). He was acting shrewdly and wisely (much like Solomon had when he suggested cutting the prostitute’s baby in half to determine who the real mother was) by setting up a test to establish the truthfulness of his wise men. He required the wise men, first, to reveal the contents of his dream so that he could establish the validity of their interpretation (6).
 - 6.3.1. Anyone of them who could read his deepest thoughts would likely be able also to provide the meaning of them.
 - 6.3.2. Anyone who claimed that he could predict the future by interpreting dreams, should also be able to reconstruct the past and repeat the contents of his dream.
 - 6.3.3. This was the only way that he could know that their interpretation was valid and that the wise men were not deceiving him.
 - 6.3.4. Had he not used this test, the wise men could have fabricated any meaning in order to mollify the king and to save themselves from death.
- 6.4. Nebuchadnezzar knew in his deepest heart that the religion of the Babylonians was mere superstition and that the wise men were fakes.
 - 6.4.1. From a human perspective, he sought the impossible.
 - 6.4.2. He was, in a backhanded way, demonstrating the foolishness of human religions and superstitions (e.g., astrology). A similar test is for us today to say to the Evolutionist, “If energy, time and chance can produce life from inanimate matter, then let’s see *you* a rational, intelligent being, produce life from these raw materials.”
 - 6.4.3. He was, from a divine perspective, setting the scene for God, through Daniel, to demonstrate that there is only one true religion—as revealed in the Bible.
7. What language is mentioned at this point (4)? Why is this significant?
 - 7.1. The language is Aramaic.
 - 7.2. At this point in the narrative, the text switches from Hebrew to Aramaic. Daniel 1.1-2.4a and 8.1-12.13 is written in Hebrew; 2.4b-7.28 in Aramaic.
 - 7.3. The translations generally apply the word Aramaic to the answer of the astrologers/Chaldeans: “Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic.”
 - 7.3.1. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar spoke a different native language than the astrologers.
 - 7.3.2. The astrologers may have been of a different ethnic/racial/linguistic background than Nebuchadnezzar so they answered him in the generic language of the empire because they spoke this language better than the native language of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 7.3.3. However, if this is true, it is difficult to explain why the rest of the narrative of Daniel, to Dan 7.28, is in Aramaic. The narrative in these later chapters wasn’t spoken by the astrologers, so why is it in Aramaic?
 - 7.4. Another suggestion is that ‘in Aramaic’ should not be understood to modify the verb ‘spoke’.
 - 7.4.1. Rather, it may be that ‘in Aramaic’ is a parenthetical sign to the reader that the language has changed.
 - 7.4.2. In support of this view: The king would probably have been speaking Aramaic to the astrologers as it was the *lingua franca* of the empire that was understood by most people and was the language of commerce and diplomacy. Aramaic would likely have been the

⁶⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 10; chapter 10, paragraph 3; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-10.htm

language used by those in the court (Ezra 4.7). If so, there wouldn't be much reason to call out the fact that the astrologers answered in Aramaic.

7.5. Why did Daniel use Aramaic in a book written for the people God?

7.5.1. It has been suggested that the portions of the narrative that deal with the future of world history were written in the language of the world (at that time), whereas the later portion of the book was written primarily for the Jews. However, chapters 8, 10, and 11 deal with essentially the same material as chapters 2 and 7. The latter chapters have as much relevance and interest to the other national groups in the empire as do chapters 2-7.

7.5.2. It is more likely that the entire book was written to encourage the Jews during the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity (so it is also an encouragement to the NT Church). If this is the case, then it may be simply that Daniel, who was bilingual (Dan 1.4), may have used one language or the other depending on *when* he first recorded the material in his personal records. The earliest narrative, from when he was a youth, was recorded in his native language (Hebrew). During the time of his active work in Nebuchadnezzar's court he recorded events in Aramaic. After he 'retired' from office or was replaced under a new regime, he recorded the remainder of the account in his personal files; again in Hebrew.

7.6. It is not easy to come to a definitive conclusion about the meaning of "in Aramaic" or the reason that part of the book is written in Hebrew and part in Aramaic.

8. How did the astrologers answer the king (4)?

8.1. "O king, live forever!"

8.1.1. This particular greeting appears to have arisen in the Akkadian kingdom in the upper reaches of the Tigris River. The Akkadian kingdoms, founded around 2350 BC and re-founded about 1225 BC, covered much of northern Palestine, Syria, parts of northern Iraq, into Turkey and Iran along the Zargos Mountains to the east. The Akkadian kingdom was absorbed into the Babylonian Empire at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's father. The greeting continued in use in the Babylonian and Persian Empires until the Muslim period (7th century AD⁶⁸).

8.1.2. Comparative greetings:

8.1.2.1. This (or similar) greeting appears also in: Dan 3.9 [used by Nebuchadnezzar's astrologers]; Dan 5.10 [used by Belshazzar's mother or wife]; Dan 6.6 [used by Darius' administrators and satraps]; Dan 6.21 [used by Daniel to Darius].

8.1.2.2. 1 Kings 1.31, "May my lord King David live forever!" [used by Bathsheba to David];

8.1.2.3. Nehemiah 2.3, "Let the king live forever!" [used by Nehemiah to Artaxerxes];

8.1.2.4. 1 Samuel 10.24; 1 Kings 1.25; "Long live the King!"

8.1.3. What was the meaning of this greeting?

8.1.3.1. It probably is not intended to imply a desire that the king might live forever in this world as a man in his mortal state. It was too obvious to all men that even human kings, despite their pretensions to divinity, grew old and died.

8.1.3.2. It may be a form of greeting in which the suppliant desires the king's reputation to be perpetual. Consider Psalm 72.17, for example.

8.1.3.3. It may be a desire that the king's dynasty be perpetual (compare, 1 Chron 28.4 with 1 Chron 17.23).

8.1.3.4. It may also be a form of blessing that has the sense of: "May you have a better existence in a future state."

8.1.3.5. When it is used by the court astrologers, it was probably nothing more than an empty formality; although it was still a sign of respect.

8.1.3.6. Daniel (Dan 6.6) and Nehemiah (Neh 2.3) could use the statement sincerely as

⁶⁸ "The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) led to the end of the Sassanid Empire and the eventual decline of the Zoroastrian religion in Persia." en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_conquest_of_Persia

they could desire that the king repent of his pagan views, believe in Yahweh, and be granted an everlasting existence in Heaven. They also could use it sincerely as an indication of their respect for the king in his office. They understood the 5th Commandment which teaches that we are to honour those in authority over us. Regardless of what we think of the person as an individual who is in an office, we are to show respect for the person as the office-holder. Note: Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Mt 26.62-64) and Paul in a similar situation (Acts 23.1-5).

8.2. “Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”

8.2.1. It is likely that Nebuchadnezzar had requested his wise men to interpret dreams at other times. So, they were not surprised that he was asking for an interpretation.

8.2.2. They asked him to relate to them the content of the dream so that they could interpret it, as he had done in the past.

8.2.3. They confidently asserted that when the king related the content of the dream to them, they would be able to provide an interpretation of it.

8.2.4. The wise men pretend to be interpreters of dreams and had provided ‘interpretations’ in the past, but they were only impostors who could only concoct myths.

9. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the astrologers? (5-6) Why?

9.1. His answer was firm.

9.1.1. The original King James translation had, “The thing is gone from me” which made early-modern commentators conclude that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the contents of his dream. The correct translation is: “thing/matter/affair from me [is] firm” which in the Middle-Eastern context is stating that the King’s command is beyond change. The NKJV and NIV provide the essence of the meaning in “I have firmly decided”. The ESV has the most accurate translation (almost literal) and does not lead to confusion for modern readers: “The word from me is firm”.

9.1.2. He was saying, effectively, the same thing that was said of the immutable and irrevocable decisions of a king under (later) Mede and Persian law (Dan 6.8, 12, 15; Est 1.9).

9.2. He reiterated that he wanted to know both the content of the dream and its interpretation.

9.2.1. He repeats this requirement twice in verses 5 and 6. There could be no confusion on the part of the astrologers. They had to understand clearly what he was asking them to do.

9.2.2. Although the king may have asked for dream interpretations in the past, he had never asked them to also tell him what he had dreamed before interpreting the dream. It seems that this particular dream had such a strong influence on Nebuchadnezzar (1) and appeared to have such significance, that he wanted to be absolutely sure that the wise men really could provide an interpretation of the dream.

9.2.3. As we noted above, Nebuchadnezzar placed this test before the wise men to establish the validity of their claimed ability to interpret dreams:

9.2.3.1. Anyone of them who could read his deepest thoughts would likely be able also to provide the meaning of them.

9.2.3.2. Anyone who claimed that he could predict the future by interpreting dreams should also be able to reconstruct the past and repeat the contents of his dream.

9.2.3.3. This was a creative way on ensuring that their interpretation was valid and that the wise men were not deceiving him.

9.2.4. By placing this challenge before the astrologers, Nebuchadnezzar was able to challenge the wise men’s pretensions to superhuman knowledge.

9.2.4.1. He placed before the wise men what was, from a human perspective, an impossible challenge in order to humble their hubris. They were too sure of their place in his court, as we noted with the observation that there may have been significance in their standing in his presence (2).

9.2.4.2. He challenged them to prove their worth and merit as counsellors.

9.2.4.3. He displayed his superiority over them.

- 9.2.4.4. A similar instance, of a king from this era being concerned that his subjects know their place, is found in Esther 1.15-22.
- 9.3. He said that he would punish the wise men/astrologers if they didn't fulfill his request.
 - 9.3.1. If they proved to be false fortune-tellers or prognosticators by being unable to inform Nebuchadnezzar of the content of his dream, they would be subject to harsh punishment. The punishment promised was of a particularly humiliating kind. What made it so?
 - 9.3.2. To cut a human body into pieces was considered about as degrading a curse as possible.
 - 9.3.2.1. The Babylonians believed that a soul of a body that was not buried properly would torment the living. They invested effort in preparing bodies with spices and perfumes (not by embalming as in Egypt) to help it enter the netherworld of the dead.⁶⁹
 - 9.3.2.2. When Babylonian and Assyrian kings wanted to curse someone they would speak of casting a body aside with no burial and the mutilation of a dead body was viewed as a terrible punishment.⁷⁰
 - 9.3.2.3. Judges 19.29 can be understood as providing circumstantial evidence of a crime. However, the pieces were also likely viewed as an abominable execration or curse (compare, 1 Sam 11.7, as a symbolic invocation of a curse).
 - 9.3.3. To turn a house into a pile of rubble (ruins) was also considered to be a curse.
 - 9.3.3.1. Examples of a city (or building) being laid in ruins as a sign of a curse: Joshua 8.28 (Ai's destruction); 1 Kings 9.8 (prophecy regarding the Temple); 2 Kings 19.25 (Sennacherib's Fall prophesied by Isaiah); Psalm 79.1 (lament over the state of Jerusalem); Isaiah 17.1 (Isaiah's prophecy about Damascus).
 - 9.3.3.2. The Aramaic word used here for rubble/ruins can also be translated as "ash heap" or "garbage-heap" or "public latrine". Note, for example, Ezra 6.11 (parallel phrasing to Dan 3.29). A similar example is in 2 Kings 10.27 where the temple of Baal was demolished and used as a latrine.
 - 9.3.3.3. "This was an ancient mode of degradation, which still continues in the East; and we are informed, that Abbas [1571-1629] the Great king of Persia, having conquered Baghdad, treated the tomb of Hanifah, one of the fathers of the church among the Turks, in a similar manner."⁷¹
 - 9.3.4. The punishment meted out by ancient Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian kings was known for its barbarity. This barbarity continues today in the lands of the ME that have succumbed to Islam.
- 9.4. He said that he would reward the wise men/astrologers if they fulfilled his request.
 - 9.4.1. While punishment could be harsh and barbaric, the kings of the ancient ME could also lavish great rewards and boons.
 - 9.4.2. Biblical examples:
 - 9.4.2.1. Joseph rewarded by Pharaoh (Gen 41.40-45);
 - 9.4.2.2. Balak offered to reward Balaam for cursing Israel (Num 22.17);
 - 9.4.2.3. Ahasuerus offered Esther up to half his kingdom (Est 5.6; Est 7.2);
 - 9.4.2.4. Daniel rewarded for interpreting the dream (Dan 2.48);
 - 9.4.2.5. Belshazzar offered to reward whoever read the writing on the wall, and then rewarded Daniel for doing so (Dan 5.7, 29);
 - 9.4.2.6. Herod offered to reward Salome, Herodias's daughter, for her dancing (Mk 6.22-23).

10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

⁶⁹ Wil Durant, "Our Oriental Heritage," *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 240.

⁷⁰ Morris Jastrow, "The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria," *Handbooks on the History of Religions*, Vol. 2, (Boston: The Athenæum Press, 1893), pp. 601, 602. www.gutenberg.org/etext/20758.

⁷¹ *The treasury of scripture knowledge: Five hundred thousand scripture references and parallel passages*. 1995. Introduction by R.A. Torrey. (2 Ki 10:27). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

10.1. God *communicates*.

- 10.1.1. God is not silent. His voice, in one form or another, goes out to all mankind (Ps 19.1-4; Ps 29.3-9; Rom 1.19, 20; Heb 1.1, 2). No man can hide from God and the knowledge of God for he will bring into their minds exactly what he wants them to know.
- 10.1.2. In this instance, he communicates, via a dream, directly to an individual who was not a believer. There are other examples in the Bible of direct communication to unbelievers (e.g., Abimelech king of Gerar in a dream [Gen 20.3]; Balaam in visions, through a donkey, and by an angel [Num 22.22-35]; and King Saul [1 Sam 10.10-11; 1 Sam 28.11-19]).

10.2. God *controls*.

- 10.2.1. Even the ‘great’ men of this world are under God’s hand (Prov 21.1).
- 10.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar’s troubling vision did not result from natural causes. It was sent by God to teach him a lesson and to awaken him to the reality that God controls all things (Dan 4.34, 35, 37).
- 10.2.3. God can use providential events or a burning conscience to make people pay attention to what he has to say. No man, no matter how great in the world’s eyes, is immune from having a troubled mind sent by God. Even his power and riches cannot protect him from the guilt, fear, anxiety, and perplexity sent by God.
- 10.2.4. In contrast, God promises those who are in his family a rest of mind (conscience) that permits them to sleep in confidence (Ps 4.8; Ps 127.2).

10.3. God *confounds*.

- 10.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar knew in his deepest heart that the religion of the Babylonians was mere superstition and that the wise men were fakes.
- 10.3.2. God used Nebuchadnezzar’s innate understanding to confound the wise men of this world and their pretensions to superhuman knowledge, by having Nebuchadnezzar place a test before them that would demonstrate the falsity of their claimed ability to interpret dreams.
- 10.3.3. God orders all events so that his incomprehensible power will be displayed—as he confounded the magicians of Egypt, so the astrologers of Babylon (Job 12.17).
- 10.3.4. In the same way today, God confounds the foolishness of men and will silence all those that set up a challenge against him (Is 19.2, 3; Is 44.24, 25; 1 Cor 1.19, 20; 1 Cor 3.19; Rom 1.22). For example:
 - 10.3.4.1. False religions, robed in priestly garb, self-destruct in internecine conflicts.
 - 10.3.4.2. False religions, dressed-up with the aphorisms of worldly philosophers, are torn apart by arbitrary assertions and logical inconsistencies.
 - 10.3.4.3. False religions, attired in the uniforms of political systems or social programs, collapse in expensive ineffectiveness.
 - 10.3.4.4. False religions, in the white lab-coats of pseudo-science such as Evolution, distort truth until men believe their lies and living by superstition and myth.
- 10.3.5. The over-arching purpose of the account in this chapter is to demonstrate the superiority of God-given wisdom over the highly praised worldly wisdom of pagan priests. Daniel alone, with God’s help, will interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to silence the pagan astrologers (Dan 2.47).

Situation (Dan 2.7-13)

- 1. What request did the astrologers make of the king? (7)
 - 1.1. They asked a second time for the king to inform them of the contents of his dream and then claimed that they would interpret it. They could think of no new way to encourage the king to provide them with the information they needed so they had to fall back on repeating the request they had made previously (4).
 - 1.2. What, probably, were the feelings they had at this point?

- 1.2.1. It is probable that they made this petition with great fear and desperation. Their ‘bluff had been called’ and they knew that their inability to interpret dreams has been found out.
 - 1.2.2. They had been discovered to be frauds and were embarrassed.
2. What was Nebuchadnezzar’s, correct, understanding of the astrologer’s situation? (8, 9)
 - 2.1. He was certain, and correct, that they were repeating their request to ‘gain time’ (or we would say today ‘buy time’ or ‘stall for time’) because they knew that he was not going to supply them with the contents of his dream and was not going to change his demand for them to reveal it.
 - 2.1.1. The Aramaic here reads: ‘of a certainty’ and can mean: ‘absolute certainty’.
 - 2.2. He had correctly established in his mind that the astrologers were unable to meet his demand that they reveal the contents of his dream.
 - 2.2.1. He had concluded that there was collusion (a conspiracy) among them and that they were all acting together to resist him, hoping that in their unity they might change his mind.
 - 2.2.1.1. The Aramaic idiom: ‘Until the time is changed’ can be re-expressed in modern idiom as: ‘hoping the situation will change’ or as ‘until things change’.
 - 2.2.2. He was sure that they were evading the reality that they were frauds.
 - 2.2.3. He was certain that their claims were lies and, as such, they were corrupt/wicked.
3. What had Nebuchadnezzar firmly decided? Why? (8, 9)
 - 3.1. Their sentence and final disposition had been firmly decided and decreed.
 - 3.1.1. Again he repeats his previous statement (5) that his decision is unalterable (8): “the word from me is firm” [ESV] “I have firmly decided” [NIV].
 - 3.1.2. Their final disposition is in accordance with law as he has decreed it (9): “there is but one sentence for you” [ESV], “there is just one penalty for you” [NIV]. The law (sentence) against you is one and unchangeable.
 - 3.2. Nebuchadnezzar’s patience had reached its limit. He appears to have become exasperated with them. They thought that their request to have the contents of the dream explained was reasonable. He, in turn, believed that *his* request was even more reasonable: to have them reveal the contents to demonstrate that they really could interpret dreams.
 - 3.2.1. In fact, both requests were reasonable.
 - 3.2.2. From a human perspective, their request is valid since men cannot discern the thoughts of other men.
 - 3.2.3. From his perspective, his request was also valid—since they claimed to have supernatural abilities there should be no reason for them not to be able to meet his demand and validate their claim. His test was really no different from what someone might do who had found a purse and asked a claimant to correctly describe it and its contents in order to verify her ownership.
 - 3.2.4. In the end, his request prevailed because of his absolute authority over his subjects. The king’s decree was to be their will and action.
 - 3.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have resented their repeated request, for another reason:
 - 3.3.1. The astrologers likely had served his father and were older than he was.
 - 3.3.2. They may have been condescending and contemptuous of his youth (if he was born in 630 BC, as is believed, he was still under the age of 30 when he had the troubling dream that is recorded in this chapter).
 - 3.3.3. He was ready to put them in their place and remind them and all his subjects that he was the king of the greatest empire that had ever been formed in the ME, until that day.
4. What does Nebuchadnezzar accuse the astrologers of doing? (9)
 - 4.1. He accuses them of conspiring to tell him misleading (lies) and wicked things.
 - 4.2. Instead of challenging them directly with respect to their inability to interpret dreams, he

- accuses them of being in collusion to deceive him.
- 4.3. Was this a fair accusation?
- 4.3.1. To this point, they had not explicitly lied, as they had not yet attempted to provide an interpretation of the dream. Only, once they had told him what they believed to be the contents of dream, and it was shown to be incorrect, could he accuse them of lying.
- 4.3.2. They had even confessed their inability to divine the content of his dream. This was true. They however continued to claim that if they knew the contents of the dream they could give a valid interpretation; so in this respect were lying.
- 4.3.3. As an analogy, if someone announced that he had found a purse and asked anyone claiming it to describe it and its contents, he could not accuse someone who came forward of being duplicitous and a fraud until after she had presented an invalid description.
5. To what universal truths do the astrologers appeal? (10, 11)
- 5.1. The astrologers asserted that there was not a man on earth who could report the contents of the king's dream. From a human perspective, this is true since no man (mere human) can read the mind of another man.
- 5.2. No king, no matter how great, has asked such a thing of his wise men.
- 5.2.1. This is probably true. No 'great' king before Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have presented such a difficult challenge.
- 5.2.2. In the Bible, the only king requesting an interpretation of his dream, prior to the time of Daniel, was the Pharaoh at the time of Joseph. He provided the contents of his dream to his wise men, he did not ask them to 'read' his mind.
- 5.2.3. There doesn't appear to be any record in secular writings of a request that is similar to Nebuchadnezzar's. If there had been, and the record of it still existed, scholars would have, by this time, cross-referenced the record to the account in Daniel.
- 5.3. Only the gods can reveal dreams and their meanings.
- 5.3.1. In this, they are partially correct.
- 5.3.2. They realize that dream interpretation is beyond natural human abilities.
- 5.3.3. Ultimately, only God can know the mind of men (Ps 94.11; Ps 139.2; Mt 9.4; Lk 9.47).
- 5.3.4. However, being polytheistic⁷² they attribute the ability to interpret dreams to their gods, whereas in reality it resides only with the true God. As we noted (when we considered 1.17) Satan does not have the ability to use dreams to foretell the future and no natural dream can foretell the future. God alone can provide revelatory dreams and their meaning.
6. What do the astrologers admit?
- 6.1. However bold their claim (to be dream interpreters) had been in the past, they now admit their own limitations and inability.
- 6.2. Their arts and powers were severely limited.
- 6.3. They understood that there was a greater mind than the human mind. Without realizing it, they admit that God has divine omniscience.
- 6.4. They do not have access to the gods (11) and so really cannot provide dream interpretations.
- 6.5. The idols to which they offered prayers and sacrifices were nothing but dumb objects with no eyes to see or ears to hear.
- 6.6. Nebuchadnezzar really wasn't divine (since the gods do not dwell among men) contrary to the popular teaching of their religious system, where the king was considered to be a god in human form.
- 6.7. They had deceived the king with their previous interpretations. If only the gods can provide dream interpretations, then how had they been able to provide them in the past?

⁷² Even though they knew that there is one supreme God, they still believed in intermediaries between God and man, whether angelic in form, gods with human traits, or *jinni* (genies).

- 6.8. These admissions would have been startling and difficult for them since they considered themselves to be worthy of great respect in the king's court and among the common people. It would have been very difficult for these proud men to admit their insufficiencies. But the fear of execution forced them to swallow their false, swollen pride.
7. What is the nature of the astrologers' final appeal?
- 7.1. It is a form of begging or pleading. They say, in effect, "We cannot do what you ask, so don't ask it."
- 7.1.1. They hope that the king will accept the reality that what he asks is impossible, from a human perspective.
- 7.1.2. However, Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch who believed that no law, tradition, or request from a subject, could be above his whim or will. We who live in the West, influenced by the English, American and French revolutions, have difficulty understanding the concept of monarchies or governments that are not constrained by 'popular sovereignty' and the rule of law.
- 7.1.3. We might find Nebuchadnezzar's demand unreasonable, but the wise men of his day would have realized that the king had the 'right' to ask of them something unreasonable or impossible even if it led to their death.
- 7.2. They use subtle flattery.
- 7.2.1. They implied that Nebuchadnezzar was "great and mighty" [NIV] ("great and powerful" [ESV], "lord, or ruler" [NKJV])
- 7.2.1.1. Ascriptions such as, 'Great King, mighty King, King of Assyria/Babylon' have been found on clay bricks, clay tablets, obelisks, and wall reliefs.
- 7.2.1.2. For example: "Shalmaneser, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, King of Assyria, son of Assur-nasir-pal, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, son of Tukulti-Ninurta, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria (brick from) the construction of the ziggurat in Kalhu."^{73,74,75}
8. What in the astrologers' answer would have angered the king?
- 8.1. They compare himself with other kings.
- 8.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar would have considered himself the greatest king ever to walk the earth. What other kings may have done is irrelevant from his perspective.
- 8.1.2. By putting the king in the same class as other kings, the astrologers have effectively knocked Nebuchadnezzar off his high pillar.
- 8.2. They tell the king that what he asks is not possible to achieve.
- 8.2.1. An absolute monarch, who expected to have his will heeded immediately, would not be pleased to have his subjects tell him that what he wished done would not be.
- 8.2.2. The astrologers effectively rebuke the king by suggesting that what he wishes done, no king should desire or request.
- 8.2.3. It is common for men who cannot be convinced by reason to become angry and provoked when their wills are thwarted.
- 8.3. They admit that their inability to provide an interpretation of the dream is evidence that their mystical arts are useless.
- 8.3.1. They effectively tell the king that their powers are a mere sham and that they have been lying to, and fooling, the kings before him.
- 8.4. In verse 12, the expression "angry and very furious," indicates Nebuchadnezzar's mounting anger.

⁷³ A. T. Clay, "Bas-Reliefs of Ashurnasirpal," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Apr., 1912), pp. 72-73.

⁷⁴ Christina Tyler, "Clay Tablets Reveal Accounting Answers," *The Gazette* 10, no. 36 (October 1, 1999).

lcweb2.loc.gov/intldl/cuneihhtml/gazette.html

⁷⁵ David K. Moore, "The Brick of Shalmaneser - Library Artifact from Ancient Assyria Translated," *Library of Congress Bulletin*, November 1999 - Vol 58, No. 11.

- 8.4.1. This is a typical construct in Semitic languages: to emphasize the importance of something, a writer repeats a word either directly or with a synonym (e.g., “dying you shall die” Gen 2.17). This repetition takes the place of ‘very’ or ‘surely’ as the means of emphasizing the importance of the idea.
- 8.5. As a result of their excuses and duplicity Nebuchadnezzar’s anger reached its peak
9. What was to be the apparent conclusion of the confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and the astrologers? (12-13)
- 9.1. Nebuchadnezzar ordered the execution of all the wise men, including the specific class of astrologers who were the ones in the confrontation.
- 9.2. Why were all the wise men to be executed? Why not just those who had challenged Nebuchadnezzar?
- 9.2.1. There was one decree for them all (2, 9).
- 9.2.2. The astrologers represented the rest of the wise men, so all of the wise men stood condemned, without exception.
- 9.2.3. The failure of one class of wise men reflected on the entire contingent. The king thought in ancient Middle East covenantal concepts. A king represented an entire nation, a father a family, a class of wise men, the entire contingent.
- 9.3. Who was to be killed? The wise men in all the empire, only in the province/territory of Babylon (Dan 2.48, 49; Dan 3.1), or only in the city of Babylon (Dan 4.29)?
- 9.3.1. Given that the decree extended to all classes of wise men, and not just the interpreters of dreams, it likely had broad geographic extent as well.
- 9.3.2. The decree applied not only to those currently serving in the king’s court, but also to all wise men, including those not present. Thus Daniel and his friends, who were not present at the confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and the astrologers, were included within the scope of the decree.
- 9.3.3. The fact that the wise men had to be assembled for the execution hints at a broader application that those near at hand to the throne room.
- 9.3.4. The decree, therefore, likely included all wise men throughout the entire kingdom. However, in practice, most of the wise men in Nebuchadnezzar’s service would likely have been in close proximity.
10. How was the execution to be accomplished?
- 10.1. It is possible that each individual was to be killed wherever he was found.
- 10.2. It is also possible that the wise men were to be rounded up for a mass, public execution. A public display would have catered to the people’s desire for entertainment and blood-lust and reinforced the King’s autocratic authority.
11. What does this decree tell us about Nebuchadnezzar?
- 11.1. He wielded temporally absolute and arbitrary power.
- 11.2. While more lenient than most kings of his era, he was still a tyrant—commanding death when he could not comprehend truth.
12. Why was Daniel *not* among the astrologers in the court at the time of these events?
- 12.1. Daniel was probably not part of the order of astrologers—the dream interpreters.
- 12.2. He may not yet have actually commenced his service in the court, even though he had just graduated from the training program.
13. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 13.1. *Duplicity* – Worldly men serving kings and others in positions of authority easily become sycophants, toadies and panderers. We see this among the astrologers who attempt to use flattery to assuage the king’s anger. We also see examples of their duplicity in that for

(probably) many years they had been making claims to be wise counsellors to kings. However, when their lives were on the line, and they were asked to perform, they admitted that they were frauds.

- 13.2. *Danger* – Nebuchadnezzar’s use of autocratic authority to decree the execution of the wise men teaches us of the dangers of placing absolute power in the hands of mortals. As Lord Acton said in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.” When leadership is not tempered by Biblical wisdom it can only tend to autocracy and tyranny. Consider fascism and Communism as modern examples which replaced hereditary kings with similar evils. We must not think that democracies are any better. The ‘will of the people’ can be as tyrannical as the will of oligarchs when it is based on selfish striving for rights and entitlements. No form of government, *per se*, is better than any other. We are not to put our faith and hope in a form of government but in God’s providential governance over all governors.
- 13.3. *Demonic* – This account reminds us that astrology and the arts of other enchanters and magicians is mere nonsense and the fruit of the demonic. The ancient wise men were made to look foolish by the king when he asked them to provide a true demonstration of their professed abilities. It is the same today, even with our professed modern wisdom, many of the counsellors to kings, presidents, prime ministers, and governors, are charlatans:
 - 13.3.1. Their economic and social policies are mystical hokum, for example:
 - 13.3.1.1. Tinkering with interest rates to stimulate the economy is like trying to turn a ship in a narrow channel in deep darkness while looking behind at the wake.
 - 13.3.1.2. Creating gun registries and not allowing honest citizens to own/carry guns ensures that criminals know that there will not be any guns to oppose their activities.
 - 13.3.1.3. Raising taxes and stifling growth to increase government revenue rather than allowing economic growth to produce a larger tax base. People do not tolerate tax increase and either hide their income in black-market transactions or flee the political jurisdiction (consider Detroit and Michigan as prime example).
 - 13.3.1.4. Legislating school integration and sending children by bus to other schools, resulting in ‘white flight’, more extreme segregation, and inferior educational opportunities for black students.
 - 13.3.2. Their military advice is a sham, for example:
 - 13.3.2.1. Ignoring the reality of war. Once wars are engaged they need to be fought to the death. It is silly for one country to attempt to ‘play fairly’ when the enemy takes advantage of every appeasement (e.g., treating terrorists as criminals needing a trial rather than as wicked and vicious enemies).
 - 13.3.2.2. Thinking that you can appease Islam and work with Islamic regimes to conquer terrorism.
 - 13.3.3. Their scientific advice is foolishness, for example:
 - 13.3.3.1. Outlawing the incandescent light bulb, claiming that this will reduce energy consumption (which it may) and in turn reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (which it probably won’t), when the alternatives may be far worse polluters (e.g., mercury from florescent ballasts).
 - 13.3.3.2. Subsidizing ethanol production and hybrid cars to decrease dependence on fossil-fuels without out considering the true life-cycle costs and impact of skewing markets (e.g., increasing the price of food).
- 13.4. *Divinity* – To God alone belongs the ability to foretell the future. We are not to resort to any means of fortune-telling or future prognostication. Even when we consider the prophecies in the Bible we are to apply them with great care. We are, for example, to believe that Jesus will return on the Last Day, as the Bible says (Acts 10.1, 11; 1 Thess 4.16). But we are not to

create systems for placing dates on when the final events will occur (Mt 24.36-51).

- 13.5. *Delusion* – Men think that they are masters of their own destinies and too smart to need God. God will confound the wisdom of the worldly-wise just as he did the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's court by making them look like fools (Is 44.25; Rom 1.22; 1 Cor 1.20).

Showdown (Dan 2.14-16)

1. Who was Arioch and what did he proceed to do?
 - 1.1. According to the translations we use (NKJV, NIV, ESV, NASB), Arioch was the commander or captain of the king's guard. Some suggest that he was the royal chief of police, or the head of the elite bodyguard of the king. It has been suggested that the Aramaic word seems to come from, or be related to, the root word "slaughterer" (of animals). So, some translations (e.g., NRSV) are more explicit and refer to Arioch as the chief executioner. Regardless of the precise translation, he and his unit had as one of its functions the execution of enemies of the kingdom.
 - 1.2. He proceeded to carry out the king's command that the wise men be executed.
 - 1.3. How might this have been done?
 - 1.3.1. It is unlikely that Arioch went personally from house-to-house or building-to-building and executed each wise man that he encountered.
 - 1.3.2. It is more likely a process like this was followed:
 - 1.3.2.1. A formal decree was published indicating:
 - 1.3.2.1.1. The charge against the wise men,
 - 1.3.2.1.2. Defining the procedure for their arrest,
 - 1.3.2.1.3. Stating the penalties for those who harboured them, and
 - 1.3.2.1.4. Setting a date for their execution.
 - 1.3.2.2. The guards under his authority were assembled and each was given a territory to cover in which he would arrest wise men and lead them to a prison for holding.
 - 1.3.2.3. A mass public execution would likely be held to:
 - 1.3.2.3.1. Cater to the people's desire for entertainment and blood-lust, and
 - 1.3.2.3.2. Reinforce the King's autocratic authority.
 - 1.3.3. It would probably have taken some time to arrest all the wise men. This may help to explain how Daniel would have been able to request some time to address the problem of providing an interpretation of the King's dream.
 - 1.4. Note: there did not appear to be any distinctions made. The whole group of wise men (whether or not they had been present) were to be included in the arrest and execution. Thus, Arioch himself or one of his cohort is sent to arrest Daniel, who had not been present at the discussions with the king. This is often the case with arbitrary and ill-considered laws or policies of governments (or corporations) which do not allow for valid distinctions and discrimination. For example:
 - 1.4.1. Policies about race often result in unintended forms of reverse discrimination. When US universities attempted to balance admission by race, they ended up rejecting better qualified candidates purely on the basis of their race. Similarly, when police forces and fire departments attempted to get a more diverse gender-ethnic mix they rejected qualified candidates merely because they were white males.
 - 1.4.2. Valid exercises of Christianity are suppressed when attempts are made to curtail practices of false religions (e.g., British Airways ruled that no religious objects such as ceremonial daggers or headscarves could be worn with uniforms so Christians are prohibited from wearing a cross).
 - 1.4.3. Restrictions on gun ownership only limit the rights of honest citizens. Criminals don't register their guns. Criminals know that citizens they accost will not have guns.
 - 1.4.4. Policies for work-at-home vs. working in the office often have unforeseen consequences. Some who work from home are less distracted, take fewer sick days, and are more productive than if they came into the office. Some who work from home abuse the privilege and slack off. Having a single policy for all can result in overall less

productivity.

2. What did Daniel ask and discover?
 - 2.1. He asked why the decree had been issued and why it was so urgent.
 - 2.1.1. He discovered the details about Nebuchadnezzar's having had a dream, his demand to have the wise men reveal both the contents of the dream and its meaning, the inability of the wise men to satisfy the king's demand, and the issuing of the decree to have all the wise men put to death.
 - 2.1.2. He also discovered that the king's command was 'urgent' (NKJV, ESV). A better translation of the Aramaic may be 'harsh' (NIV) or 'severe' from the root of the word used here.
 - 2.2. What does the fact that he asked this question tell us about his attendance at the court?
 - 2.2.1. He had not been present when the king revealed to the wise men (astrologers) that he had had a dream and that he was looking for someone to explain its meaning (see also, 13).
 - 2.2.2. We don't know the reason that he had not been at the royal court. It does seem somewhat strange considering the fact that the king had had a positive impression of Daniel's wisdom—ten times above all his peers.
 - 2.2.2.1. It may be that he avoided being present with the pagan astrologers, if he was able to.
 - 2.2.2.2. It may also be (more likely) that since he was a new graduate of the Babylonian civil service training academy he had not yet been given an appointment or job and had no permission to be in the courtroom with the other wise men.
3. How did Daniel approach Arioch?
 - 3.1. We are told that he approached Arioch with wisdom and tact.
 - 3.1.1. The two Aramaic words apparently can take on a variety of translations: wisdom and tact, prudence and discretion, counsel and wisdom, discretion and discernment.
 - 3.1.2. The root of the first word seems to have the idea of 'prudence' whereas the second word is based on the word 'taste' (e.g., Dan 5.2)
 - 3.1.3. The two words are essentially synonyms.
 - 3.2. Why is this stated explicitly?
 - 3.2.1. We need to remember that Daniel is a young man, probably no older than 19 at this time. He is not an astute veteran of dealing with many years of courtroom politics and intrigue. His approach to Arioch is much more mature than we would expect from a person of his age in any culture or society (even one where young people become adults at a much earlier age than in our culture).
 - 3.2.2. He shows by example how all Christians should honour those in positions of authority over them (whether civil magistrates, employers, Elders, or parents). His approach was one of deference and respect.
 - 3.2.3. It shows the truth of the proverb which teaches that a gentle (delicate) answer turns away wrath (Prov 15.1).
 - 3.3. How did he *not* approach Arioch?
 - 3.3.1. He did not lose his composure and panic.
 - 3.3.2. He did not go into a fit and make a fuss. You would not have heard him saying things like: "Not me! What have I done? I don't deserve to die! I don't want to die! ..."
 - 3.3.3. He did not accuse the king of being an unjust barbarous tyrant.
 - 3.3.4. He did not contrive a plan of resistance.
 - 3.3.5. He did not contrive a plan for escaping from Babylon and returning to Judea.
 - 3.4. Can you think of examples, as recorded in the Bible, of other men of God whose actions before kings are not as wise and circumspect?
 - 3.4.1. Abraham before Pharaoh (Gen 12.10-20) and Abimelech (Gen 20.1-18).
 - 3.4.2. David feigning insanity before Achish in Gath (1 Sam 21.12-15).

In contrast, Daniel is presented to us as a man of outstanding integrity.

4. What is the basic form of Daniel's approach to Arioch?
 - 4.1. He structured his approach in the form of a question.
 - 4.1.1. Why is this an effective technique?
 - 4.1.1.1. A question is less likely to put someone on the defensive than a direct accusation.
 - 4.1.1.2. A question is a good way of raising doubt in someone's mind. Satan understood this (Gen 3.1).
 - 4.1.1.3. A question is a good way to initiate conversations and open dialogue as most people want to talk about things that concern them.
 - 4.1.2. What was the result of his question?
 - 4.1.2.1. He was able to be blunt without being belligerent. He could mention the harshness of the edict without appearing to be accusatory.
 - 4.1.2.2. His question probably raised or reinforced doubts in Arioch's mind. Most people have some vestige of a conscience left and feel a pit in their gut when they see examples of injustice. Arioch, as a (stained) image bearer of God knew in his heart that Nebuchadnezzar's decree was unjust and was encouraged to hear someone else suggest this, even if obliquely in the form of a question.
 - 4.1.2.3. He got Arioch to talk about the cause of the serious directive.
 - 4.2. He also approached Arioch boldly.
 - 4.2.1. On what basis can we infer that his approach to Arioch was bold?
 - 4.2.1.1. It is unlikely that Daniel had already become a friend of Arioch, the chief executioner. It is improbable that he would have had any reason to have met or discussed matters with Arioch during his training or in the short time since his graduation. There may have been an exception if Arioch was also the head of the king's body guard as some translations imply. Even then, it seems that Daniel would have had little reason to come into contact with Arioch. It would be as unlikely as a young research assistant from Saskatchewan, in the Department of Finance in Ottawa having contact with the Deputy Attorney General.
 - 4.2.1.2. In a royal court setting there was a regular form of protocol that was supposed to be followed. It would have been considered very out of the ordinary for a young man, a hostage or slave, and a new graduate of the Babylonian civil service training academy to have approached the chief executioner, let alone questioned him.
 - 4.2.2. Daniel had a holy boldness, not a rashness. He based his confidence in God, not in his own position, privilege, or power.
5. Why is it significant that Arioch answered Daniel?
 - 5.1. Note that it was more than just than a simple answer, he "explained the matter."
 - 5.2. Arioch had no reason to talk with, let alone give an explanation to, a hostage or low ranking court officer, and certainly not one who was condemned to die.
 - 5.3. It may indicate, in spite of the fact that Daniel may not have known Arioch personally, that Daniel had already gained a reputation of respect and so Arioch took him seriously. Arioch must have known who Daniel was since he sent arresting officers specifically to arrest Daniel and his friends (13).
 - 5.4. The king's order was urgent and discussing matters would delay the execution of the order.
 - 5.5. It is also significant because we see God's providential governance as he leads Arioch to answer Daniel.
6. What action did Daniel take?
 - 6.1. He *appealed* to the king for a stay of execution.

- 6.1.1. Did Daniel actually see and speak with the king?
 - 6.1.1.1. Compare 25. He seems to introduce Daniel to the king. If Daniel had actually appeared before the king in this instance, it seems that Arioch would have said something different.
 - 6.1.1.2. What exactly he did isn't clear. The NIV has "Daniel went in to the king", whereas the ESV has "Daniel went in and requested the king". Another way to translate it is "Daniel went in and sought from the king that he would give him time". The Aramaic says: "Daniel went (in) and requested the king to give him (a) time."
 - 6.1.1.3. Where exactly did he go? Obviously, Daniel did not rush into the courtroom uninvited. The account must be abbreviated, not giving all the details of court protocol.
 - 6.1.1.4. It is possible that Daniel didn't actually enter the courtroom and see the king but made his appeal through intermediaries. Regardless, he could not have approached the king directly without the intervention of senior court officials.
- 6.2. He *asked* for time to address the king's request.
 - 6.2.1. The other wise men had insisted that what the king asked for was impossible. They didn't consider that having more time would help them come up with an answer; although they might have asked for time as a stalling tactic (they were accused of stalling by the king, 8).
 - 6.2.2. Daniel, in contrast, asked for some time to fulfill the king's demands.
 - 6.2.3. We are not told how long a period he requested.
 - 6.2.3.1. It could not have been open ended as the king would have wanted an answer and would have concluded quickly that any extended period was a stalling tactic.
 - 6.2.3.2. If we translate it with the article, 'a time', it could refer to a measure of time and mean a day.
- 6.3. He *asserted* that he would provide an answer to the king's request.
 - 6.3.1. He had an implicit trust that God would provide him with the answer.
- 7. What was the outcome of Daniel's request?
 - 7.1. His request was granted; he was given time to obtain an answer about the king's vision.
 - 7.1.1. This is implied by the silence between verses 16 and 17.
 - 7.2. Why might the king have granted Daniel's request?
 - 7.2.1. He had been intent on executing the wise men, yet acceded to the request of a novice court official. Ultimately, God intervened.
 - 7.2.2. He may have been having second thoughts about his decree and was hoping for some form of mitigation that would allow him to save face. Much like Darius hoped that Daniel hadn't been killed in the lions' den.
 - 7.2.3. Also he would still have wanted an interpretation of the dream; and if there was some way he could obtain an answer he was willing to entertain the possibility.
 - 7.2.4. The boldness of Daniel's course of action contributed to its success. It was so bold and unexpected that it got attention.
- 8. What does this account tell us about Daniel?
 - 8.1. He was wise and discerning. He knew how to read people and events. Again, we need to consider how amazing this is—Daniel is a young man, probably no older than 19.
 - 8.2. He understood how to use psychology. By asking for time to provide an answer for the king, he delayed the execution of the wise men and provided the king with a cooling off period.
 - 8.2.1. [We have to wonder if the wise men ever thanked Daniel for saving their lives. They probably did not. They would have been jealous of his abilities, his favour with the king and his rise to a prominent position of power (compare, Dan 6.4).]
 - 8.3. He was bold – His request of both Arioch and the king took boldness because the king had

- already accused the wise men of wanting more time and of being useless prophets.
- 8.4. He had already gained respect within the Babylonian court:
- 8.4.1. Otherwise, Arioch would have dismissed his request as insubordinate.
 - 8.4.2. If he appeared personally before the king, then he had some form of access to the king or was able to persuade the king's subordinates to grant him access. Regardless, his request for time was heard by the king and he was granted time.
 - 8.4.3. The response of Arioch and the king indicates that Daniel was already viewed with respect.
- 8.5. He depended on God. He was not afraid of earthly potentates because he revered the supreme ruler of the universe. He was convinced that the Spirit of God was with him and would provide a solution to the dilemma.
- 8.5.1. It is possible that he had already displayed skills in dream interpretation (Dan 1.17) and may have interpreted dreams previously for his contemporaries, if not for the king—though there is no record of this.
 - 8.5.2. If he had already interpreted dreams for others, he may have been resting his confidence in God's working through him on evidence.
 - 8.5.3. Regardless, he was in new territory with having to discern the dream as well as provide its meaning.
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 9.1. *God Rules* – Kings and their servants are in the hand of God (Prov 21.1). Just as Nebuchadnezzar and Arioch were overruled by God and responded to Daniel's request, so all persons in governing positions today are subject to God. We need never be afraid of men, no matter how powerful they appear, because they are ultimately nothing more than mere men under the hand of almighty God.
 - 9.2. *General Respect* – Daniel approached all men, whether Arioch or Nebuchadnezzar, with the same degree of deference and boldness. So, we should approach all men with a common respect—from a king on a throne to a slave sweeping horse manure from the streets. All men are created in the image of God, and we should treat them as such. We are not to be respecters of persons, but respecting of people (1 Pt 2.18; Titus 3.2; James 3.17).
 - 9.3. *Guarded Response* – We need to cultivate a wise approach to how we respond to unjust people and difficult events. Daniel displayed wisdom and tact, even with the threat of execution above his head. He did not over react; rather he acted in a shrewd but sincere way. We need to become masters of the studied and subtle art of tact and diplomacy (Mt 10.16; Eph 5.15-17).
 - 9.4. *Grudging Recognition* – Godly men gain respect from their peers, even if hated by the sinful world. Daniel was a man of principle who stood out in a pagan culture. Today in government, sports, business, etc. men of dedication and principle are like statues of granite in the clay of relativism (1 Thess 4.11-12; Titus 2.8-10; 1 Pt 2.12; 1 Pt 3.16-17).
 - 9.5. *Great Results* – William Carey is reported to have said: "Expect great things; attempt great things [for God]." From the example of Daniel, we can conclude the same thing: Think boldly, act boldly. Christians should never be timid. What we undertake for the kingdom of God, for the glory of God, will be blessed with the greatness of God. When we walk in trust we can expect great results (Ps 18.29; Ps 56.10, 11; Ps 144.1).

Supplication (Dan 2.17-23)

1. What actions did Daniel take?
- 1.1. He informed other believers of the urgent need.
 - 1.1.1. He shared his concerns and needs with fellow believers.
 - 1.1.1.1. He explained what had happened (the decision of the king) and how it affected them.
 - 1.1.1.2. God's people—Christian family members, brothers in the faith, and wise Pastors/Elders—are to be our first recourse for help when we have troubles and

- needs.
- 1.1.2. He did not consult with the other wise men.
 - 1.1.2.1. He did not consider their magic arts to have any merit for addressing the problems that were confronting him.
- 1.2. He urged them to *pray* for mercy and concerning the mystery.
 - 1.2.1. We are to call on the saints to pray for and with us (Est 4.16; 1 Thess 5.25; James 5.16). Friends who pray for and with us are the most valuable friends we can have.
 - 1.2.2. We must never be shy and reticent about asking our Christian friends to pray for and with us.
 - 1.2.3. He gave specific guidance as to what he wished them to pray about (we will consider this below).
 - 1.2.4. This is the first explicit reference to Daniel praying or speaking about prayer.
- 2. How did Daniel refer to God? Why?
 - 2.1. He referred to God as the ‘God of heaven (heavens)’.
 - 2.2. ‘God of heaven’ is a title of God used five times in Daniel (Dan 2.18, 19, 37, 44; Dan 5.23 [Lord of heaven]). It is also used eight times in Ezra, and four times in Nehemiah. It occurs only five times elsewhere in the OT (Gen 24.3, 7; 2 Chron 36.23 [parallels a portion of Ezra]; Ps 136.26; Jonah 1.9).
 - 2.2.1. ‘God of heaven’ seems to be a title for God that was used mostly during the period of the Babylonian exile.
 - 2.3. The expression is also used in the NT? (Mt 11.25/Lk 10.21 [Lord]; Acts 17.24 [Lord]; Rev 11.13; Rev 16.11)
 - 2.4. Why did Daniel use this expression? Why was it used more in the period of the exile?
 - 2.4.1. It may be that the OT believers wanted to emphasize a key attribute of God in the face of pagan religions.
 - 2.4.2. The God of the Bible, the only true God, is the God who dwells in heaven.
 - 2.4.3. God is not a god who dwells (i.e., manifests his presence in the most visible way—through light) in people’s houses or in manmade temples or on mountains but in an abode that is transcendent (above the physical realm).
 - 2.4.4. It seems that the reason for the usage is that OT believers (and the pagans like Cyrus who also used this expression) wanted the pagan world to understand that God was different from the gods of the pagan pantheons. God isn’t earth-bound or confined to a particular realm of the created order; he is above the created order.
 - 2.4.5. The usage appears to be a way of describing God as the Creator.
 - 2.4.6. Note: heaven is not eternal; it is a created realm out of which God chooses to make his presence known to his created rational beings: angels and sanctified believers.
 - 2.4.6.1. God alone has existed from all eternity.
 - 2.4.6.2. God did not exist eternally in time or place. Both time and place were created along with substance/matter—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
 - 2.5. Does the NT usage of the title add anything to this consideration?
 - 2.5.1. Jesus was in Galilee at the time he uttered his prayer (Mt 11.25). He *may* have used this title to counter the syncretistic tendencies of the nations around Israel.
 - 2.5.2. Paul’s use of the title (Acts 17.24) seems to have the same purpose as Daniel’s. Paul was emphasizing God as Creator, the transcendent God, who is not confined to temporal/spatial habitations. He makes this point in the midst of a city given over to idolatry and the reverence of a vast pantheon of false gods.
 - 2.5.3. The instance of the use of the title in Revelation (Rev 11.13; Rev 16.11) appear to be in the context of the pagan unbelieving world acknowledging that God is the true God, Creator and governor of the world.

3. What were the specific requests that Daniel wanted presented to God?
 - 3.1. For *relief by mercy*.
 - 3.1.1. That he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men.
 - 3.1.2. What is mercy?
 - 3.1.2.1. Technically, mercy is compassion shown to an offender or enemy (1 Chron 21.13; Neh 9.28). Mercy is not getting what we deserve—i.e., punishment. Whereas grace is getting what we don't deserve—God's care. Mercy: God's love pardons the guilty. Grace: God's love helps the needy.
 - 3.1.2.2. In a broader sense, mercy is a general act of kindness or compassion toward anyone. Mercy is God's response to a person's need (Neh 1.11; Ps 25.6).
 - 3.1.2.3. Daniel recognized his native/natural inability in these difficult circumstances and turned to God, expecting his assistance in time of need (Heb 4.16).
 - 3.1.3. Notice that there seems to be an assumption that the other wise men would still be executed. Daniel didn't pray for them and their safety. Based on the circumstances, they were pagan idolaters who claimed to be able to foretell the future. They deserved to die for lying to their king and to God.
 - 3.2. For *resolution of mystery*.
 - 3.2.1. That an answer to the mystery of the dream would be provided.
 - 3.2.2. The Aramaic term *raz* (רָז) which is translated as 'mystery' identifies an enigmatic or baffling omen that only revelation from God can explain or make clear.
 - 3.3. He left the matter in God's hands.
 - 3.3.1. He didn't fret, but remained calm.
 - 3.3.2. It may be that that he prayed and then went to bed (19), although this cannot be proved, and some argue that his vision came while he was awake in the night.
 - 3.3.3. He had a confidence that God would protect him or take him into glory.
4. What was the outcome of their prayer?
 - 4.1. God answered their prayer by revealing the mystery of the dream.
 - 4.1.1. Their specific request was granted—to have the mystery revealed.
 - 4.2. In addition, since they had an answer to the mystery, the implication would be that they would not face the death penalty. Of course, we know from reading the rest of the chapter, that not only did they not die, but they were promoted to important roles in the kingdom.
 - 4.3. Daniel was considered to be a righteous man by his contemporaries (Ezk 14.14, 20). James (James 5.16b) tells us that, "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." So it is no surprise that God heard Daniel's prayer.
 - 4.4. We won't consider in detail at this time the topic of what it means for God to *answer* prayer, but will note the following:
 - 4.4.1. It is an incontrovertible truth that God hears the prayers of his people and answers them. Although it may at times appear that he is unhearing, this is not the case. God always hears and answers the true prayers of his people (Ps 10.17; Ps 86.7; Prov 15.29; Is 58.9; Lk 11.9; 1 Jn 5.14–15).
 - 4.4.2. Natural men, steeped in sin, think that this means that God is like a vending machine filled with every kind of candy, chips, and soft drinks. All we have to do is press the buttons and out will flow all the junk we could ever want to indulge in.
 - 4.4.3. But God does not always answer prayer in the way we expect or desire. His understanding and purposes are far beyond ours and he knows what is best for each of us (Rom 8.28).
 - 4.4.4. True believers know that at times God's answer to our prayers will be: "No," "Wait," or, "I have something better than you ask for."
 - 4.4.5. Our challenge is to trust and believe. We must trust him that his answer will be beyond anything we can imagine or hope. We may not see the answer now, but it will come.

5. How did God reveal the mystery? Why?
 - 5.1. He was given a vision (appearance of a supernatural revelation in his mind to communicate truth) to reveal the mystery of what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed.
 - 5.2. Some commentators think Daniel dreamed, during sleep, the same dream that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed.
 - 5.3. Others think that Daniel was not sleeping, but praying through the night or in a trance, and was given a vision of the mystery.
 - 5.3.1. They point to the use of a different word ('vision') here than in verse 1 ('dream').
 - 5.3.2. However, the two words may be synonyms in the Semitic cognates, as shown by their adjacent use in parallel structures (Num 12.6; Job 4.13; Job 7.14; Job 20.8; Job 33.15; Is 29.7; Dan 4.5, 9).
 - 5.4. How does God reveal mysteries today?
 - 5.4.1. Not through dreams; God has wrapped up the use of dreams and visions and other extraordinary means of revealing truth with the advent of Jesus Christ is ultimate revelation (Heb 1.1, 2).
 - 5.4.2. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ given in the Bible (Rom 16.25-26; Eph 1.9; Eph 3.1-6; 1 Tim 3.9; 1 Tim 3.16) and the word preached (1 Cor 4.1; Eph 6.19; Col 1.25-27)
6. What was Daniel's response to being provided with a revelation in a vision and a solution to the mystery?
 - 6.1. He prayed again.
 - 6.1.1. This time, the primary theme of his prayer was praise rather than petition.
 - 6.2. Did he check with Nebuchadnezzar to see if the right dream had been revealed to him?
 - 6.2.1. He didn't have to go to the king for confirmation that God had the right dream. He knew that God had given him the answer to the mystery.
 - 6.3. Daniel's faith in God and God's controlling providence were strong. He depended on God to be faithful and praised him for his faithfulness.
7. What are some questions we can ask to help us understand and study Daniel's prayer? (20-23)
 - 7.1. How does the prayer open?
 - 7.1.1. It opens with God (his name), and his praise.
 - 7.1.2. The Aramaic reads, "Let be the name of God *praised*". Notice that the Aramaic has the object before the subject. The English translations reverse this, with man (the one offering praise) coming first in the construct.
 - 7.2. What is the substance (content) of Daniel's prayer?
 - 7.2.1. It is composed of various ways of giving praise/honour to God.
 - 7.2.2. It praises his name (it reminds us of the words in the Lord's prayer: "hallowed be your name")
 - 7.2.3. It praises his nature (e.g., his wisdom and knowledge and revelation of secret things)
 - 7.2.4. It praises his power
 - 7.2.5. It praises his acts in providence (e.g., his raising up and deposing kings)
 - 7.3. How is Daniel's prayer structured?
 - 7.3.1. Daniel gives glory to God for what he is in himself (20)
 - 7.3.2. Daniel gives glory to God for control in creation and general providence (21).
 - 7.3.3. Daniel gives glory to God for what he does in the world of men (22).
 - 7.3.4. Daniel gives glory to God for particular providence, in revelation—what he had asked of God (23).
 - 7.3.5. Daniel covers all of man's existence and the universe's existence in the context of God's governing and disposing his will.
 - 7.4. What attributes of God are included in this prayer?
 - 7.4.1. Worthiness of praise (20a) [Rev 4.11].
 - 7.4.2. God's name is uniquely special—it is holy (Ex 20.7) blessed, praised, and honoured.

- God is “I am” and Lord (Sovereign), Creator, etc. (20a).
- 7.4.3. He is wise (20b) [Job 12.13].
 - 7.4.4. He is powerful/mighty (20b) [Gen 28.3; Josh 22.22; Ps 50.1].
 - 7.4.5. He governs (times and seasons) in providence according to his eternal plan (Dan 2.21; Job 12.23). His will is done on earth as in heaven [Gen 1.14-18; Gen 8.22].
 - 7.4.6. He is all-knowing; knowing the end from the beginning (21) [Job 37.16; Ps 139.1-4; Is 44.7; Is 45.21; Is 46.10].
 - 7.4.7. He is a God who communicates and reveals truths to men (22, 22, 23) [Heb 1.1, 2].
 - 7.4.8. He dwells in light and makes himself known through light (22) [Ps 104.2]. This speaks primarily to God’s holiness [Is 10.17] and secondarily to his knowledge [Ps 119.105].
 - 7.4.9. He reveals true prophecy, foretelling history to be (23) [Is 42.9; Is 44.7; Is 48.6].
 - 7.4.9.1. God’s universal foresight or foreknowledge is directly connected with his governance (22 and 23 with 21).
 - 7.4.9.2. It is not that God just looks ahead and sees what men (as free agents) will do in the future, but executes his plan through the future actions of men.
 - 7.4.9.3. Some people try to protect man’s ‘free will’ by suggesting that God knows the future but does not control the future actions of men.
 - 7.4.9.4. God can only know for certain what men will do if in fact it is certain men will act in a particular way. The only way that men will act in a particular way is if God has decreed the action. God knows the future is certain because he makes it certain.
 - 7.4.10. God is a Covenant-keeping God. We infer this from the reference to “God of my fathers” (23) [Dt 7.9; Neh 1.5; 1 Ki 8.23; Heb 6.13-18].
 - 7.4.11. A God who hears and answers prayer (23) [Ps 10.17; Ps 86.7; Prov 15.29; Is 58.9; Lk 11.9; 1 Jn 5.14–15].
- 7.5. What other prayers of praise are called to mind by Daniel’s prayer?
- 7.5.1. Mary’s prayer of praise (Lk 1.46-55) has a similar ‘feel’:
 - 7.5.1.1. Both provide an overview of God’s attributes.
 - 7.5.1.2. Both appear to quote extensively from the Psalter.
 - 7.5.2. A few of the Psalms could be likened to it (e.g., Ps 8.1-9; Ps 9.1-20; Ps 18.1-50; Ps 21.1-12; Ps 29.1-11; Ps 33.1-22; Ps 138.1-8; Ps 146.1-10); although most of Psalms are more detailed.
 - 7.5.3. Leupold calls this prayer Daniel’s Psalm.
- 7.6. What appears to be the source for much (all) of Daniel’s prayer?
- 7.6.1. Daniel’s prayer is composed of many Biblical passages (direct quotes or allusions).
 - 7.6.2. What might be some of the places in the Bible that he used as the source for his prayer?
 - 7.6.2.1. 20a: Ps 103.1; Ps 113.2; Ps 145.1, 2
 - 7.6.2.2. 20b: 1 Chron 29.11, 12; Job 12.13; Ps 62.11; Ps 147.5
 - 7.6.2.3. 21a: Ps 31.15
 - 7.6.2.4. 21b: 1 Sam 2.7, 8; Ps 113.7, 8; Prov 8.15, 16
 - 7.6.2.5. 21c: 1 Ki 3.12; 1 Ki 4.29; Prov 2.6, 7
 - 7.6.2.6. 22a: Job 12.22; Ps 139.11, 12
 - 7.6.2.7. 22b: Job 26.6; Ps 139.12; Is 45.7
 - 7.6.2.8. 22c: Ps 36.9; Ps 104.2
 - 7.6.2.9. 23a: 1 Chron 29.13; Gen 31.42; Ex 3.15
 - 7.6.2.10. 23b: same as 20b
 - 7.6.3. Why is Daniel’s use of Scripture in his prayer significant?
 - 7.6.3.1. He prays the Bible. This is a good exemplar for us. We can never go wrong in prayer if we use God’s own words (particularly from the Psalms) as the principle content-source for our prayers.
 - 7.6.3.2. He shows a significant understanding of the OT across a breadth of its contents. He was well versed (pun!) in Scripture.

- 7.6.3.3. We need to remember that he was still a young man (late teens) at this point. He displays a remarkable knowledge of Scripture and of God for someone so young. He may not have had easy access to the OT Scripture (sections available to that point) while in the Babylonian school system as manuscript scrolls were expensive and generally only available in places such as rabbinical schools and synagogues. His education in the Scriptures must have been extensive in his home during his youth (for about 10 years; 3-13). This means that he had grown up in a godly Covenant family that emphasized training in the Bible.
- 7.7. How does this prayer establish God as the true God, in contrast to pagan deities?
 - 7.7.1. It is possible, and even likely, that Daniel's prayer is a direct challenge to the pagan gods of the Babylonian pantheon.
 - 7.7.1.1. The ten plagues inflicted on the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus were likely challenges to their gods of light (the plague of darkness), water (turning the Nile to blood), agricultural fertility (locusts), etc.
 - 7.7.1.2. The Canaanite god of Baal was similarly challenged by God during the crossing of the Jordan during the peak flood season. The god of the storms was pushed back so the people of God could cross on dry ground.
 - 7.7.2. Possible contrasts between the pagan deities and the true God include:
 - 7.7.2.1. Named (20a): The gods of the pagan pantheons had various names given to them by man to represent various aspects of the created realm. Even the name of the Anu, the god of the highest heavens, "becomes little more than a synonym for the heavens in general and even his title as king or father of the gods has little of the personal element in it."⁷⁶ God alone is a personal God with names given by himself: Elohim (God; Gen 1.1) and Jehovah/Yahweh ("I am"; Ex 3.14).
 - 7.7.2.2. Eternal (20a): The gods of pantheons were created or came into existence. For example, Marduk was regarded as the son of Ea (Sumerian Enki) and Ishtar. God is eternally self-existent.
 - 7.7.2.3. Wise (20b): False gods do not know all things. Other gods can fool and deceive them. For example, Ea "Lord of Wisdom" and the Babylonian god of wisdom and crafts discovered that Tiamat was planning a war against the other gods. Ea was encouraged by the Anunnaki gods to attack Tiamat, but he was against this action. After a peace mission failed, Marduk went into action against Tiamat and his associates. God in contrast knows everything from beginning to end and doesn't discover things or find out that plans won't work.
 - 7.7.2.4. Almighty (20b): Pagan deities were nothing more than mythical superhumans who could overcome one another and be defeated. For example, The *Enuma Elish* records a civil war between the gods in which the Anunnaki gods promise Marduk, a young god, the position of high god if he can lead them to victory. Marduk killed his enemy and assumed his new position. The true God is all-powerful, not a god that could be defeated in battle.
 - 7.7.2.5. Providence (21a): In pagan religions, it is claimed that events on earth are fatalistically controlled by astral events. Astrology, based on discerning movements of planets and the supposed causal correlation between events in the heavens and on earth permeates paganism. In the Babylonian system the following gods were associated with celestial objects:
 - 7.7.2.5.1. Sun with Shamash
 - 7.7.2.5.2. Moon with Sin
 - 7.7.2.5.3. Jupiter with Marduk
 - 7.7.2.5.4. Venus with the goddess Ishtar
 - 7.7.2.5.5. Saturn with Ninurta (Ninib)

⁷⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anu

7.7.2.5.6. Mercury with Nabu (Nebo)

7.7.2.5.7. Mars with Nergal.

In theory, omens from the gods could be derived from reading their actions in their celestial counterparts. In contrast to paganism, God controls, according to his perfect plan for the created realm, the times and seasons and appoints the stellar objects to act as markers for the times he has established.

7.7.2.6. Governance (21b): In pagan religions, the gods were kings and the ancient kings were gods and ruled on capricious and selfish whim. For example, when Marduk assumed his new position as chief god he had humans created to bear the burdens of life so the gods could be at leisure. God alone governs all kings and nations with equity.

7.7.2.7. Revelation (22a, b): The false god's are generally obscure and inscrutable. The fluidity of the myths of ancient Mesopotamia and the contradictions in the myths show that nothing can be known for certain about the gods. In addition, the will of the gods is difficult to discern through omens and signs. God, in contrast, reveals himself and his will with clarity first in natural revelation (Rom 1.19-20), then through the written Word (Heb 1.1), and finally by God the Son (Heb 1.2)

7.7.2.8. Light (22c): We noted previously that in most ancient pantheons, there is an association between light and one or more of the important gods. For example in the Mesopotamian pantheons An or Gibil [Sumerian], Utu [Sumerian], Tutu/Shamash/Girru [Akkadian]. So Daniel refers to God as the true God of light in contrast to the false gods of light.

7.8. What is a keynote of this prayer and of the book of Daniel as a whole?

7.8.1. The keynote of the prayer of praise seems to be verse 21, which extols God's sovereignty over all aspects of the created realm, and in particular the nations of this earth. Compare Daniel 4.34-35.

7.8.2. The keynote of the whole book of Daniel is the same—God is the master of the universe and, in particular, of human history,

7.8.3. Human history is under God's controlling hand and is leading to a climax—the establishment of his universal reign on earth. Daniel is a book of eschatology as it directs our attention to the final days of the world (the *last days*), when God will establish his eternal Messianic kingdom on earth [Dan 2.44-45; Dan 5.24-28; Dan 7.9-14; Dan 9.24-27; Dan 11.40; Dan 12.1-13], after which will follow God's judgement, and man's ultimate destiny in the future state.

7.8.4. In simple terms, this prayer of praise and the entire book of Daniel teach that God is in control of all things and all of history.

8. What do you notice that stands out in the parallel-thought in the conclusion of the prayer of praise? (23)

8.1. Both lines of the conclusion declare that God is the one who reveals truth. Both lines indicate that this revelation is in response to a request—from Daniel and his friends.

8.2. Notice that Daniel includes his three friends in the ending of the prayer.

8.2.1. He credits their prayer along with his ("what we asked") as being effective.

8.2.2. He includes them in being recipients of the revelation from God ("made known to us").

8.3. What does this teach us about Daniel?

8.3.1. Daniel gave credit first to God and then to those who laboured with him in prayer.

8.3.2. Even though Daniel was the principal actor in standing for truth in a pagan culture it is clear that he did not want to usurp the credit.

8.3.3. Daniel was a team player. He knew that his gifts were from God and that faithful co-workers for the kingdom supported him.

8.3.4. By including them, he shows true humility. Daniel understood that the work of the kingdom is to give praise to God, not to men. In the Church men in positions of authority

need to understand and live by this truth: the work of Christ's kingdom is built around a team serving under the one captain—Jesus Christ [1 Cor 3.6-8; 1 Cor 12.1-27; 2 Cor 1.19; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Philemon 1].

9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (17-23)
 - 9.1. *Troubles? Pray!* Daniel reminds us of something that should be second nature for all believers in the true God—all Christians.
 - 9.1.1. We are first to turn to God in prayer when we have troubles.
 - 9.1.2. Daniel also included his Christian (i.e., believers in the true God who were looking for the promise of the Messiah) friends in his prayer circle.
 - 9.1.3. God cares for his people in every generation and he wants us to come to him in dependence and reliance upon him.
 - 9.1.4. Daniel did not turn to the 'magic arts' (astrological signs, omens, sorceries, etc.) for help. In the same way, we are not to turn to today's 'magic arts'. What are some examples?
 - 9.1.4.1. Psychiatrists (with unbiblical views of human psychology) who can only deal with anxieties and guilt through denial and repression.
 - 9.1.4.2. Drugs (e.g., for depression) which dull men into escape from reality.
 - 9.1.4.3. Purveyors of pseudo-science and false philosophy who answer questions of meaning and purpose by turning man into an amoral machine.
 - 9.1.4.4. Government administrators; when we view the government as the paternalistic provider for all forms of security; rather than as the administrator of defence, justice, and punishment.
 - 9.1.4.5. Lawyers who 'solve' problems by twisting law to their advantage.
 - 9.1.5. Whatever is our concern or care, it must be the petition of our prayer. Our matters, 'big' and 'earth-shattering' or 'small' and 'insignificant', are matters of concern to God.
 - 9.2. *Titles of the Potentate.* Daniel's use of the expression 'God of heaven' in his prayer of praise reminds us that we are to address God as the infinite Creator and sovereign of the universe.
 - 9.2.1. Although God is our friend, he is still the supreme ruler and governor who is to be treated by his subjects with respectful awe and adoration.
 - 9.2.2. When I listen to some people pray, especially those who come from a Pentecostal background, it seems that the use of God's name in prayer is little more than a punctuated pause. They pray 'Father God' in about every tenth word. We should become totally conscious of every use of God's name and references to him when we pray.
 - 9.2.3. We should find ways to vary the terms by which we address God so that we don't become stale and take his name in vain (Ex 20.7). We don't want to go to the other extreme and suggest that every reference to God must be an exercise in artificial variety. However, we can use his names and titles judiciously to keep us from lapsing into irreverence: Holy God, Holy One, Almighty God, Sovereign Lord, Creator, King of kings, Lord of lords, etc.
 - 9.3. *Themed Praise.* Related to the above topic is the inclusion of God's attributes in prayer.
 - 9.3.1. In (almost) every prayer in the Bible we find references to more than one of God's attributes. In some prayers we find many of his attributes included (e.g., 1 Ki 8.22-52; Ezra 9.1-15; Neh 1.5-11; Neh 9.6-38; Lk 1.46-55).
 - 9.3.2. When we pray we should include one or more of God's attributes in our prayers to him.
 - 9.3.3. God is pleased when his people reflect on his holy attributes in prayer. Some of those attributes include:
 - 9.3.3.1. God the self-existent⁷⁷ (I AM)

⁷⁷ Self-existence (aseity) is existence that is self-caused, derived from self, and having no other source.

- 9.3.3.2. God the creator; his creativity
- 9.3.3.3. God the all-powerful and great
- 9.3.3.4. God the one full of awe
- 9.3.3.5. God the righteous and holy one
- 9.3.3.6. God the one over all gods (in heaven)
- 9.3.3.7. God who is personal (his personal name: Jehovah/Yahweh)
- 9.3.3.8. God the covenant-maker and covenant keeper
- 9.3.3.9. God who makes laws and governs his creatures providentially
- 9.3.3.10. God the communicator (who communicates with men, bi-directionally)
- 9.3.3.11. God the compassionate and merciful
- 9.3.3.12. God the dispenser of justice
- 9.3.3.13. God who hears, answers, and forgives.
- 9.3.3.14. God the promise-keeper

9.4. *Thank with Psalms.* Like Daniel (and Mary), we are to use the Psalms to structure, guide, and provide content for our prayers.

9.4.1. Many of the Psalms are prayers that have been brought into the songbook of the Church.

9.4.2. The Psalms provide all the scope that we need for prayer.

9.4.3. Athanasius in his letter to the young Pastor, Marcellinus, says:

9.4.3.1. [The Psalter] possesses ... this marvel of its own—namely, that it contains even the emotions of each soul ... these words become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul.”⁷⁸

9.4.3.2. But in the Psalms we are instructed how one must praise the Lord and by speaking what words we properly confess our faith in him. And in the case of each person one would find the divine hymns⁷⁹ appointed for us and our emotions of equanimity.⁸⁰

9.4.3.3. For I believe that the whole of human existence, both the dispositions of the soul and the movements of the thoughts, have been measured out and encompassed in those very words of the Psalter. And nothing beyond these is found among men.⁸¹

9.4.4. We can never go wrong memorizing the Psalms and using them as the feed-stock for our prayers. God is greatly honoured when we return to him in praise his own words as given through the Holy Spirit.

9.5. *True Philosophy.* God is uniquely God compared with all pagan deities and false religions. In our thoughts and words we are to be continuously conscious of God’s superintending reality.

9.5.1. We need to be so aware of God’s sovereign disposition that we do not fall subconsciously into the trap of assuming or acting otherwise. For example,

9.5.1.1. We should not wish one another ‘good luck’. Luck is from the Fates and is a capitulation to paganism.

9.5.1.2. I have seen Christians cross their fingers (a talisman to combat the forces of darkness) or knock on wood (a petition to the fertility gods) to indicate that they wish good fortune to befall them.

9.5.1.3. We should not say ‘gesundheit’ or ‘bless you’ when a person sneezes implying that a either a portion of their soul has been expelled or that the sneeze is a positive omen.

9.5.1.4. We should not break a chicken wishbone with another person and suggest that

⁷⁸ Athanasius, “Letter to Marcellinus,” in *Athanasius – The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus* (Translation and Introduction by Robert C. Gregg), Paulist Press, NY, 1980, p. 108.

⁷⁹ Athanasius uses the terms ‘psalms,’ ‘hymns,’ and ‘songs’ or ‘odes’ interchangeably, as Paul does in Col 3.16; Eph 5.19 to refer to the compositions in the Psalter; see the discussion above: *Apostolic Command*.

⁸⁰ Athanasius, “Letter to Marcellinus,” in *Athanasius – The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus*, cited above, p. 109.

⁸¹ Athanasius, “Letter to Marcellinus,” in *Athanasius – The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus*, cited above, p. 126.

the person who got the larger piece will have good luck. This is pure paganism that has its roots in the animistic paganism such as that found in parts of Africa or the Caribbean.

9.5.1.5. We should not read the pieces of paper found in fortune cookies. It is superstition, not harmless fun, to think faux wisdom or vague prophecy are of more worth than the piece of paper they are written on.

9.5.2. We need to find ways to season our speech and prayers with the reality that God is the only God.

9.5.2.1. In prayer, this is relatively easy. We can consciously pray the kind of prayer we see Daniel and other Biblical saints praying. We can use the attributes of God to season our prayers.

9.5.2.2. It is the area of our speech that this becomes more challenging.

9.5.2.2.1. In our conversations among Christians, we need to be much more conspicuous about honouring and praising God: this means a careful circumspection in our use of language and God's name, and a constant awareness of God's nearness to all that we do.

9.5.2.2.2. Similarly our conversations with unbelievers needs to be noted for its tact, holy optimism, and God-consciousness.

9.6. *Team Player.* Daniel in a simple way (sharing his concerns with his believing brothers and including them in his prayer of praise) reminds us that we are part of the body of Christ.

9.6.1. We need to share our requests and rejoicings with our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Cor 12.26).

9.6.2. We must never think or act as if the Church cannot go forward without us. We are dispensable and unworthy servants (Lk 17.10; Rom 12.3).

9.6.3. We need to give honour and praise to all those who serve Christ with us in local congregations, Christian organizations, and the broader Church (individualism and sectarianism are accursed by Christ) (Phil 2.3).

9.7. *Trust in Providence.* The outcome of this prayer, in the revelation of the mystery, teaches us that God controls all events and is working all things for his glory and the good of his people (Rom 8.28).

9.7.1. In particular there are three aspects of God's providence that stand out in this account.

9.7.1.1. God knows the future because he planned it. Because he knows it, he can reveal it.

9.7.1.2. God knows the mind of man and since he revealed the dream to Nebuchadnezzar he can also reveal it to Daniel.

9.7.1.3. God controls all events of the universe, and in particular of this world. The kings (presidents, prime ministers, etc.) of this world are subject to God's decretive will.

9.7.2. The theme of God's control over the events of this world continually re-occurs throughout this book. We have already seen God's providential governance of all things in the record of Daniel, for example:

9.7.2.1. God's handing over the Jewish king and Temple articles to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1.2).

9.7.2.2. God preserving Daniel and his three friends when he requested permission to eat a different diet than that supplied at the king's table (Dan 1.8-16).

9.7.2.3. God's providing Daniel and his three friends with extraordinary wisdom (Dan 1.20).

9.7.3. We will encounter many more examples as we continue to study this book of God's dealings with the kings of the ancient world.

9.7.4. Let us heed the lessons of Daniel and never despair. God is in control of all events today just as he was 2,600 years ago.

Source (Dan 2.24-30)

1. What immediate action does Daniel take? (24)
 - 1.1. He returned to Arioch, the person from whom he had requested the information about the king's decree and the person whom he had asked to assist him in gaining time to find the answer to the king's dream.
 - 1.2. He informed Arioch that he had the solution to the dream-problem and that he should not execute the wise men.
2. What character attributes does Daniel display in his action? He was:
 - 2.1. *Committed* – He acted promptly. He shows a sense of urgency vs. procrastination.
 - 2.1.1. It is easy for us to become lazy and procrastinators. Christians should be neither (Prov 10.4; Prov 12.24, 27; Prov 10.15; Prov 26.15; Eccl 10.18; Mt 25.26).
 - 2.1.2. Christians should be quick to act and show leadership in situations where needs arise (Luke 10:25-37). For example, Christians should be first to help and not paralyzed by the 'bystander effect'.⁸²
 - 2.2. *Calm* – While he displayed an urgency it was not uncontrolled. Urgency does not have to include displays of panic. For example, a doctor saving the life of an accident victim acts with deliberate and controlled urgency. A Christian can act calmly and deliberately in any situation because he knows that God is in control of all events, including those transpiring around him.
 - 2.3. *Compassionate* – He cared not only for his own life and lives of his friends, but also for the lives of his fellow wise men.
 - 2.3.1. Although those who had deceived the king with their feigned ability to interpret dreams or who participated in divination and sorcery deserved punishment by death, it was not Daniel's role to mete out that punishment.
 - 2.3.2. Daniel showed compassion to his fellow men. He realized that these men were fooled by their pagan religion and were pawns in the hand of a tyrant, and he had compassion on them
 - 2.3.3. We must be like Daniel. We must not be haughty because we have been given the gift of revealed truth. Rather, we must care for our fellow men who are fooled by their inclination to autonomy and are enslaved by Satan.
 - 2.4. *Commanding* – He took charge and commanded (stated in the imperative) Arioch not to execute the prisoners and to him to the king.
 - 2.4.1. Can you think of other Christians recorded in Scripture who took command in whatever situation they were placed?
 - 2.4.2. Paul is a good example. Even as a prisoner he took charge. He must have had such a commanding presence that men listened and complied with his commands (Acts 27.9, 10, 21-26, 33-36).
 - 2.5. *Courageous* – He could be courageous because he had no fear of men. He knew that Arioch and Nebuchadnezzar were mere finite, limited, mortals; who were, in principle, no greater than Daniel.
 - 2.5.1. We must not be intimidated by the rich or powerful of this world (Ps 49.16-17; Ps 56.4, 11; Ps 118.6).
 - 2.5.2. The expression "do not be afraid" (e.g., Lk 12.32) occurs more than 60 times in the Bible. Often it is used by God/Jesus to encourage his people.
 - 2.6. *Confident* – He displayed confidence (he said he would interpret the dream). It was not confidence in his own abilities but in the provision of God. He knew that the king would want to see him because he had the interpretation to the dream. Christians can be confident in the gifts that God gives them because God does not make mistakes. When he gives us gifts he expects us to exercise them and to use them for his glory (Mt 25.14-30).
 - 2.7. *Competent* – He was competent, applying the gifts that God gave him with skill.
 - 2.8. *Courteous* – He returned to Arioch who had helped him gain time to find a solution and didn't

⁸² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bystander_effect

- by pass him with the solution by going to a different court administrator. He also let Arioch share in the solution (25).
- 2.9. *Compliant* – He followed court protocol to present the solution to the king by going through Arioch rather than around him.
3. What action does Arioch take? What does this show? (25)
- 3.1. He went to the king at once, or he moved quickly (with alarm or greatly excited) to inform him that he had found someone who could provide an interpretation of the dream.
- 3.1.1. He did it quickly because he didn't want to kill the wise men and was hopeful that a resolution could be found that would allow the king to lift the decree of execution.
- 3.1.2. He had a vestige of a conscience left. He, therefore, likely felt a pit in his gut when he saw the injustice of executing all the wise men.
- 3.1.3. As a (stained) image bearer of God, he knew in his heart that Nebuchadnezzar's decree was unjust and was encouraged to hear that a solution to the problem may have been found.
- 3.2. He took Daniel to the king.
- 3.2.1. He didn't try to get Daniel to explain the dream to him and its interpretation and then go into the king and give the answer himself and take the credit for solving the problem.
- 3.2.2. In spite of being a pagan in a pagan empire, he was a man of integrity.
4. What do we learn about Arioch's knowledge of, and attitude toward, Daniel?
- 4.1. He believed Daniel.
- 4.1.1. In spite of the denial of the astrologers that anyone could provide an interpretation to the dream, and their assertion that only the gods could provide the interpretation, Arioch believed Daniel when he said he could provide an interpretation. If we put this into a modern context, it would be equivalent to someone saying he had figured out how to make cold fusion work when most other scientists have said it could not be done, or someone saying that he had evidence that carbon dioxide emissions do not cause global warming when most scientists think the opposite.
- 4.1.2. Daniel was credible and his word was taken as factual. This indicates that Daniel was already viewed as honest and that he had not given any reason for people to doubt his word.
- 4.2. He respected Daniel.
- 4.2.1. He didn't dismiss Daniel's claim as foolishness.
- 4.2.2. He didn't tell Daniel to give him the interpretation and he (Arioch) would take it to the king.
- 4.2.3. He thought Daniel worthy enough to bring him into the presence of the king. Don't underestimate how significant this is. Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest absolute monarch the world had ever seen to this point. He ruled an immense dominion. Few people would ever see the king, let alone have direct access to his throne room. It truly was amazing that a young exiled hostage/slave (even though trained in the court schools) would have been granted access to the king.
- 4.3. He knew that Daniel was from Judah.
- 4.3.1. He informed Nebuchadnezzar that one of the exiles from Judah would provide the interpretation of the dream for him.
- 4.3.2. This would be similar to someone saying in government today, "Prime Minister Harper, a Christian, provided an update to the House of Commons on Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan."
- 4.3.3. After three years in captivity and training in the Babylonian civil service academy, Daniel would have spoken Aramaic (and other languages of the AEM) and would have worn the clothes of a civil servant.
- 4.3.4. What would have stood out that would have made Arioch cognizant of the fact that

Daniel was from Judah?

- 4.3.4.1. The mention of his being from Judah seems to be an indication that his Jewishness stood out.
- 4.3.4.2. This would probably not have been in terms of a distinct dress or language, or even hair curls (as are visible on some orthodox Jews today) but in terms of his deportment. He would not have participated in the dissipation of his cohorts.
- 4.3.4.3. His life was already known for discipline and dedication. In simple terms, his Christian (i.e., trust in God and looking for the coming Messiah—so a Christian) profession stood out.

5. How does Arioch introduce Daniel to the king?

- 5.1. He does not introduce Daniel by name, but rather by his position—an exile from Judah.
- 5.2. He introduces Daniel to the king as if the king did not know Daniel.
 - 5.2.1. This seems to indicate that Daniel wasn't known to the king.
 - 5.2.2. What possible problems does this cause?
 - 5.2.2.1. It seems to contradict the fact that Daniel had been introduced to, and been examined by, the king. However, even though Daniel had been through the final civil service exams/interview (Dan 1.18-21), and the king had been impressed with his learning, he may not have been remembered by the king. Consider this: if a dozen High School Jeopardy champions were introduced to the US President and asked some questions by him, would he necessarily remember all their names and who they were?
 - 5.2.2.2. It seems to contradict the fact that Daniel had asked the king for time to provide a solution to the dream (16). However, as we noted previously, it may be that Daniel didn't actually present his case to the king at that time, but that it was relayed through official channels.
- 5.3. Arioch said that he had found a man who could provide an interpretation of the dream.
 - 5.3.1. It seems that Arioch wrongly claims credit for having found an interpreter for the king's dream; whereas it was Daniel who approached Arioch.
 - 5.3.2. Some commentators therefore conclude that Arioch hoped to ingratiate himself to the king and hoped to receive a reward for finding someone who could provide a solution to the problem.
 - 5.3.3. I suggest that this may be too harsh an interpretation of Arioch's motives. Suppose the following scenario: A person has been looking for rare blood-donor match for someone sick with leukemia. Advertisements have been placed on the radio and in the newspapers. One day, a possible donor appears at the doctor's office mentioned in the ads, and after a blood test is determined to be a suitable candidate. The doctor then goes into the patient and says, "I have found someone who can provide blood for your transfusion." Would we accuse the doctor of lying because he didn't actually find the donor but the donor came to his office? Would we accuse the doctor of trying to ingratiate himself with the patient or of hoping to get credit or a reward from the patient? I think not!
 - 5.3.4. Arioch was doing nothing more than using an expression similar to someone saying "I have found a solution!" He was excited and joyful that the king's problem would be resolved and that he would not have to execute the wise men.

6. What is the King's question of Daniel?

- 6.1. The king wanted to know if Daniel could provide both the content of his dream and its interpretation.
- 6.2. Notice the two parts: tell me the dream's contents and the dream's interpretation. He continued to require both dimensions of the answer.
- 6.3. Daniel was subjected to the same test of veracity that the king had demanded of the wise men.
- 6.4. The king was going to be sure that the interpretation of the dream was true, by establishing the

truthfulness of the interpreter.

7. How does Daniel answer the king? What is the structure of his answer? (27-30)
 - 7.1. He opens his remarks to the kings with a preamble that positions the explanation of the mystery that is going to be revealed to the king. It consists of the following, general sections or topics:
 - 7.2. *Putdown* – He puts the wise men and the false gods of Babylon in their place.
 - 7.2.1. He says that no mere human wise man could do what the king had requested (i.e., reveal the content of the dream and its interpretation).
 - 7.2.2. Daniel's put-down of the wise men is also a rebuke of the king for his having asked the wise men to do something that is humanly impossible.
 - 7.2.3. He is exhaustive in listing the classes of wise men to make it clear that no human means would provide an answer.
 - 7.2.4. He introduces a class of wise men not previously mentioned in the text of Daniel: 'diviners' (NIV) or 'soothsayers' in the NKJV; but translated 'astrologers' in the ESV. This word is based on the Aramaic root 'to divide' and appears to refer to those who sought to ascertain or decree the fate of others through the interpretation of fissures and orifices in animal entrails. Thus the NIV may have the best translation. However, some suggest that the divination has to do with interpreting omens by dividing the heavens into spheres or areas of influence—thus the translation 'astrologers' in the ESV.
 - 7.2.5. What else is implied by his put down of the wise men?
 - 7.2.5.1. The implication is that the king should not have been angry at the wise men for not doing what they could not do.
 - 7.2.5.2. Also, he implies that the king should not consult the wise men anymore because they do not have any ability to provide interpretations of dreams.
 - 7.2.5.3. He is actually rebuking the king for asking the humanly impossible and for consulting with pagan astrologers or diviners.
 - 7.3. *Pronouncement* – He indicates where true revelation of mysteries comes from.
 - 7.3.1. Only the God in heaven can reveal mysteries
 - 7.3.2. The wise men had claimed that only the gods could reveal the future to man (11) and that they had no access to the gods who did not live among men, so there was no means of gaining an answer.
 - 7.3.2.1. They were grasping for truth without knowing it and were partially correct, in that revelation of mysteries belongs to the divine realm.
 - 7.3.2.2. They were wrong however, in their assumptions of multiple deities and that the divine realm does not communicate with the created/human realm.
 - 7.3.3. Daniel asserted that the wise men of Babylon were wrong—a man could have access to the answer, but not by consorting with the pagan deities. However, the answer would be supplied only by the true God.
 - 7.3.4. He asserted *twice* (28, 29) that God makes things known by revelation. God reveals himself and truths that can only be known by revelation.
 - 7.3.5. He asserted that it is only the God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He used the expression 'God in heaven' as he did in his request for prayer (Dan 2.18; 'of') to reinforce the fact that it was the true God, the transcendent God, and the God above the pantheon of false gods of the pagan religions.
 - 7.3.6. Daniel introduced to Nebuchadnezzar the reality that there is one true God.
 - 7.3.6.1. It is probable that, until this point, Nebuchadnezzar had no (or limited) formal knowledge of the truth that there is only one living and true God. Although in his inner being he knew this truth (Rom 1.19).
 - 7.3.6.2. When he was in Judah, and took captives from Jerusalem, he may have heard of Jehovah/Yahweh as the God of the Jews (compare with, 1 Ki 20.23), but would likely have considered Jehovah/Yahweh as nothing more than a tribal deity.
 - 7.3.6.3. But now Daniel introduces Nebuchadnezzar to the fact that the God Daniel

worshipped, Jehovah/Yahweh, is a unique, transcendent, God—the only true God.

7.3.7. Daniel used a new name for God: ‘revealer of mysteries/secrets’ (28, 29, 47). This is uniquely applicable to God, and therefore a good name for him.

7.4. *Prediction* – He gives the king a hint about the importance of what he had dreamed.

7.4.1. He, *twice*, indicated that the revelation in the king’s dream referred to what would happen in the future, in ‘days to come’ or in the ‘latter days’.

7.4.2. Daniel asserted that the king’s dream was prophetic, having to do with future events.

7.4.3. He speaks of the ‘latter days’ or ‘days to come’; literally: ‘at the end of days’ or ‘in after days’ or ‘the farthest part of the days’;

7.4.3.1. When are the latter days?

7.4.3.2. Daniel is not speaking of merely a future time, but of a specific age.

7.4.3.3. The time covering the first coming of Christ to the end of time (Is 2.2; Acts 2.17; 1 Tim 4.1; 2 Tim 3.1; Heb 1.2; James 5.3; 2 Peter 3.3; 1 Jn 2.18).

7.4.3.4. There are three key events in history: Creation, Christ, Consummation and only *two* ages of importance; the former age of the OT economy—the era of types and symbols—and the latter days of the NT economy—the era of the reality in Christ (Acts 17.30).

7.4.3.5. The ‘latter days’ is the final period of history when God establishes his kingdom under the Messianic king.

7.4.3.6. We live in the ‘last days’ when time is wrapping up, and the world is quickly moving toward the Day of Judgement.

7.4.4. While the entire contents of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream does not fall within the latter days, the most important part of the dream does. The dream is of great significance because it foretells of key events in the latter days.

7.5. *Personalization* – He draws the king’s interest with a personal reference, by speaking of ‘your dream’ and ‘your bed’.

7.5.1. He uses these personal references *twice*.

7.5.2. Daniel portrays events as if he had seen them and as if he had been in the king’s bedchamber when he had the dream.

7.5.3. It may be that Daniel was given a vision (19), as distinct from a dream (1).

7.5.3.1. Although, as we noted previously, the two words may be synonyms in the Semitic cognates, as shown by their adjacent use in parallel structures (Num 12.6; Job 4.13; Job 7.14; Job 20.8; Job 33.15; Is 29.7; Dan 4.5; Dan 4.9).

7.5.3.2. If we are to understand that there is a distinction, it may be that Daniel was shown a picture of Nebuchadnezzar lying in his bed and his dream unfolding around him.

7.5.4. He indicates that what was revealed to him (30) was exactly what was revealed to the king (29, 30), indicating that he had the same information that the king had.

7.6. *Pretention-less* – He informs the king that there is nothing special in his (Daniel’s) station that allows him to be the recipient of the solution to the mystery.

7.6.1. Daniel took no credit to himself (see, 23) and gave all the credit to God. It was nothing in Daniel that provided the revelation but it was all from God.

7.6.2. He *twice* refers to his humble status; indirectly in 27 by including himself among humans in contrast to God, and directly in 30 by dismissing the possibility of the mystery having been revealed to him because he was a wiser wise man.

7.6.3. Compare Genesis 41.16 where Joseph takes the same humble position before God in the presence of Pharaoh.

7.6.4. After saying that the wise men could not interpret dreams, Daniel was not going to suggest that he had special power to do what other men could not. Rather, he gave the credit and glory for the revelation of the mystery to God.

8. Why does Daniel repeat a number of his declarations twice?
 - 8.1. Some suggest that this account is an amalgam of two separate accounts that are woven together. Why they come up with this kind of nonsense is beyond understanding!
 - 8.2. This format is not a garbled account from two sources, but rather it shows how Daniel used repetition to build suspense.
 - 8.3. He used suspense, through repeating his message, to:
 - 8.3.1. Engage the king in the revelation.
 - 8.3.2. Reinforce the importance of what was to be revealed.
 - 8.3.3. Reinforce the definiteness of what was revealed as the meaning of the dream (compare, Gen 41.32).
9. Why did God reveal the meaning of the mystery to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 9.1. For the education of the king. God was using the dream and Daniel to humble the monarch of the greatest kingdom ever, by showing him that he was a mere human who was a subject of the true God and King.
 - 9.2. To endorse Daniel. God revealed the mystery through Daniel so that he might make the king realize that Daniel was among the true prophets and not a fake like the other wise men.
 - 9.3. To demonstrate that he is a God who communicates, in contrast to the gods of the pagans which are silent (Ps 115.4-7; Ps 135.15-17; Jer 51.17; Hab 2.19).
 - 9.4. To demonstrate to Nebuchadnezzar that he is the true God who plans and predestines (not 'predicts'), and therefore knows, the future.
 - 9.5. For our encouragement—we can be assured that the God who puts Nebuchadnezzar in his place controls all events of history and therefore all kings and rulers of the earth are subject to him.
10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (24-30)

This section teaches us that we should:

 - 10.1. *Display* – We should visibly display the attributes of a Christian. As Daniel was known to be from Jerusalem (Judea) by the way he lived, so we should be known as from the spiritual Jerusalem by our lives.
 - 10.1.1. It is not our dress but our demeanour that should stand out. Daniel stood out because of his character not because he wore a special turban or trimmed his hair in a particular way.
 - 10.1.2. It is not our haughtiness but our humility that should distinguish us; not our self-aggrandizement but our self-abasement. Daniel put aside his own wisdom and worthiness in declaring God the revealer of mysteries.
 - 10.1.3. We noted the character attributes of Daniel (24) and can apply them to our own situation:
 - 10.1.3.1. *Committed* – Christians should display urgency, not procrastination, and be quick to act in situations where needs arise.
 - 10.1.3.2. *Calm* – Christians should not display panic but act calmly and deliberately in every situation because we know that God is in control of all events.
 - 10.1.3.3. *Compassionate* – Christians should care for the lives of their friends and fellow men—both temporal and everlasting.
 - 10.1.3.4. *Commanding* – Christians should not be afraid to take charge in a situation of chaos, because we are members of a royal family, children of the Great King.
 - 10.1.3.5. *Courageous* – Christians can be courageous, with no fear of men, because we know that God is in control.
 - 10.1.3.6. *Confident* – Christians should display confidence in exercising the gifts that God gives them because God does not make mistakes. When he gives us gifts he expects us to exercise them and use them for his glory (Mt 25.14-

- 30).
- 10.1.3.7. *Competent* – Christians should display competence and skill in applying the gifts that God gives them.
 - 10.1.3.8. *Courteous* – Christians should be polite. We are not to be respecters of persons, but respecting of people (1 Pt 2.18; Titus 3.2; James 3.17).
 - 10.1.3.9. *Compliant* – Christians should follow the laws of men (Ex 20.12), even if they are unnecessary, unless they are contrary to God's law.
 - 10.2. *Deliver* – Daniel showed kindness to those who did not deserve it as he delivered not only himself but all the wise men from disaster (24).
 - 10.2.1. God shows goodness to good and evil men through his general grace.
 - 10.2.2. Jesus taught that we are to help those in need (Lk 10.25-37); even our enemies (Mt 5.44).
 - 10.2.3. We should be like our Father in Heaven and be ready to help all who are in true need, even when they do not appreciate the help.
 - 10.3. *Demolish* – Daniel used the opportunity he had in the presence of the king to demolish the false gods of the pagans and to show the foolishness of those who sponsored them.
 - 10.3.1. We need to be alert to opportunities where we can show the inconsistency of philosophical, psychological, social, economic, and ethical thinking that is un-Christian.
 - 10.3.2. A few examples:
 - 10.3.2.1. Darwinians claim that all behaviour is programmed by our genes and natural selection. We can point out that this then includes rape and misogyny or gender differences. The 'political correct' don't like to hear this.
 - 10.3.2.2. Homosexual advocates declare that their practices are programmed by their genes, natural, and are as unchangeable as skin colour. If homosexuality is in fact 'natural' what are the evolutionary selective factors that produce it when Evolution is supposedly directed by reproductive pressures?
 - 10.3.2.3. Feminists express moral outrage at anyone who suggests that abortion is wrong, and shut down dialogue or debate on university campuses. We need to ask them on what standard they base their objection to alternative opinions.
 - 10.3.2.4. Activists apply guilt on rich consumers to get us to buy 'fair-trade'⁸³ products at prices that must "never fall lower the market price". We can ask them, "How can a competitive price based on free-market bidding ever be below the 'market price'? This is illogical. It is like proponents of some new schooling program saying, "We want all students to perform above average." We can also ask how we help a developing country become competitive if we subsidize inefficiency in their production.⁸⁴ Supporters of 'fair-trade' often *also* tell us that we should buy local (e.g., to support local jobs and reduce transportation costs and the generation of CO²). While we might buy our coffee and bananas from a 'fair-trade' organization should we buy underwear, soft drinks, or soccer balls made by a manufacturer in Vietnam or in Truro, Nova Scotia? It is easy to point out their inconsistencies, but they don't want to hear about them.
 - 10.3.3. We need to think clearly, logically, and Biblically and be able to analyze the sloppy

⁸³ "Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay sustainable prices (which must never fall lower than the market price), Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers. It enables them to improve their position and have more control over their lives." www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/faqs.aspx

⁸⁴ See, for example: 1) Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion—Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford, 2007. 2) Alec Brandon, "Hurting the third world one latte at a time," *Chicago Maroon*, 2007-02-07; www.chicagomaroon.com/online_edition/viewpoints/2007/02/27/hurting-the-third-world-one-latte-at-a-time/ 3) Alex Singleton "The poverty of Fairtrade coffee," *Telegraph*, 2008-02-22; blogs.telegraph.co.uk/politics/brassneck/feb08/fairtrade.htm.

- thinking of our culture and thereby demolish the idols of our generation.
- 10.3.4. We should never fall into the false belief of our pluralistic culture, and of even many in the Church, which holds that we cannot present Christianity, and God as presented in the Bible, as uniquely true.
- 10.3.4.1. Religious pluralism is a relatively new phenomenon for the ‘Christian’ West. However, for Daniel and his contemporaries in ancient Mesopotamia there were many religions and many gods. Also the administration of the state (e.g., laws and customs) and religion were blended into an amalgam that dominated the lives all people.
- 10.3.4.2. Daniel did not compromise with other religions and claim that his belief in Jehovah/Yahweh was one of many ways to find truth. He did not go through gymnastic exercises to engage in dialogue with other ‘great faiths’ or cultivate a relationship with them as if they were searching for truth. He declared bluntly that the other religions and their gods were false and the only true religion is that which holds to faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- 10.3.4.3. In this context, Daniel presented the true God as unique. He did not accept the view that truth was a private matter, but rather declared God in the presence of the king of the pagan empire and expected him to believe in the uniqueness of Biblical truth.
- 10.3.4.4. Like, Daniel we need to stand firmly on the solid ground of truth and declare emphatically that only Christianity is true and all other religions are delusions that lead their adherents nowhere near truth, but only to Hell.
- 10.4. *Declare* – Daniel declared the existence and attributes of the true God in a pagan setting.
- 10.4.1. Daniel presented the following attributes of God as fact (28):
- 10.4.1.1. God exists (there is a God)
- 10.4.1.2. He is transcendent (in heaven)
- 10.4.1.3. He is the creator (God in heaven); implied by his being the supreme God.
- 10.4.1.4. He is all-knowing (who reveals mysteries)
- 10.4.1.5. He communicates (he has made known to the king)
- 10.4.2. Daniel didn’t attempt to prove the existence of God through a cosmological (first cause or prime mover), teleological (order, complexity, design), ontological (the greatest that can be conceived), transcendental (logic, beauty, ethics make no sense without God), moral (an objective standard), or epistemological (we can know only as image bearers) arguments.
- 10.4.3. Rather, Daniel assumed the existence of God as presented in the Bible and expected the king to accept the truth about the true God. This is how the Bible opens (Gen 1.1) for as Paul states (Rom 1.18-23) all men know that there is a God and they are accountable to him.
- 10.4.4. How can we follow Daniel’s example?
- 10.4.4.1. If a person seriously enquires about the existence of God we can present arguments that the Holy Spirit may use to open his heart. However, we cannot prove God’s existence and argue someone into the Kingdom with your ‘brilliant logic’.
- 10.4.4.2. In general, it isn’t helpful to get into debates and arguments with those who have hardened their hearts against the existence of God.
- 10.4.4.3. Rather we should always be looking for opportunities simply to state (as Daniel did in a dozen words) the existence of God and his providential governance and moral supremacy. Many people are deistic and need to be reminded that God not only exists, but he directs the affairs of this world.
- 10.4.4.4. It best in many situations to state the simple truth and let God use the seed planted to convict the heart. To God be the glory (Rom 16.25-26).

10.5. *Depend* – Daniel’s denunciation of the wise men of Babylon (27) should warn us about the insufficiency of human systems of thought. This should drive us from considering, honouring, and worshipping the creature to believing and praising the all-sufficient Creator.

10.5.1. Trust in man and his systems and you will have despair (Ps 146.3-4).

10.5.2. Depend on God and his truth and you will have hope (Ps 146.5-6).

Summary (Dan 2.31-35)

1. What does Daniel’s description of Nebuchadnezzar’s reception of the dream tell us about Daniel and God? (v. 31, compare v. 29)
 - 1.1. Daniel describes the king’s encounter with the vision as if he had not only seen the vision but had been present in the king’s bed chamber, and inside the king’s head during the reception of the dream.
 - 1.2. The revelation given to Daniel was complete. No detail was missing.
 - 1.3. This recounting validated Daniel and demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel could not only reveal the content of the dream but could also reveal its meaning.
 - 1.4. This recounting also validated God. It demonstrated that he is the true God who knows all things and that nothing can be hidden from him.
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar observe the statue in his dream? (31, 34)
 - 2.1. The Aramaic word for ‘looked’ (saw/gazed) is the same in both verses. It includes the idea of being entranced and continual action, i.e., ‘you stared’, ‘you were transfixed’.
 - 2.2. Daniel reflected on how the king reacted to what he saw as well as on what he saw.
 - 2.2.1. It may be that Nebuchadnezzar saw himself standing before the statue staring at it.
 - 2.2.2. It was like an out-of-body experience in which he hovered above the scene and saw a likeness of himself staring at the statue.
 - 2.3. The statue in the king’s dream was so impressive that the king was unable to avert his eyes.
3. What was the appearance of the statue?
 - 3.1. *A great and mighty statue* – Images or statues in the ancient world were used as idols for worship of deities or for reverence and worship of humans. The greater the image, the more impressive the god or human being represented. We aren’t told the height of the image, but can guess that it was very large. Considering that it was possible for him to build an image sixty cubits high (Dan 3.1), or about 9 storeys, the image in his dream must have been significantly higher to have intimidated him.
 - 3.2. *A statue of exceeding brightness* – In most ancient pantheons, there is an association between light and the gods. The more important gods are associated with bright lights (e.g., the sun or light—Re and Shu [Egypt], An or Gibil [Sumerian], Utu [Sumerian], Tutu/Shamash/Girru [Akkadian], Huehuetēōtl [Aztec], goddess Mazu [China], goddess Lakshmi [Hindu, India], Hyperion and Apollo [Greek]). The presence of light signals the presence of energy, implies power, and commands attention. The brightest bearer of light was the sun, which was usually given a prominent place in the ancient pantheons. A statue of exceeding brightness would have implied a god greater than all the other gods in Nebuchadnezzar’s pantheon or a king greater than Nebuchadnezzar himself.
 - 3.3. *An statue that was of awesome/frightening appearance* – [Hebrew: ‘awesome’ (NIV/NKJV) and ‘frightening’ or ‘causing terror’ [ESV]; used also in Dan 4.2; Dan 5.19; Dan 6.27; Dan 7.7, 19] We are not told what in particular engendered fear in Nebuchadnezzar. It certainly could have been the height and brightness of the image, but it was likely the appearance of the image. For example, the face on the head may have had a cruel, cold gaze. The arms may have been folded across the chest to give the impression of confidence, and the legs spread slightly apart in a stance of defiance. Whatever it was about the image, it scared Nebuchadnezzar more than anything he had seen in his experience as a conqueror and ruler.

4. Why did God reveal this message to Nebuchadnezzar in the form of a statue?
 - 4.1. The statue was not necessarily an idol, but an image in human form.
 - 4.2. The king probably did not perceive the image to represent a god, but rather he thought it represented a great king, one that was greater than him since a great and mighty statue implied that someone great was being honoured.
 - 4.3. The statue stood erect and unmovable before him and blocked his view.
 - 4.3.1. The statue challenged him.
 - 4.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar understood that whoever this great king was, he was challenging him just by his intimidating presence.
 - 4.3.3. The intimidating appearance humbled him. He would have considered himself to be the greatest king in the world and would have been confronted by an image that implied that someone was greater.
 - 4.3.4. He would have also been troubled and curious to find out who deserved to be honoured in this way.
 - 4.4. Nebuchadnezzar didn't understand the meaning of the image, but he understood that it was important.
 - 4.4.1. That it was the largest image imaginable would have led Nebuchadnezzar to begin questioning his own importance and the importance of his kingdom.
 - 4.4.2. God was beginning the process of humbling Nebuchadnezzar. God humbles nations and their leaders who raise their heads in pride (Is 2.11; Is 5.15; Is 10.12-14; Ezk 31.10, 14; Dan 4.37).
5. What is the significance of the metals and clay seen in the image?
 - 5.1. To answer this question we won't look ahead to the interpretation of the dream that Daniel provides in 36-45. Rather, we will consider only what Nebuchadnezzar would have seen and might have surmised before Daniel provided the interpretation.
 - 5.2. Immediately, Nebuchadnezzar would have noted that the statue was composed of four metals and clay progressing from the head downward.
 - 5.3. The head was of pure/fine gold.
 - 5.3.1. How did he know that the gold was pure?
 - 5.3.2. By its appearance. Pure gold has a yellow lustre that is not found in gold alloyed with silver (soft green), copper (red), platinum (white), iron (blue-white) or aluminum (purple).
 - 5.4. The thighs were of bronze. The KJV translated this as brass, but the metal was bronze.
 - 5.4.1. Brass is 60% copper and 40% zinc. It is relatively soft and subject to corrosion. Brass was probably not available until around 500 BC⁸⁵ (shortly after the life of Daniel).
 - 5.4.2. Bronze is 80% copper and 20% tin. It is harder than iron and resists corrosion. It was used for armour and cannons and is used for boat propellers and bells. Bronze is found in the oldest post-Flood settlements and was known before the Flood (Gen 4.22).
 - 5.5. The feet were composed of iron and clay.
 - 5.5.1. How was the clay combined with the iron?
 - 5.5.2. It could have been that there was an iron framework with clay filling in the spaces.
 - 5.5.3. Alternatively, it could have been a hollow iron shell filled with clay, or a skeleton of iron with clay around it.
 - 5.5.4. Or it may have been strips of one material and then the other.
 - 5.5.5. It is unlikely that a mixture of iron and clay would have been recognizable to the viewer.
 - 5.6. This progression from precious materials to less valuable would have indicated some sort of change from more glory to less glory. However, there also appeared to be increasing strength from the gold to the iron, but then decreased strength (or brittleness) in the feet indicated weakness and deterioration.

⁸⁵ Zinc is rarely found naturally in its elemental state. In the ancient world it was alloyed with copper through smelting the copper with calamine—a zinc ore.

- 5.7. An account of a similar statue made of four metals has not been discovered in the ancient literature or archaeology, implying that Nebuchadnezzar's dream was an original revelation direct from God (as we know it was!).
- 5.7.1. However, the concept of different metals representing different (and decreasingly happy) ages, and possibly dynasties or kingdoms, may have been extant in the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean world. A Greek myth⁸⁶ written a couple of centuries earlier, by Hesiod⁸⁷ a farmer in Boeotia, a region of central Greece, recounts world history as divided into four mythological ages, each characterized by a metal of decreasing value—gold, silver, bronze, and iron.
- 5.8. What might Nebuchadnezzar have thought the image or statue represented?
- 5.8.1. He might have thought that it represented different dynasties or reigns of individual kings.
- 5.8.2. Alternatively he might have thought of it as showing the aging of an individual man (himself) through his life: youth is the head of gold, the old man is represented by the mixture of iron and clay—weaker than iron and brittle.
- 5.9. At first there was no action in the dream. He observed a large, immovable statue.
6. What was special about the first appearance of the stone? (34, 45)
- 6.1. The rock/stone came into existence without being carved by human hands.
- 6.1.1. How was this accomplished?
- 6.1.2. It may have appeared that someone was shaping it into a sphere through carving, without hands being visible.
- 6.1.3. Or it may have appeared as a growth that started as a mound that formed into a sphere as it separated from the base strata.
- 6.2. What may be the meaning of the formation of the stone without human hands?
- 6.2.1. Jerome (ca. 345-420) suggested that it could refer to the virgin birth.⁸⁸
- 6.2.2. It may have a more generic meaning, encompassed in the idea of not being tainted with sin from mankind. For example, God's altar had to be made of natural stone, not cut stone (Ex 20.25; Dt 27.5, 6; Josh 8.31).
- 6.3. From where did the stone appear?
- 6.3.1. It is not stated in 34, but in verse 45 we see that it was cut out of the side of a mountain.
- 6.4. How big was the stone?
- 6.4.1. Since it came from the side of a mountain, it probably appeared to be large, certainly larger than a pebble.
- 6.5. What does the stone symbolize?
- 6.5.1. Although we are not yet considering Daniel's interpretation, we know that the 'rock' image appears elsewhere in the OT and it refers to the Messiah (Ps 118.22; Is 28.16; Zech 3.9).
- 6.5.2. This image also appears in the NT to represent Christ (Mt 21.42; Acts 4.11; Rom 9.33; 1 Pt 2.6–8).
7. What did the stone do?
- 7.1. The stone rolled down the side of the mountain and hit the feet/legs of the image/statue like a bowling ball hitting pins.
- 7.2. The force of the stone hitting the feet of the image/statue caused the statue to collapse from the bottom, with the upper portions falling down on the lower portions.
- 7.3. The image/statue crashed down on itself and, as it collapsed, it was reduced to dust. The dust was blown away so that there was no trace left of the imposing statue that had stood in front of Nebuchadnezzar.

⁸⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 106-80; www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/works.htm

⁸⁷ Hesiod lived in the 8th century BC, probably about the same time or shortly after Homer.

⁸⁸ www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.v.LXI.html?scrBook=Dan&scrCh=2&scrV=34#v.LXI-p15.1

- 7.3.1. Threshing floors in the AME were on elevated areas where wind could blow away chaff.
- 7.3.2. Chaff is the light, inedible portion of grain husk which separated from the grain when it was threshed (beaten) and then blew away when the grain was winnowed (tossed up in the air) on a windy day.
- 8. What does this action of the stone symbolize?
 - 8.1. The blow on the feet was sufficient to shatter the entire image/statue. This indicates that the image/statue was:
 - 8.1.1. Brittle and destructible—whatever it represented could be destroyed.
 - 8.1.2. Not permanent—whatever it represented would not last.
 - 8.2. The natural stone, not made by human artifice, was greater than the king(s) of the AME—greater even than Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 8.3. This scene would have frightened Nebuchadnezzar as much as the size and appearance of the image/statue, since the kings of the AME believed that their deities or reigns, as represented by this image/statue, would have been very powerful. For a natural stone to destroy a deity or monarchy and scatter it to the wind as chaff, implied a great force or power.
- 9. What then happened to the stone? What does this symbolize?
 - 9.1. The climax of the dream is the rapid growth of the stone into a mountain greater than the one from which it was cut.
 - 9.1.1. The mountain from which the stone had been cut stood off to the side of the statue.
 - 9.1.2. The mountain which the stone grew into filled the whole earth, replacing the statue that probably stood on a plain.
 - 9.1.3. The resulting mountain was the largest mountain imaginable. The irony is clear: the largest statue imaginable, representing a human dimension, was replaced with the largest mountain imaginable, representing a non-human (and therefore divine) dimension.
 - 9.2. The dream itself was simple and even without the explicit interpretation of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar would have known that the dream spoke to significant events that could destroy a human king or worldly kingdoms. This would have greatly agitated him.
- 10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 10.1. *We should be humbled:*
 - 10.1.1. Nothing relating to man (whether a king or a kingdom) is indestructible or everlasting.
 - 10.1.2. Kings may be honoured or mighty but they are subject to decay.
 - 10.1.3. Kings may be awesome and fearsome but they can be blown away in an instant under the force of the Divine (Is 26.5).
 - 10.1.4. As this message was intended to humble Nebuchadnezzar so it should humble us.
 - 10.1.4.1. We are weak and brittle before God. We cannot stand before the force of his coming.
 - 10.1.4.2. We are subject to decay and destined to return to the dust from which we were created.
 - 10.2. *We can be helped:*
 - 10.2.1. We should be encouraged when we see that God can produce great effects from, apparently, weak resources (Ps 8.2; Acts 4.11-21; 1 Cor 1.27; 2 Cor 4.7). As a natural stone can destroy the largest of human edifices; we can apply this:
 - 10.2.1.1. Christians can stand, in the power of God, before tyrants and oppressive systems.
 - 10.2.1.2. Christians do not need to fear unjust laws or the abuse of police powers.
 - 10.2.1.3. God reigns and he will overcome the kings and kingdoms of this earth.
 - 10.2.2. The purpose of this vision along with the ones in later chapters (8-12) was to strengthen the faith of the Daniel's contemporaries and to focus their attention on the establishment of God's ultimate eschatological kingdom.

- 10.2.2.1. The kingdom of Jesus Christ will overcome all earthly powers that stand tall in opposition to God. They are ultimately nothing but chaff before the winds of his judgement.
- 10.2.2.2. The kingdom of Jesus Christ, the rock, will grow into a world-filling mountain.

Solution (Dan 2.36-45)

1. What does Daniel do that the wise men could not do? (36 with 11)
 - 1.1. The pagan wise men had stated that revealing the content of the dream in order to provide its interpretation was impossible for a man. They said that the mystery could only be resolved by someone with access to the divine realm. But, they argued, the divine realm does not make its mind known to men.
 - 1.1.1. Daniel proves the wise men to be unwise—not because they required the Divine to reveal the meaning, but rather because God does in fact reveal his mind to men.
 - 1.1.2. Daniel was able to reveal the dream and interpret it for the king because God does in fact reveal himself to men.
 - 1.1.3. He presents the solution to the dream in the order that Nebuchadnezzar had demanded: first the content of the dream (31-35) and then its interpretation or meaning (36-45).
 - 1.2. What do you notice in Daniel's statement to the king that would distinguish him from the (other) wise men?
 - 1.2.1. Daniel speaks of 'we' providing an interpretation.
 - 1.2.1.1. The (other) wise men would likely have been proud and concerned about receiving merit points with the king and would have quickly claimed sole possession of any interpretation.
 - 1.2.1.2. Daniel may be including his three friends in the provision of a solution to the mystery.
 - 1.2.1.2.1. They had played a role as sharers in his concern (17) and by praying with him (18).
 - 1.2.1.2.2. He had already displayed the spirit of a team player in his previous communication (23).
 - 1.2.1.2.3. We don't know if his three friends were present when he revealed the dream, but they may have been (49).
 - 1.2.1.3. The 'we' could also be a plural of invested authority (1 Cor 2.6).
 - 1.2.1.4. It seems that the 'we' shows that Daniel had a basic humility before God and Man. He knew that the revelation was not his, but God's and that it had been revealed only to him as a spokesman for the group and not because there was anything special in his own person.
 - 1.2.2. Daniel had a confidence that the (other) wise men could not have.
 - 1.2.2.1. The (other) wise men were like the blind leading the blind. Their pagan religion was based on lies and there was no hope that what they had to say to the king could provide the truth. Therefore, they were at best timid fakers and at worst brash liars (Rom 1.18).
 - 1.2.2.2. Daniel knew that God had given him the solution to the mystery and it was without doubt correct (45).
 - 1.2.2.3. He could trust God to provide truth because God is Truth (Ex 34.6; Dt 32.4; Ps 86.15; Ps 117.2; Heb 6.18; Jn 16.13; 1 Jn 5.6).
2. What does the head of gold represent? (37-38)
 - 2.1. It could have any of a number of meanings:
 - 2.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar himself.
 - 2.1.2. His kingdom, under his personal reign (605-562 BC),
 - 2.1.3. His dynasty after him: Evil-Merodach, his son, 561-560 BC; Neriglissar, son-in-law to

- Nebuchadnezzar by his marriage to Nitocris, 559-555 BC; Labashi-Marduk, son of Neriglissar, a child-king, 555 BC; Nabonidus, 555-539 BC; Belshazzar, coregent who was not actually crowned king, 549-539 BC.
- 2.1.4. The Babylonian dynasty, including the kings before him and after him until the conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persian king, Cyrus, in 539 BC.
 - 2.1.5. Since the other metals in the statue appear to refer to dynastic empires (rather than to individuals) it may make sense to consider the gold head as a dynastic empire with Nebuchadnezzar as the representative.
 - 2.2. How is Nebuchadnezzar described?
 - 2.2.1. As the “king of kings” (Ezk 26.7).
 - 2.2.2. This may have been a self-designation of Babylonian kings since it appears to have been a self-designation of later Persian rulers (Ezra 7.12).
 - 2.2.3. It may have included the pretention of the king as being the greatest king of all time.
 - 2.2.4. However, it may also have been a mere statement of fact. Nebuchadnezzar could have been the king of kings if he had subject or vassal kings within the bounds of his dominion who ruled under his authority, as in the case of the kings of Judah (e.g., 2 Ki 24.1; 2 Chron 36.10).
 - 2.2.5. Ultimately, the true King of kings is Jesus Christ (1 Tim 6.15; Rev 17.14; Rev 19.16) who appears in this account as the rock who overcomes the kingdoms of this world.
 - 2.3. What is the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign or kingdom as described by Daniel?
 - 2.3.1. It is a dominion or kingdom that includes sovereignty, space (territory), and subjects—laws, land, and lieges; codes, cities, and citizens.
 - 2.3.2. It (and the king as its head) has power and might (strength) which includes the capacity or ability to rule and to deal with enemies that attack the kingdom, and with problems that face the kingdom.
 - 2.3.3. It has glory or honour that accompanies the other attributes. A kingdom could be strong without honour (e.g., a despicable tyranny) or honourable and weak (e.g., a subject state with a respected statesman), but Nebuchadnezzar has both worldly power and honour.
 - 2.3.4. In a few words, Daniel describes a strong, powerful, dominant, and respected dominion—setting up the fact that this dominion is the premier, without peer.
 - 2.3.5. There is a deliberate set up in this account to provide a contrast with the kingdom of the Rock. If the authority of Nebuchadnezzar is so awesome in human terms, then how much more so is the authority of Rock who will establish his kingdom at the expense of all earthly kingdoms?
 - 2.4. Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his authority?
 - 2.4.1. Daniel reminds Nebuchadnezzar that he did not build the kingdom by his own power, contrary to what he might think (Dan 4.30); but rather it was given to him by God, as Daniel and Jeremiah prophesied (Dan 2.21; Jer 27.5-7).
 - 2.4.2. Daniel finds opportunities to remind the greatest king in the world that he is a subject to the ultimate King (28, 37).
 - 2.4.3. Daniel uses the expression ‘God of heaven’ (as he did with an equivalent expression, in 28) to assert that God is transcendent, above the pantheon of false gods of the pagan religions, and the creator of the universe. Our pagan culture needs to hear the same message—God is the creator and sovereign over the created realm.
 - 2.5. What was the extent of Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion?
 - 2.5.1. It extended over man and beast—over all animate creation. God had given all people and their possessions into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. He was an absolute monarch who controlled the disposition of everyone and everything. No person had rights without his say, no person owned property without his indulgence.
 - 2.5.1.1. At creation mankind (male and female) was given dominion over the earth and all its creatures (Gen 1.26; Ps 8.6-7).
 - 2.5.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar, by divine appointment, is again granted this dominion. In this,

- he was helping fulfill what God had planned for man—i.e., to have dominion over the non-rational creation (Jer 27.6).
- 2.5.1.3. However, Nebuchadnezzar also owned the bodies and souls of every person in his dominion. Every person was ultimately a slave to him. The concepts of freedom that we espouse in NA (from John Locke, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution) would have been such foreign ideas to his subjects to be practically unimaginable.
- 2.5.2. It extended over all territories of the world—to wherever the animate creation made its habitation. All nations on earth were (to be) subject to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27.7).
- 2.5.2.1. We, in Canada, speak of ‘Crown lands’ with the understanding that these territories belong to the government and in theory to the titular head of the government, the monarch of the dominion.
- 2.5.2.2. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion there really wasn’t a difference between private and public or ‘crown’ property. Every plot of land in his dominion belonged to the crown and was leased or loaned to, and managed by, tenants at his indulgence.
- 2.5.2.3. The concept of a king’s dominion extending from the centre of his realm to the edges of the earth (the four quarters) is found in inscriptions and writings from the AME:
- 2.5.2.3.1. Sargon the Great (thought to have reigned c 2270 to 2215⁸⁹) rose from obscurity to become king of Kish. He conquered Sumer, Upper Mesopotamia, the Amorites in Syria, Elam and Assyria. His empire ranged from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. His eventual heir, Naram-Sin (by tradition), who brought the kingdom of Akkad to its zenith, was the first Mesopotamian king to claim divinity, and the first to be called ‘King of the Four Quarters’ (i.e., the world).⁹⁰
- 2.5.2.3.2. An inscription on the door of Sennacherib’s palace from around 693 BC says, “the great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters [of the earth], favorite of the great gods ...”⁹¹
- 2.5.2.3.3. Cyrus (c 600-530 BC) read the ‘Charter of Freedom’ after he crowned himself king in the Temple of Marduk, and declared, “I am Kourosh (Cyrus), King of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters ...”⁹²
- 2.5.2.3.4. This concept isn’t limited to the AME. The Incans called their empire *tahuantinsuyu* (‘the four parts that make up the whole’).
- 2.5.2.4. Some commentators suggest we must limit Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion to that part of the world that was known in his day.
- 2.5.2.4.1. However, that isn’t what God, through Daniel, says—mankind, *wherever* they lived were part of his dominion.
- 2.5.2.4.2. They are mistaken in their contention that his dominion included only the ‘known world’. The known world in Nebuchadnezzar’s day extended to the territories of the Greeks (Dan 8.21; Is 66.19) and the Mediterranean world at least as far as Spain (1 Ki 10.22; Is 23.6), and parts of north and east Africa (1 Ki 10.1; Is 11.11; Is 66.19), and to India and probably to China. Yet these territories were not directly under the authority of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2.5.2.4.3. The point of God’s message appears to be that Nebuchadnezzar had

⁸⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_of_Akkad

⁹⁰ “The Sumerians and the Akkadians 2371–2190 [BC],” *The Encyclopedia of World History*. 2001; www.bartleby.com/67/84.html

⁹¹ John Malcolm Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival at Nineveh*, (University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 244.

⁹² Cyrus, *Charter of Freedom*, 539 BC; www.iranchamber.com/history/cyrus/cyrus_charter.php.

been given absolute authority over all nations on earth. That his armies did not extend his dominion during his lifetime does not mean that the nations were not subject to him, but rather that he had not taken control of all that had been given to him by God, and belonged to him.

- 2.5.3. We are to understand from this account that Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king to ever have been given earthly power by God.
 - 2.5.3.1. The authority and extent of his kingdom was absolute and unequalled in history (before or after).
 - 2.5.3.2. Daniel, a Jew, declares God's word to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was greater even than Solomon's.
 - 2.5.3.3. This declaration indicates that the text was written by Daniel as a contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar, and not some 400 or 500 years later as non-believing 'scholars' try to suggest. A Maccabean Jew under Roman oppression would not have credited Nebuchadnezzar with such greatness.
 - 2.5.3.4. The extent of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion is declared as a set up for comparative purposes. If Nebuchadnezzar's dominion extends to the whole earth, then how much more extensive must be the kingdom of the Rock?
- 2.6. How can Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom have been the greatest kingdom in history?
 - 2.6.1. His kingdom wasn't the largest by geographic extent. Other kingdoms which followed, such as that of the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, and later the Han Empire c 200 AD, and the British Empire in the 19th century, covered larger territories.
 - 2.6.2. Other kingdoms lasted considerably longer such as that of the Persians which was founded by Cyrus and continued for over 2,500 years into the 20th century, and the Roman Empire which lasted for over 500 years.
 - 2.6.3. The glory of his kingdom did not *appear* to be the greatest in history. Solomon's kingdom, although considerably smaller, was extremely wealthy and glorious. The pomp of ancient Rome from around 50 BC to 150 AD was unparalleled. The wealth and innovation of the Shang (c 1675-1000 BC), Tang (618-906 AD), and Ming dynasties in China (1368-1644 AD) was spectacular. The British Empire during the reign of Queen Victoria was incredibly prosperous.
 - 2.6.4. What could be the factors by which Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is deemed to be the golden head of all worldly kingdoms? A few suggestions:
 - 2.6.4.1. *Originality vs. magnitude* – The Neo-Babylonian Empire was the first to create a single culture of dominance. Its influence continued into Persian and Greek cultures. For example, the Greek and Roman pantheons are essentially Babylonian, under different names.
 - 2.6.4.2. *Tenacity of spirit and purpose vs. duration* – Nebuchadnezzar held absolute power over all his subjects. Kingdoms before and after may not have concentrated all power in the king to the same extent. Rome for example had the senate which limited, to a degree, imperial power.
 - 2.6.4.3. *Unity of vision vs. display of pomp* – Nebuchadnezzar appears to have been the first king to draw all conquered peoples into a single unified empire. Earlier kingdom's like Sargon's may have been more of a confederacy under a single head; and empires afterwards, like the Medo-Persian and Greek empires, did not unite peoples.
 - 2.6.4.4. In summary, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire was the original 'world' empire that stood in total opposition to God, with:
 - 2.6.4.4.1. A complete religious system that included sacred myths, priests, and rituals set up to replace Biblical truth. No vestige of the true religion was left or included in their religious system.
 - 2.6.4.4.2. An absolute monarch who placed himself over all of creation. He claimed to own every aspect of the created realm from land to crops,

- and from beast to men. He claimed to be subject to no one else, including God.
- 2.6.4.4.3. A human-based (humanistic) system that placed man and his inventions at the center of the world. Man claimed to be the measure of all things.
 - 2.6.4.4.4. A comprehensiveness that brought together people from the people groups descended from the three sons of Noah (Shemites in the ME, Hamites in the Middle East, Africa, and East, Jephthites from the NW in Turkey). This may have been the first time a world-empire, since Sargon I had accomplished this alignment of peoples.
 - 2.6.4.4.5. His kingdom totally dominated society through the concentration of statist power, but was more than the momentary achievement found in other kingdoms.⁹³
 - 2.6.4.5. Essentially, Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom stand as the representative of all pagan anti-God systems (religious, philosophical, economic, and scientific), governments, cultures, and civilizations.
 - 2.6.4.5.1. All other kingdoms or nations striving for world domination, before or after, are merely graspers or imitators of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. They are what empire builders would like to be in total rebellion against God. Nebuchadnezzar was the archetype for all attempts to exalt human beings above God.
 - 2.6.4.5.2. No other kingdom has been able to realize total rebellion against God in such a complete and organized way. Nebuchadnezzar is the embodiment of antichrist.
 - 2.6.4.5.3. This is the reason that God deals with Nebuchadnezzar explicitly by challenging him (chapters 2 and 3) and humbling him (chapter 4).
 - 2.6.4.5.4. God shows through Nebuchadnezzar that all usurpers to God's throne will be put down and made subject to the true King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. What are the kingdoms represented by the different materials of the statue?
- 3.1. What are guiding principles for determining what the kingdoms are?
 - 3.1.1. They are not kings, but kingdoms or empires (39, 40).
 - 3.1.2. The kingdoms are not just *kingdoms*, but dominant dynastic empires—which can be called 'world' empires.
 - 3.1.3. The statue in the dream provides an accurate prophecy of world history and is not just an allegory of man's rebellion against God.
 - 3.1.4. The kingdoms display different or unique traits as represented by the metals which distinguish them from one another.
 - 3.1.5. The kingdoms have to be at their peak of dominance between the time of Nebuchadnezzar and Jesus, since there is no disagreement among Christian scholars that the rock in the account refers to the kingdom of Jesus.
 - 3.1.5.1. Note: we will refer, below, to alternate views of which kingdoms are represented by the metals.
 - 3.1.6. The Book of Daniel was written sometime in the 6th century BC, not in the 2nd century as claimed by liberal interpreters.⁹⁴ The perspective of Daniel is from within a dominant world-empire. It is not a Jewish Maccabean perspective concerned primarily with the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - 3.1.7. There is a single, over-arching, message in the book of Daniel and the interpretation of

⁹³ Joshua Berman, *Created Equal* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

⁹⁴ For example, Phil J. Botha, *The Reception of Daniel Chapter 2 on the Commentary Ascribed To Ephrem The Syrian Church Father*, [www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/2800/1/Botha_Reception\(2006\).pdf](http://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/2800/1/Botha_Reception(2006).pdf)

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chapter 2 needs to be consistent with the interpretation of chapters 7 and 8.

3.1.8. The interpretation must be consistent with an interpretation of Matthew 24.15. Jesus quotes Daniel as a prophet who foretold future events that would be fulfilled in his generation (i.e., at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD).

3.1.8.1. Some interpreters think that Daniel was describing the “end of the age” (Mt 24.3) that they want to place immediately preceding the Judgement Day (i.e., still in our future).

3.1.8.2. Therefore, their identification of the metals in the statue with empires tends to differ from the interpretation of most Reformed scholars.

3.1.9. The opinion of the majority of the Church fathers and Reformers has merit—whereas the post-18th century liberal interpretations and the opinions of cults and dispensationalists are worth less consideration.

3.2. The identification of the kingdoms does vary, however the commonly accepted view among Reformed interpreters⁹⁵ is that given in Interpretation 1, below:

Different Interpretations of the Materials in the Stature in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream					
Verses	Material	Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2	Interpretation 3	Other Views
36-38	Gold head	605-539 <i>Babylon</i> Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty	Babylon	Babylon	
39	Silver chest and arms	539-330 BC <i>Medo-Persia</i> Darius the Mede / Cyrus the Persian (his mother was a Mede) ⁹⁶ to Darius Codomannus (Dan 5.28, 31; Dan 6.8)	Media	Media	
39	Bronze abdomen and thighs	330-63 BC <i>Greece</i> Alexander the Great (334-330 BC) and the four kingdoms that resulted after his death (Hellenistic culture)	Persia	Persia	
40	Iron legs	<i>Rome</i> 63 BC-325 AD or c400 AD	Greece	Greece	
41-43	Iron and clay feet	<i>Rome</i> in its later stages	Rome	Syria and Egypt (Seleucids and Ptolemies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easter and Western Roman Empires • The European kingdoms • The Anglo-American dual empire of the 20th c • Future kingdom, revived Roman Empire (Rev 20.1-6) per dispensationalism⁹⁷

⁹⁵ View supported by: Josephus, some Jewish scholars (Japet Ibn Ali, Saadia, Rashi, Abraham Ibn Ezra), Irenaeus, Chrysostom, Hippolytus Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Calvin, E. J. Young, Leupold, etc.

⁹⁶ Some have suggested that the alliance between the Medes and Persians is represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. However, this form of symbolism introduces difficulties since there is no representation of the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire disintegrated. Also, the supposed division of Rome into two parts represented by the legs/feet is problematic—does it represent the period of Roman civil wars or the later eastern and western empires?

⁹⁷ www.watchmanbibelstudy.com/biblestudies/HIStoryOurFuture_RRE.htm and www.jesusplusnothing.com/studies/quick/daniel2p2.htm.

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Different Interpretations of the Materials in the Statue in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream					
Verses	Material	Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2	Interpretation 3	Other Views
44-45	The rock cut out of a mountain	Messiah's kingdom	Messiah	Hasmonean dynasty of the Maccabees, after the defeat of the Seleucid forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohammed and Islam • Future Millennial kingdom^{98,99}

3.3. Considerations related to different interpretations of the metals and clay composing the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

3.3.1. The statement in verse 43: "As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage" (ESV) has led some interpreters to suggest that this is a reference to Ptolemies and the Seleucids who sealed their alliance by intermarriage (Antiochus II to Bernice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, in 252), but could not stay united and ended up at war.

3.3.1.1. A problem with this interpretation is that after Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire was broken into *four* kingdoms ruled by his generals. Two of these were the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty in Syria.

3.3.1.2. The interpreters claim that only these two kingdoms were of relevance to the Jews (and therefore included in the statue), because they continually squabbled over Judea.

3.3.1.3. This ethno-centric interpretation is too narrow. Daniel wasn't written for Maccabean Jews but for an international audience in a world-empire 400 years earlier.

3.3.1.4. There are alternate translations of this verse, which we will consider below.

3.3.2. Daniel mentions the Medes and Persians as a single empire (Dan 5.28) and the courtiers appeal to the law of the Medes and Persians (Dan 6.8, 12, 15). This indicates that at the time of Daniel (see also, Est 1.19), the empire of the Medes and Persians was viewed as a single empire, not two consecutive empires. This supports the view that Interpretation 1, above, is correct.

3.3.3. Daniel 2.36-45 enumerates four kingdoms (v. 37 [a kingdom], v. 39 [another, third], v. 40 [fourth]) not five. The kingdom of iron in clay is not called a fifth kingdom but is the fourth kingdom in its later stages.

3.3.4. The kingdom of the Rock was to be set up in the days of the kings of the fourth empire (44).

3.3.4.1. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed ..." (ESV)

3.3.4.2. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed..." (NIV)

3.3.4.3. Luke 2.1: "In *those days* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that *all the world* should be registered" [italics added], confirms that it was the Roman world-empire) that was the fourth kingdom.

3.3.5. Jesus (Mt 24.15; Mk 13.14) refers to the abomination of desolation mentioned by Daniel (Dan 9.27; Dan 11.31; Dan 12.11). This indicates that the final, fourth, kingdom in Daniel is the Roman Empire. The particular abomination of desolation is the desecration and destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

3.3.6. Edward Young, in his commentary¹⁰⁰ on Daniel, in an approximately 20-page appendix,

⁹⁸ bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/ScofieldReferenceNotes/srn.cgi?book=da&chapter=002.

⁹⁹ www.raptureready.com/abc/Roman_Empire.html.

¹⁰⁰ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 41.

deals with various arguments related to the identity of fourth kingdom. He relates chapters 7 and 8 to chapter 2 and shows that statements (e.g., Dan 7.7) made about the fourth kingdom cannot apply to the Greek Empire, but they do describe the Roman Empire.

- 3.3.7. Spencer Kimball, a Mormon, explained in 1976, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored in 1830. ...This is the kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, that would never be destroyed nor superseded, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would become a great mountain and would fill the whole earth.” He agreed that the third kingdom represented the Greek Empire and the fourth, the Roman Empire. He then argued that the feet of iron and clay represented the kingdoms of the European nations into which the Roman Empire fragmented and which were the great political powers at the time the Mormon church was founded.¹⁰¹
- 3.3.8. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the feet of iron and clay refers to the Anglo-American dual world-power. They claim that this is the last dominant world power. The mixture of iron and clay refers to the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ powers of these ‘empires’—there military strength and diplomacy. They claim that the Kingdom of the Rock is now established.¹⁰²
- 3.4. Leupold¹⁰³ refers to a view that suggests that the metals in the statue correspond to the distinctive nature of the cultures of Interpretation 1: Gold was used extensively in Babylon, Silver represents the commercial activities of the Medo-Persian merchants, bronze was the metal of Greek armaments, and iron typifies the power and cruelty of the Roman armies which used steel swords. This may be reading too much into the passage. Both the Greeks and the Romans used bronze for much of their armour, but iron had replaced bronze in swords by at least 200 years before the time of Alexander the Great.
- 3.5. Nebuchadnezzar's dream encompassed the world-dominating Gentile nations until the time that they would be brought under subjection to the Messiah. “The times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21.24), in one sense (i.e., world-dominating empires) reached its apex at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. We are now in the Kingdom-age in which there are no longer world-dominating human empires and when Gentiles as well as Jews honour the one Messiah. The truth of the coming end of the “times of the Gentiles” was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, the first world-ruling emperor, to teach him (and all who follow) that they are ultimately subject to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. What is the significance of the feet being composed of iron and clay? (41-43)
 - 4.1. This probably does not refer to two separate parts of the Roman Empire (e.g., east and west) since the Roman Empire was essentially under one ruler during the life of Christ from Augustus Caesar, and to the rule of Constantine or to around 400 AD. The Roman Empire we permanently split into eastern and western halves in 395 AD, following the death of Theodosius I.
 - 4.2. This may be a reference to the civil wars in the Roman Empire: between Marius and Sulla (2nd c BC) and Julius Caesar and Pompey (1st c BC). Rome was the dominant world ‘empire’ at this time even though it did not have an official emperor until Augustus (27BC – 14AD)
 - 4.3. It is possible that iron and clay refer to the period of chaos after the death of Nero in 68 AD. In the following year there were four emperors.
 - 4.4. The iron and clay probably refers to a general progressive weakness and deterioration in the Roman Empire; rather than to a specific era.
 - 4.4.1. The two materials may refer to Rome after the time of Julius Caesar, when the Roman Empire extended north beyond the Mediterranean world. If this is the case, the iron represented the original Roman people; and the clay the Germanic peoples who were

¹⁰¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar's_statue_vision_in_Daniel_2

¹⁰² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar's_statue_vision_in_Daniel_2

¹⁰³ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 122.

- brought into the Empire, but were not considered good material for empire building.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, Rome lacked inner unity and had a resultant brittleness.
- 4.4.2. Some suggest that the iron refers to the military strength of Rome, and the clay to administrative, legal, and religious institutions. The strength of Rome was in its militaristic might—in its power to break and crush. But, this military strength and organization was deceptive since Rome was sustained by a large contingent of slave labour, its army included many mercenaries, while its legal system was abused by the debauched wealthy and elite.
 - 4.4.3. Others suggest that the iron refers to the culture and laws of imperial Rome, while the clay is the different social and political traditions in its conquered territories. Rome succeeded in conquering the territories but it could not unite the peoples into a single empire.
 - 4.4.4. Another explanation may be that the empire was strong organizationally but weak morally.
- 4.5. It may be that, while we consider the iron mixed with clay to represent Rome, we cannot be specific about the time or meaning of this imagery.
- 4.6. The ESV (43) reads: “As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together”.
- 4.6.1. The ESV has an idiomatic translation that seems to be more interpretative than a translation.
 - 4.6.2. Compare with other translations:
 - 4.6.2.1. NIV: “the people will be a mixture and will not remain united”
 - 4.6.2.2. NKJV: “they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another”
 - 4.6.2.3. NASB: “they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another”
 - 4.6.2.4. LXX: “they will be commingled the descendants/seed of man but they will not be united together”
 - 4.6.2.5. Aramaic: “they will be a mixture the descendants/seed of the peoples but not they will remain untied”
 - 4.6.3. The meaning of this verse, although not easy to determine, seems to be that the people groups who made up the Roman Empire would not be joined in some way (politically, administratively, etc.) but truly united (e.g., ethnically, culturally).
 - 4.6.3.1. The verse is probably not speaking of intermarriage between different branches of the royal family, or of intermarriage among the leaders of the Latin and Germanic territories.
- 4.7. It is probably inappropriate to attempt to assign the ten toes of the statue to specific kings/emperors as some attempt to do. It would be impossible to determine which ten should be included. For example, Suetonius (c 69/75 – after 130) records twelve in the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars Emperors of Rome*. If there is any significance to the ten toes (other than that the statue had feet on which to stand), they may refer symbolically to the complete number of the rulers of the Empire. [Note the ten horns, and then the 11th horn in Daniel 7.8; in Daniel’s vision there might be significance in the ‘ten’.]
- 4.8. Regardless, the instability, decay or rot within the final empire extended to the toes.
5. What may be symbolized by the statue being a single image made of different materials? (39-40)
- 5.1. The fact that the statue is an image of one man (as distinct from four separate objects like the beasts in chapter 7) may imply that, in essence, the represented kingdoms are one. The world powers are united in their human intent (Gen 6.5)—there is essentially no difference among them.

¹⁰⁴ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 120.

- 5.2. The Gentile kingdoms as a whole are viewed as a 'person' before God. The spirit, genius, power, and purpose of one is the same for all. All are standing against God and his Church.
- 5.3. The four different empires surround Judea. The centres of the former two lie to the east and the centers of the latter two to the west. East and West conspire together against God and his holy people.
- 5.4. The world rule may have passed from conquering empire to conquering empire, but the essential sameness applies to each empire. The subsequent empires absorbed the culture, mythical religion, ethics, and technology of preceding ones. There was really no differences among them. Therefore, when the feet were struck, the entire body of the statue collapsed.
6. What kingdom is represented by the rock cut out of the mountain without human hands? (44)
 - 6.1. There is no debate among Christian interpreters that it represents the kingdom of the Messiah. There is however debate as to when this kingdom was (or will be) established and what it encompasses (e.g., an essentially spiritual realm, a future temporal realm, or an everlasting realm).
 - 6.2. The symbol of a stone/rock representing the Messiah and his kingdom occurs throughout the OT from before the time of Daniel (Ps 118.22; Is 8.14-15; Is 28.16; Is 51.1) and NT (Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10-11; Lk 20.17-18; Rom 9.32-33; 1 Pt 2.6-8).
7. What are the attributes of this kingdom? (44)
 - 7.1. *Principality* – “a kingdom” It is a Kingdom.
 - 7.1.1. What makes a kingdom a *kingdom*? A kingdom has to have a king, territory, subjects, laws, and administration.
 - 7.1.2. What are the constituent elements of the Kingdom of the Rock?
 - 7.1.2.1. The King is Jesus, he is an appointed and anointed sovereign (Ps 2.2; Ps 89.27; Mk 11.10; Lk 22.29; Eph 1.20-23; Col 1.18; Phil 2.9-11; 1 Pt 3.22).
 - 7.1.2.2. It is a kingdom that ultimately is not of this world (Jn 18.36), and yet it is in and over the world of men (Rev 11.15). Its territory includes the entire world (Ps 24.1)—it is the ultimate world empire.
 - 7.1.2.3. The subjects of the Kingdom are:
 - 7.1.2.3.1. All men in all nations are under the governance of King Jesus, even if they won't admit it (Ps 2.10-11; Rom 13.1-7).
 - 7.1.2.3.2. The Church, from which the King receives honour and tribute (Mt 5.3, 10; Mt 21.31; Mk 10.14, 15; Col 1.13; Rev 5.10).
 - 7.1.2.4. The laws by which King Jesus rules are encoded in the Kingdom's constitution, the Bible, and are summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.1-17).
 - 7.1.2.5. Jesus administers the Kingdom through the Holy Spirit (Jn 14.26) and his appointed ambassadors on earth such as Pastors/Elders (Lk 22.30; Jn 20.21; 2 Cor 5.20; Eph 6.20) and through civil magistrates (Rom 13.1-7).
 - 7.1.3. Jesus used the reference 'Kingdom of God' or 'Kingdom of Heaven' dozens of time during his earthly ministry.
 - 7.1.3.1. In contrast, he uses the term 'church' in only two instances (Mt 16.18; Mt 18.17).
 - 7.1.3.2. It may be that he used the reference 'kingdom' explicitly to identify his realm with the prophecy of Daniel 2.44.
 - 7.2. *Present* – “In the time (days) of those kings ...” It is an ongoing 'now' Kingdom. (Mt 3.2; Mk 9.1)
 - 7.2.1. Christ's Kingdom was established in the time of those kings (i.e., during the Roman Empire).
 - 7.2.2. While the empires of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were standing the Kingdom of Christ was founded and started to grow and overcome and destroy the world empires represented by the statue.

- 7.2.3. The means used by Jesus to establish the Kingdom were his death and resurrection, which occurred during the dominion of the fourth empire—the Roman Empire as it was already in the process of decay (as represented by the iron and clay).
- 7.2.4. The Kingdom that Jesus was to establish in accordance with the prophecy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is not a future temporal kingdom to be set up at his second coming. It is a Kingdom that began to exist 2,000 years ago, continues to exist today, and will exist forever.
 - 7.2.4.1. Christ, at the end of his first advent, established the Kingdom. He reigns now from his throne in Heaven (Phil 2.9-11; Heb 8.1; Rev 4.2).
 - 7.2.4.2. Christianity, like the growing mountain (35, 45), began to grow and spread geographically and numerically 2000 years ago, and is still doing so.
 - 7.2.4.3. Premillennialists mistakenly hold that the kingdom will be established by Christ on earth, at a yet future date. In their view, Jesus will set up a new temporal world-empire, ruled from Jerusalem.
- 7.3. *Personal* – “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom” It has a direct and personal Divine origin.
 - 7.3.1. World empires, and all kingdoms among men, are established by human conquest or by men putting forward other men who they believe have gifts or qualities of leadership.
 - 7.3.2. Although it is true that ultimately God rules and establishes all kingdoms (Dan 2.21; 1 Sam 2.7, 8; Ps 113.7, 8; Prov 8.15, 16), only the Son receives a royal appointment directly from God (Ps 2.1-12; Ps 110.1-2).
 - 7.3.3. Since the Kingdom of the Messiah is not of human origin, it does not go forward with worldly instruments or weapons but with spiritual ones (Eph 6.10-18).
- 7.4. *Permanent* – “that will never be destroyed” It is an indestructible Kingdom.
 - 7.4.1. The kingdom of Christ cannot decay (Mt 6.19, 20; 1 Pt 1.4).
 - 7.4.2. It is in no danger of destruction, not even Satan or the powers of Hell can overcome it (Ps 125.1, 2; Mt 16.18, 19; Heb 12.28).
 - 7.4.3. No one can remove any of its subjects (Is 54.17; Jn 10.27-30; Rom 8.33-39).
 - 7.4.4. No succession or revolution is possible in this Kingdom (Rev 21.1-4).
- 7.5. *Protected* – “nor will it be left to another people” It is owned by God.
 - 7.5.1. What happened to Sargon's empire?
 - 7.5.1.1. Sargon (may mean ‘the true king’) the Great (thought to have reigned c 2270 to 2215) conquered Sumer, Upper Mesopotamia, the Amorites in Syria, Elam and Assyria. His empire ranged from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. Sargon was probably the first individual, after the Flood, to create a centrally ruled empire made up of subject kingdoms.
 - 7.5.1.2. His empire eventually decayed and the Elamites destroyed the remnants of the empire. Mesopotamia had no central authority for a few centuries. It is possible that the creation of the alliance under Sargon may have been the driving force in the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11.1-9).¹⁰⁵ The decay of this empire was probably caused by the separation of mankind at the time of the Tower.
 - 7.5.1.3. Out of the turmoil, an Amorite king, Hammurabi (dated at 1790-1750 BC) built a new empire based in Babylon (an earlier Babylonian Empire). He restored law and order.
 - 7.5.2. What happened to the Babylonian Empire established by Hammurabi?
 - 7.5.2.1. Tribesmen from the north-east and south plundered and destroyed the irrigation systems and central administration of government.
 - 7.5.2.2. Within a few generations the first ‘great age’ of Mesopotamia came to an end.
 - 7.5.2.3. Over the next few centuries the Assyrians in northern Mesopotamia began their rise to power and conquered the Babylonian territories to the south. Some of the

¹⁰⁵ According to Wikipedia, William Ewing, 1910, *The Temple Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 514 equates Sargon to Nimrod (Gen 10.8, 9); en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nimrod.

Assyrian kings¹⁰⁶ were: Tiglath-Pileser II (967-935 BC; 2 Kings 15.29; 2 Kings 16.7, 10), Shalmaneser III (859 -824 BC; 2 Ki 17.3; 2 Kings 18.9), Sargon II (720-705 BC; Is 20.1), Sennacherib (705-681 BC; 2 Ki 18.13; 2 Kings 19.16, 20, 36), and Esarhaddon (681-669 BC; 2 Ki 19.37; Ezra 4.3; Is 37.38).

7.5.3. What happened to the Assyrian empire?

7.5.3.1. At the death of the last strong Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal the son of Esarhaddon (627 BC), the Babylonians in southern Mesopotamia rebelled under Nabopolassar. With the help of the Medes they sacked Nineveh in 612 BC. The seat of the Assyrian-Babylonian Empire was transferred to Babylon.

7.5.3.2. Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar became king in 605 BC, and consolidated the first great world-empire.

7.5.4. What happened to the Babylonian Empire? It was over-run by the Medes and Persians in 539 BC.

7.5.5. What happened to the Medo-Persian Empire? It was defeated by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

7.5.6. What happened to the Greek Empire? It fell apart into four kingdoms ruled by descendants of Alexander's generals and was eventually absorbed into the Roman Empire (c 63 BC).

7.5.7. What happened to the Roman Empire? It eventually disintegrated under attacks by the northern peoples and later by Islamic tribes. The Middle Ages was a time of chaos in which there was no central administration in the northern Mediterranean regions, and the southern and eastern Mediterranean fell into the hands of the Islamic Caliphates.

7.5.8. What is the point of asking these questions about what happened to each empire?

7.5.8.1. The fact is that each empire became the possession of someone else.

7.5.8.2. Human empires do not last. Every emperor in history has proudly thought that his empire or dynasty was different from the others and that it would last for generations, or even forever.

7.5.9. In contrast, what is the expectation for the Kingdom of the Rock?

7.5.9.1. The Kingdom and its sovereignty cannot pass to another king, and its subjects can never come under the dominion of another king.

7.5.9.2. Since the Kingdom is possessed by God, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, it cannot pass to, be left to, or be possessed by, anyone else (another people).

7.5.9.2.1. Christ cannot be deprived of his Kingdom; he cannot lose his reign or authority.

7.5.9.2.2. His throne cannot be usurped.

7.5.9.2.3. Christ reigns secure because of who he is (the God-man and Mediator) and what he has done (earned his inheritance through perfect obedience and conquering Satan).

7.5.9.3. The subjects of the kingdom are protected by God and can rest secure.

7.5.9.3.1. We are saved by God's grace and preserved by God's grace, through faith. Therefore, our salvation is everlastingly secure (Jn 10.27-30; Rom 8.33-39; 1 Pt 1.5).

7.5.9.3.2. Ultimately, we are secure from all tyranny and danger from Satan and man. Temporal evils and dangers pass away and can never retain a hold on us (Ps 23.4; Ps 20.5; 2 Cor 4.17; 1 Pt 1.6; 1 Pt 5.10)

7.6. *Powerful* – “It will crush (break in pieces) all those kingdoms and bring them to an end (consume them)” It is an all-powerful Kingdom.

7.6.1. What is the evidence that this prophecy has come true?

7.6.1.1. The Christian Church broke the power of pagan Rome. Eventually Rome became Christianized (by about 325 AD) and officially recognized Christ after the

¹⁰⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kings_of_Assyria.

conversion of Constantine. Rome collapsed from moral decay and the attacks of the migrating northern Visigoths under Aleric (a Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths being another). After the sack of Rome in 410 AD, Augustine, in *The City of God* (413 AD) refuted the pagans' claims that Christians brought about the fall of Rome because they weren't patriotic, asked people to serve God rather than the state, and advocated forgiveness toward enemies. Augustine argues that Rome had suffered calamities before Christians were in the Empire, and the pagan gods were worshipped, and yet those gods had not prevented the calamities. In contrast, he argues, Rome was preserved for far longer than it deserved because of the leaven of Christian influence in the Empire.

7.6.1.2. Many kings thereafter in the remnants of the Roman Empire (e.g., Theodosius II and numerous other Byzantine emperors), in Europe (e.g., Charlemagne and subsequent Holy Roman Emperors) and in England (e.g., Wihtred¹⁰⁷, Alfred¹⁰⁸, Aethelred¹⁰⁹, John¹¹⁰ and Edward I¹¹¹) professed allegiance to Christ as King of kings.

7.6.1.3. The defeat of Nazism, the removal of the Berlin wall, and the realization of the bankruptcy of Communism, all demonstrate that no human kingdom or atheistic political system can long endure. The US's pride of world dominance (in pop culture, economic ascendancy, and military 'empire'), the United Nations, and Islam's goal of global *dhimmitude* (to subject all people to Islam) will also be broken in pieces (assuming Christ does not return first). The collapse of all human systems and aspirations to world empire will fail. Only the Kingdom of the Rock will continue to grow and dominate the world.

7.6.1.4. The Kingdom of Christ has grown and continues to overcome all religions and kingdoms. Starting from a small group of fearful disciples, Christianity has become the dominant religion and moral influence on earth.

7.6.1.4.1. "Christians 33.32% (of which Roman Catholics 16.99%, Protestants 5.78%, Orthodox 3.53%, Anglicans 1.25%), Muslims 21.01%, Hindus 13.26%, Buddhists 5.84%, Sikhs 0.35%, Jews 0.23%, Baha'is 0.12%, other religions 11.78%, non-religious 11.77%, atheists 2.32% (2007 est.)"¹¹²

7.6.1.4.2. Christianity is growing faster than the growth rate of the world's population, and is apparently growing faster (percentage and absolute) than any other (major) religion on earth.¹¹³

7.6.2. What are the means used by the Kingdom of the Rock to crush world empires?

7.6.2.1. Precepts – truth about God, creation, law, and salvation stated and proclaimed (Jn 8.32; Eph 6.14)

7.6.2.2. Prayer – the prayer of faith (Eph 6.18; Heb 11.33 with James 5.15)

7.6.2.3. Preaching – evangelism and teaching (Rom 10.14-15; 1 Cor 1.21; Eph 6.15)

7.6.2.4. Practice – morality lived out (1 Pt 2.12).

This is in marked contrast with Islam which conquers territories by sword and forced

¹⁰⁷ Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology* (Oxford University Press: 1999), pp. 26-29.

¹⁰⁸ www.northvegr.org/lore/anglo_saxon_dooms/002.php#alfred

¹⁰⁹ A. J. Robertson, ed. and trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge University Press, 1925), p. 119.

¹¹⁰ "JOHN, by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, to ... his faithful subjects, greeting. Know ye, that we, in the presence of God, and for the salvation of our soul, and the souls of all our ancestors and heirs, and unto the honour of God and the advancement of Holy Church, and amendment of our Realm, by advice of our venerable Fathers ..." (*Magna Carta*, June 15, 1215)

¹¹¹ King Edward I, *Magna Carta*, 1297; www.laughtergenealogy.com/bin/histprof/legacy/magna2.html

¹¹² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups

¹¹³ www.bible.ca/islam/islam-myths-fastest-growing.htm quoting from David A. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p 4. However, see: Jennifer Riley, "Christian Population Growth Rate Higher than World; Less than Muslims, Hindus," *Christian Post*, 2006-01-06; www.christianpost.com/article/20060106/christian-population-growth-rate-higher-than-world-less-than-muslims-hindus.htm.

slavery and servitude.

7.6.3. What is the result of the Kingdom of the Rock crushing the kingdoms/empires of this world?

7.6.3.1. The Kingdom of the Rock does not deliver more of the same, such as is found in totalitarian governments that have aspirations to dominate mankind:

7.6.3.1.1. Concentration of power in a single man's hands, or in the hands of a few elite individuals (oligarchy) such as Ivy-league lawyers

7.6.3.1.2. State ownership of the means of production, property, and the lives of citizens

7.6.3.1.3. Control of monetary policy (e.g., setting interest rates and inflating currency)

7.6.3.1.4. Government-endorsed censorship of statements of belief that are contrary to the official positions of the state or academic institutions

7.6.3.1.5. Deprivation of freedom of movement, and personal choices (e.g., in family, education, and career choices)

7.6.3.1.6. Creation and dissemination of nationalistic, humanistic, religions, through:

7.6.3.1.6.1. Myths that stand in the place of (the true) religion, such as the religion of environmentalism with 'green' sacraments, an evolutionary 'theology', and 'scientists' in the priesthood.

7.6.3.1.6.2. State-funded indoctrination mills that reproduce 'politically correct' thinking.

7.6.3.1.7. Dependence on the government's/the monarch's largess (e.g., in social programs)

7.6.3.1.8. Suppression of initiative and denigration of personal responsibility

7.6.3.1.9. Endorsement of evil (e.g., abortion, same-sex 'marriage', homosexual practices, etc.)

7.6.3.1.10. Entertaining the masses to keep them stupid and submissive.

7.6.3.2. The Kingdom of the Rock delivers a different kind of kingdom from world empires, overcoming all that is wrong in the world powers, and replacing them by:

7.6.3.2.1. Providing freedom to worship the true God openly with public endorsement (e.g., sanctifying the Christian Sabbath)

7.6.3.2.2. Destroying slavery, caste systems, and feudalism

7.6.3.2.3. Fostering freedom of thought and morally accountable consciences

7.6.3.2.4. Encouraging personal and family responsibility for health, education, and welfare; rather than reliance on government to provide programs through the forced re-allocation of income

7.6.3.2.5. Demanding critical thinking and evaluative reasoning

7.6.3.2.6. Teaching right moral practice.

7.6.3.3. Note: Until Christ returns there will continue to be a tension between human world-empire builders and citizens of the Kingdom of the Rock. Although Jesus' kingdom will grow and prosper, human antagonists will continue to try to drag it down and set up imitations. The book of Revelation speaks of this tension with the Beast and the False Prophet representing false governments and false religion attacking the Church, until the end of time.

7.6.4. Is this prophecy (*it will crush all those kingdoms*) complete or fulfilled?

7.6.4.1. In one sense, yes, as the Roman Empire has been crushed. However, the prophecy referred not only to the dissolution of the Roman Empire but to the destruction of all the kingdoms that made up the statue (yet, the preceding had already come to an end). So, the application is to all similar kingdoms/empires

on earth.

7.6.4.2. Its victory is continuing and will be completed with the final revelation of the eternal Kingdom. It is both temporal and eternal.

7.6.4.3. Only when Jesus returns to this earth will the final form of his eternal Kingdom be revealed (1 Cor 15.24, 25).

7.6.4.4. When that day comes, Jesus will have put down all rulers of this age/realm, and will have made all his enemies his footstool (Ps 110.1). Then the prophecy of the destruction of the statue will be fully accomplished (Rev 11.15).

7.6.4.5. Jesus will then be acknowledged as King of kings by all mankind—whether willingly in love, or grudgingly in hatred (Phil 2.9-11).

7.7. *Perpetual* – “but it will itself endure (stand) forever)” It is an eternal Kingdom.

7.7.1. How long with the Kingdom of the Rock endure?

7.7.1.1. Forever! (2 Sam 7.16; Rev 11.15).

7.7.1.2. Jesus will reign forever, not only *to* the end of time, but *through* the end of time and into the new heavens and earth.

7.7.1.3. This shows that the prophecy of Daniel (as given by the interpretation of the statue’s imagery) is not speaking of some (yet) future millennial reign of Christ. Daniel 2.44 is not predicting a reign of Christ on earth for 1,000 years, as some (e.g., dispensationalists) suggest.

7.7.1.4. The meaning of the growing rock in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream isn’t speaking ultimately of the period between Christ’s 1st and 2nd coming to earth, although it includes that period. The prophecy is referring to the eternal reign of Christ that began at his resurrection and will continue in an everlasting existence in the new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3.13; Rev 21.1).

7.7.1.5. Of the increase of Christ’s government and peace there shall be no end (Is 9.7).

7.8. A summary of the differences between the kingdoms of man and the Kingdom of Christ is as follows:

Comparison of the Kingdoms of Man with the Kingdom of Christ		
Attribute	Kingdoms of Man (the Statue)	Kingdom of Christ (the Rock)
1. Extent	‘World’ empires that included only a portion of the globe and of mankind	<i>Principality</i> – A universal Kingdom with a king, territory, subjects, laws, and administration
2. Existence	In the past with temporary dynasties that ceased to reign	<i>Present</i> – An ongoing ‘now’
3. Origin	Human	<i>Personal</i> – Divine
4. Durability	Temporary	<i>Permanent</i> – Indestructible
5. Ownership	Owned by man	<i>Protected</i> – Owned by God
6. Power	Weak, based on an arm of flesh	<i>Powerful</i> – All-powerful
7. Outcome	Non-existence	<i>Perpetual</i> – Eternal

8. How does Daniel conclude his explanation of the dream’s meaning? (45)

8.1. He summarizes the key aspects of the dream:

8.1.1. He reminds Nebuchadnezzar of the key elements of the dream. With very few words he summarizes all the important parts of the dream that he wishes Nebuchadnezzar to dwell upon.

8.1.2. What element of the dream is missing from the summary? Why?

8.1.2.1. There is no reference to the statue but only to the constituent pieces. The rock broke the metal components, not the statue.

8.1.2.2. This may indicate that, in spite of the impressive and fearsome image, the realms of man are nothing to be feared and nothing more than scattered dust before God and his Rock.

8.1.2.3. It is the Kingdom of the Rock that is the ultimate focus of the dream, not the passing kingdoms of man.

8.2. He refers to the divine origin of the dream:

8.2.1. He refers to god as ‘great’.

- 8.2.1.1. The modifier of ‘great’ was necessary to distinguish the true God from the gods of the pagans. In our alphabetic system we capitalize the word ‘god’ when we are referring to the true and only God. Only one form of Aramaic alphabetic symbols was available to Daniel. Upper and lower case letters were not used in the alphabetic systems in the ancient world.
 - 8.2.1.1.1. Lower case, or minuscule, letters developed from a semi-cursive style used for handwriting that eventually evolved into a minuscules alphabet by the 8th c AD.
 - 8.2.1.1.2. The two styles were used separately, majuscules for inscriptions and formal writing, and minuscules for less formal manuscripts.
 - 8.2.1.1.3. During the reign of Charlemagne, during the Carolingian Reform, the two styles were merged to create our Roman alphabet.
 - 8.2.1.1.4. The Greek alphabet went through a similar transformation process during the same period.
- 8.2.1.2. Daniel used another expression earlier to refer to the uniqueness of God: ‘God of heaven (heavens)’ (Dan 2.18, 19, 37, 44; Dan 5.23). We noted that this title was used mostly during the time of the Babylonian exile, when the prophets or writers wanted the pagan world to understand that God was different from the gods of their pantheons and that he is not earth-bound or confined to a particular realm of the created order—he is above the created order.
- 8.2.1.3. In the same way, the name ‘great God’ is used, in the OT, primarily in the context of refuting paganism:
 - 8.2.1.3.1. In English (ESV/NIV) translations: Ezra 5.8; Neh 8.6; Ps 95.3 [see also Dt 10.17; 2 Sam 7.22; etc.]).
 - 8.2.1.3.2. In Aramaic and Hebrew: Ezra 5.8 and Daniel 2.45 (אַלֹהֵי רַב) use a different word for ‘great’ than Nehemiah 8.6 (הָאֱלֹהִים הַגָּדֹל) and Psalm 95.3 (אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַגָּדֹל).
 - 8.2.1.3.3. It is used also in the NT (Acts 8.10; Titus 2.13 [μεγάλου θεοῦ]).
- 8.2.1.4. Daniel also sets up a contrast between the ‘great’ king, Nebuchadnezzar, and the great God. In effect putting Nebuchadnezzar in his place.
- 8.2.1.5. The modifier ‘great’ as used here can refer to immense, powerful, and of high status. It is probably used of God in this context as the most high all powerful God, rather than as a reference to his immense infinitude.
- 8.2.2. What is the significance of his calling God great in the historical context in which Nebuchadnezzar received his dream?
 - 8.2.2.1. The wise men of Nebuchadnezzar’s court had claimed (11) that only the gods could reveal mysteries and that they did not dwell among men (or, by implication, communicate with them)—i.e., the solution to the dream could not be known.
 - 8.2.2.2. God alone is different from all gods created by men. He is the Great God who knows all things, chooses to communicate with men, and can reveal truth. The pagan gods of the ‘wise’ men were vain idols and meaningless imaginations (Acts 17.29). They could not see, hear, or talk (Is 42.17, 18; Jer 10.3-5, 8, 14; Jer 51.17; Rev 9.20).
 - 8.2.2.3. It is the Great God alone, who can give prophetic dreams and the interpretation of dreams.
- 8.3. He declares the dream to be foretelling prophecy; as distinct from forthtelling truth, which certainly is included in the revelation of the dream and its explanation:
 - 8.3.1. The Great God who can, and does, communicate with man has revealed truth about the distant future.
 - 8.3.2. As we noted when considering Daniel’s prayer of praise (Dan 2.20-23), God can reveal true prophecy—foretelling history to be (Is 42.9; Is 44.7; Is 48.6)—not because he looks

ahead and sees what men (as free/responsible agents) will do in the future. Augustine said, “[F]uture things do not yet exist; if they do not exist, they are not. If they are not, they in no wise can be seen.”¹¹⁴ Instead, God knows they will happen because he executes his plan through the future actions of men. God knows for certain what will happen in the future because he has decreed the future. God knows the future is certain because he makes it certain (Is 46.10).

8.4. He proclaims the truth and certainty of what is foretold:

- 8.4.1. The things foretold by God are certain because they are the unfolding of his decrees (i.e., what he has declared from all eternity will happen in the space-time realm).
- 8.4.2. The things foretold by God are also certain because he is a God of truth, who cannot lie.
- 8.4.3. God is, again, represented as a unique God. The gods of the pagan pantheon were *contingent* entities who could not know the future, were capricious beings that would change their minds, and were deceptive in their relations with one another. In contrast God is certain and candid.

8.5. How does Daniel declare the true God to Nebuchadnezzar?

8.5.1. Daniel proclaims the true God in very few well-chosen words.

8.5.1.1. Truth is not strengthened or improved by the volume of the words offered—either decibels or duration of the sounds.

8.5.1.2. Truth is established by the nature of the subject of the declaration and the clarity of the argument or evidence offered.

8.5.1.3. If a proposition is true, its truth can be demonstrated easily by simple logic, verifiable fact, or reliable testimony. Truth can be defended by the elemental and the essential. For example:

8.5.1.3.1. The truth for the resurrection centres not around arguments of whether or not it is possible to resurrect a dead person but on what you do with the evidence of the empty tomb. Reliable eyewitness accounts tell us that the tomb was empty and that many saw the resurrected Jesus. You can propound alternate theories (the disciples stole the body and lied, the authorities stole the body and hid it, or Jesus was in a swoon and recovered). However, these alternate theories require convoluted and complex constructs that demand more faith to believe in than the simple and consistent evidence of the eyewitnesses’ testimony.

8.5.1.3.2. The truth of the existence of God does not rely upon arguments of probability or an appeal to men to set aside their presuppositions and to apply their innate logic to determine if there is a God.

8.5.1.3.2.1. We can use cosmological (first cause or prime mover), teleological (order, complexity, design), ontological (the greatest that can be conceived), or epistemological (we can know only as image bearers) arguments. But, in the end they make man the measure of all things, as it is man who decides whether or not there is a God.

8.5.1.3.2.2. Even the transcendental (logic, beauty, ethics make no sense without God) and moral (an objective standard) arguments, as valid as they are, appeal to man’s reason as the final arbiter of truth and the existence of God.

8.5.1.3.2.3. Rather, our approach should be similar to Daniel’s and Paul’s. They *assumed* the existence of God as presented in the Bible and expected men to accept the truth about the true God (Gen 1.1; Rom 1.18-23). All men know that there is a God and that they are accountable to him. They (Daniel

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, book 11, chapter 18.

and Paul) started from that presupposition and stated facts about God's nature and demands that all men know to be true, but choose to suppress or ignore.

8.5.2. Daniel states simply: "The true God has revealed the future, only the true God can do this. The future is certain because he is God."

8.5.3. Daniel presents four key attributes of the true God:

8.5.3.1. He is a person; he truly exists,

8.5.3.2. He is powerful (great),

8.5.3.3. He is prophetic (knowing all because he predestines all), and

8.5.3.4. He has probity (honesty, integrity, uprightness).

The modern pagan world of 21st c NA needs to hear the same message: God is, God is the almighty creator, and God communicates truth that all men must hear.

9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (Solution: 36-45)

9.1. *Communication* – God is not silent.

9.1.1. By revealing the content and meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel shows us that God is not like the imagined gods of the pagans who cannot communicate. He is also not the imagined god of the deists who wound up the universe like a clock and watches it unfold from a disinterested distance.

9.1.2. God's revelation, through Daniel, to Nebuchadnezzar shows us that God's word is not just for God's people but also for all mankind.

9.1.2.1. Men try to dismiss the Bible, and the OT in particular as the sacred writings of a particular religion or ethnic/cultural group.

9.1.2.2. They posit that other sacred writings (from the Qur'an to the Vedas) have an equal claim on mankind.

9.1.2.3. Daniel demonstrates that only the true God can reveal truth.

9.1.3. The word of God, as documented in the Bible, tells us all that we need to know for faith and life.

9.1.3.1. "Although the light of nature; and the works of creation; and providence; do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal; Himself, and to declare; that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased."¹¹⁵

9.1.3.2. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge ... that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."¹¹⁶

9.1.3.3. The word of God, in the Bible, gives us sufficient information not only about how to be saved but also how to govern and defend nations, administer justice,

¹¹⁵ "Of the Holy Scripture," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 1, para. 1.

¹¹⁶ "Of the Holy Scripture," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 1, para. 6.

- regulate economies, conduct business, execute our professional duties, manage our families, educate our children, care for the health and welfare needs of those dependent upon us, and participate in recreational activities.
- 9.1.3.4. The Bible is to be not only the sourcebook for Christian faith, but also the guidebook for all that we undertake as rational, volitional and social beings.
- 9.1.3.5. This view of Scripture permeated the thinking of the Reformers, but is foreign to most men, including Christians, today:
- 9.1.3.5.1. Preaching throughout the Church today is largely not based on an exegesis of Scripture but on general concepts of morality or prudence.
- 9.1.3.5.2. ‘Christian’ counselling follows the guidelines of the ‘scientific’ understanding of man’s psychology rather than God’s teachings of how sinful man thinks and operates (e.g., in Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, the Psalms, and Romans 1.18-32).
- 9.1.3.5.3. Laws governing behaviour are not based on Biblical prudence, let alone Biblical directives. Rather, they are based on theories of man’s nature (e.g., innate goodness, only needing to be educated), and justice and equity that have been developed by political scientists and philosophers who have an explicit antagonism to Christianity.
- 9.1.3.5.4. Lifestyle choices are not based on Biblical standards but on feelings and popular cultural trends.
- 9.1.4. Just as God communicated the future to Nebuchadnezzar, through Daniel, so he communicates the future to us through the Bible.
- 9.1.4.1. Future events that we need general information about, but about which God does not deem it necessary for us to know specifics:
- 9.1.4.1.1. Which kingdoms will arise and which pagan leaders will challenge the Church. The remaining (unfulfilled) prophecies about the future in the Bible are not given so that we can discern which specific world leader is the antichrist.
- 9.1.4.1.2. Economic events, wars, natural disasters, times of spiritual declension, etc. We have general guidance in Scripture that teaches us that there will be times of falling away and times of revival.
- 9.1.4.1.3. Our personal life. Some people in the past have been given specific information about life-events (e.g., the duration of their lives), or about the way that they would die. But, we are given only general information: God will care for us and take us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and deliver us safely into the hands of Christ.
- 9.1.4.2. Future events about which we need to know about with more precision, and which are predicted in the Bible, include:
- 9.1.4.2.1. Death is certain for all—unless Christ returns first (Heb 9.27; 1 Thess 4.15)
- 9.1.4.2.2. Christ’s return—suddenly without signs and warnings (1 Thess 4.16-17; 1 Thess 5.2-3)
- 9.1.4.2.3. The Judgement Day—in which all men will stand accountable before God with respect to what they have done with his Christ (Jn 5.26-29; Acts 17.31; 2 Cor 5.10; Heb 9.27)
- 9.1.4.2.4. The renovation of the created realm in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pt 3.13)
- 9.1.4.2.5. The general resurrection of all mankind—some to eternal life in Heaven and the rest to everlasting death in Hell (Jn 5.28-29).
- 9.1.5. We have a revelation of God that is perfect in the account of the living Word and in the written word delivered by the Holy Spirit through human writers. We know what God requires of us and must believe it and act upon it.

9.2. *Control* – God controls all things.

9.2.1. The gods of the pagans were very small gods. They were assigned areas of responsibility such as control over the oceans, crops, storms, wind, crafts, etc. The god of men today, even of many Christians is also a very small god.

9.2.1.1. ‘Atheists’ who set up a ‘straw man’ god to attack, limit god by proposing that he must have had a beginning or that he cannot have valid reasons for permitting/decreeing suffering.

9.2.1.2. The gods of false religions today, including the gods of Judaism and Islam, are poor imitations of the true God. They are limited and contingent and not infinite, eternal, unchangeable, tri-personal, all-wise, almighty, totally holy, loving and just.

9.2.1.3. The god of the Deists is a meaningless figment of man’s imagination who is limited to giving the universe its creative spark and putting in place some nebulous ‘laws’ that allow chance, Evolution and autonomous man to create the future.

9.2.1.4. Christians limit God by believing (preaching/teaching) that he:

9.2.1.4.1. Could not have created the universe in six days, ~6000 years ago, as he declares

9.2.1.4.2. Could not have caused the earth to turn back for part of day because reversing the inertial mass of the earth would have caused massive destruction

9.2.1.4.3. Has no right to elect some to salvation and predestine others to damnation

9.2.1.4.4. Cannot know (and predestine) what humans are going to do next, in exact detail

9.2.1.4.5. Cannot save us unless we choose to be saved

9.2.1.4.6. Doesn’t know what is best for each of us, and is working his plan for the good of his people

9.2.1.4.7. Cannot dictate what practices are right in our lives and in our worship of him.

9.2.2. The dream given to Nebuchadnezzar reveals true attributes of God and demonstrates in particular that he controls the:

9.2.2.1. Lives of every person in every nation, whether king or pauper, and raises up whom he wishes and dismisses them again, in his time. God is the ultimate king-maker, not parents (dynastic fathers), popes, political parties, or the people.

9.2.2.2. Future by unfolding his precise plan. God does more than foretell the future, he makes it come to fruition.

9.2.2.3. Vibration of every molecule. He holds the physical universe together, and continues to permit our existence; all by pure thought (Acts 17.28; Col 1.17).

9.2.3. Men say in their heart there is no God, but they are fools (Ps 14.1) who exchange the glory of the immortal God for idols based on created entities or figments of their imaginations (Rom 1.23). There is a God. He is larger and more powerful than we (any of us) can imagine or think. We must not be practical atheists—that is living as if God does not interact intimately with his created order, minute by minute. We need to believe and trust in the true God, the one who controls all things (Rom 8.28-30).

9.3. *Christ* – Christ’s kingdom is dominant.

9.3.1. The kingdom represented by the stone is the one that conquers all other kingdoms, grows to fill the whole earth, and endures to the end of history and into an everlasting existence.

9.3.2. The kingdom of the Rock, Jesus Christ is (44):

9.3.2.1. *Principality* – It has a king, Jesus; a territory, the whole earth; subjects, believers from all nations (and all mankind in a second sense); laws, as given in Scripture; and an administration through Church officers and civil magistrates.

- 9.3.2.2. *Present* – The Kingdom of Christ exists now. It is not a future kingdom, although it has a glorious future. We live in the Kingdom age, the last days, before Christ comes to remove out of his Kingdom all manner of evil, purify it, and present it to the Father as his glorious bride.
- 9.3.2.3. *Personal* – The Kingdom of the Rock was not set up by human hands. It is directly established by God himself in the person of the God-man, Jesus.
- 9.3.2.4. *Permanent* – The Kingdom is an eternal kingdom that will last longer than the Persian Empire (it is claimed that it lasted 2,500 years) or the Roman Empire (700+ years; 625 BC or 241BC to 476 AD), or any nation will ever last.
- 9.3.2.5. *Protected* – The kingdoms of this earth are scattered before the Kingdom of Christ. They become nothing but dust that is blown away. Nations rise up and destroy other nations, and in turn are destroyed by other nations. But, the Kingdom of Christ can never be defeated and will never stop growing until Jesus has brought every person into his Kingdom that he died for on the cross.
- 9.3.2.6. *Powerful* – The Kingdom of Christ breaks into every nation and conquers it. It may not seem that way with Europe and NA, which were once permeated with Christian principles, heading back to paganism and absorbing false forms monotheism. However, God breaks down kingdoms in his time. He may yet have great plans for destroying Islam through mass conversions in the ME and he may yet conquer secular humanism in the first-world. Regardless of his specific plans for nations, the kingdom of Satan has been defeated and is in decline.
- 9.3.2.7. *Perpetual* – The Kingdom is eternal; it will endure through the end of time and into an everlasting existence.
- 9.3.3. We are part of Christ's amazing, conquering, kingdom. Rejoice!
- 9.4. *Conclusion* – World-dominating kingdoms of men are poor imitations of Christ's kingdom, and they have had their day.
 - 9.4.1. The destruction of the statue made of materials of value to men—gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay—is a sign that idolatry is being destroyed by the Kingdom of Jesus. As idolatry and the kingdom of Satan are being destroyed, the Kingdom of Christ is growing.
 - 9.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom stands as the representative of all pagan, anti-God systems (religious, philosophical, economic, and scientific), governments, cultures, and civilizations. It was the ultimate tyranny among men, binding men to Satan and Hell. In contrast, the Kingdom of Christ sets men free (Is 61.1; Jn 8.32; Rom 6.14-18; Rom 8.2, 15).
 - 9.4.3. The kingdoms of men conquered ruthlessly and dominated their subjects' bodies and souls. In contrast, Jesus lovingly draws all men into his kingdom (Jn 12.32).
 - 9.4.4. During the age of empires, power was consolidated into the hands of a relatively few emperors and kings. Man has always had an aspiration to form empires and unite people in opposition to God:
 - 9.4.4.1. Starting at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11.4-6), shortly after the Flood around 2350 BC, men wanted to form one people. During the years leading up to the time of Christ there were at any one time fewer than ten large empires throughout the world (Mediterranean, Middle East, Indus Valley, Far East, Meso-America).
 - 9.4.4.2. Around 400 AD much of Europe and the Mediterranean world was under the control of Rome, the Sassanid Empire controlled the Middle East, the Kingdom of Ghana and the Axumite Kingdom controlled civilized Africa, the Kushan States were south of Russia, the Gupta Empire covered Pakistan and northern India, the Pallava Confederacy ruled in southern India, the Sung Empire dominated much of China; and there were empires in eastern Russia (northern China), Japan, SE Asia, Melanesia, and Mexico (Mayan). Most of mankind was

- under the control of fewer than 20 kings.
- 9.4.4.3. Around 1600 AD the world was under the control of probably 30 major kingdoms; ranging from the Aztec and Incan Empires to the British and Spanish Empires, to the Ottoman Empire, Persian and Mongol Empires and the Ming Dynasty in China, and extending to the kingdoms in Siam and beyond.
- 9.4.4.4. Today, 87% of the world's population lives in the top fifty countries by population (67% live in the top 11 countries, with populations of over 100,000,000). There are however, about 220 recognized countries in the world.
- 9.4.4.5. Men have tried to consolidate control of men by men into single empires. Yet, control has been fragmenting: from ~6 empires in 1000 to 500 BC, 20 empires in 400 AD, ~30 Empires in 1600, and 50 'empires' around 2010 (with 200+ countries).
- 9.4.4.6. Notwithstanding the UN, the world is fragmenting politically, not consolidating.
- 9.4.4.7. In contrast the Kingdom of Christ, that began (in the NT age, not including the believing Jews of the OT era) from a small band of disciples and represented about .002% (5,000/250,000,000) of the world's population a year, or so, after his resurrection has grown to represent approximately 30% of the world's population.
- 9.4.5. Even the greatest of these kingdoms/empires decays. The Babylonian, Mede and Persian, Greek and Roman Empires are nothing more than pages in history books and fragments of clay in museum cases.
- 9.4.5.1. The Persians claim that their dynasty lasted 2,500 years from Cyrus until the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (the Shah of Iran in 1971. But even it came to an end under the tyranny of Islamic mullahs (whether in the 8th century or 20th century).
- 9.4.5.2. "Eternal Rome was a byword for centuries and the Roman emperors continually emphasized that idea."¹¹⁷ Coins minted in London in the early fourth century during the reign of Constantine had the words "To Eternal Rome" engraved on them. Yet, about 100 years later the city of Rome was sacked; in 410 AD by Alaric, king of the Visigoths; in 455 by Geiseric, king of the Vandals; and finally depopulated by Totila, king of the Ostrogoths, during the war between the Ostrogoths and the Byzantines. The remnants of the Roman Empire, which had been in a steady decline for centuries, eventually disappeared with the raise of Islam and the capture of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, by the Ottoman Empire in 1453.
- 9.4.5.3. Hitler had pretensions of setting up an enduring Third Reich (Empire)¹¹⁸ through world conquest.¹¹⁹ As we know, 1945's defeat of the Nazis ended that hubris.
- 9.4.5.4. Some in the US seem to believe that America is the new 'eternal empire', even if they don't make pretentious and preposterous claims to its perpetual endurance.¹²⁰ For example, "As we celebrate the birth of the American Republic, can we all stop predicting its death? It's getting depressing. ... The U.S. is not only the wealthiest and most powerful country on earth now, but in all of history. There's never been a better time and place to be alive than America in the 21st century." The author of this article is a professor of history at Saint Louis University and author of *Empires of Trust: How Rome Built – And America Is Building – A New World*.
- 9.4.5.5. In contrast, the Kingdom of Christ *is* building a new world order that *is*

¹¹⁷ Louis C. West. "Imperial Publicity on Coins of the Roman Emperors, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Oct., 1949), pp. 19-26.

¹¹⁸ *Das Dritte Reich* (The Third Empire) with the Holy Roman Empire as the first and the 1871-1918 monarchy as the second.

¹¹⁹ Mark Grimsley, *What If Hitler Had Won World War II?*; warhistorian.org/grimsley-hitler-wins-what-if.pdf

¹²⁰ Thomas F. Madden, "America's Days Aren't Numbered," *Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 2008, p. A11.

everlasting.

9.4.6. The destruction of the kingdoms of this earth by the Kingdom of Christ informs us that we never need to worry about men setting up a world government.

9.4.6.1. The age of world-dominating human governments has passed. We are now in the Kingdom age when Christ's kingdom dominates.

9.4.6.2. Some argue against this view by pointing to Revelation 13.16-18). We cannot take the time now to consider in detail this, essentially, dispensational/premillennial view. However there are alternate and probably more valid and accurate explanations, such as:

9.4.6.2.1. The bulk of what is recorded in Revelation applied to the generation for which it was written and the events prophesied (probably through chapter 18) referred to the Roman Empire.¹²¹

9.4.6.2.2. The beast symbolizes governments in general throughout history that persecute the Church.¹²²

9.4.6.3. However, it does not follow that Christian's should not work against the creation of world governments.

9.4.6.3.1. We need to be ever vigilant because people have aspirations to create world governments (e.g., the United Nations, world courts and legislative bodies for all nations) and we need to challenge them as direct usurpers of Christ's Kingdom.

9.4.6.3.2. At minimum, we need to fight against these movements to keep them from wasting (usually taxed) resources on futile schemes, and we need to resist the movements because of the damage to human freedoms and the Church that will result as they try to execute their programs (e.g., instituting programs to silence criticism of religion—meaning Islam).

9.4.6.3.3. We also have to point out the logical contradiction in the thinking of those who claim that a world government will be better than the governments that are in place today: "Why should we presume that would-be governors of the globe will be essentially different from other kinds of governors? And why should we expect that politics will improve merely by pouring it into different containers, especially when these new vessels also divide people and keep them unequal? The nation-state, for all its faults, at least provides a structure in which governors and the governed are presumed to belong to the same polity. This has not precluded terrible atrocities, the worst typically inflicted on stateless people after they have been stripped of their citizenship. International and nongovernmental organizations can provide aid, but if they are to offer a better alternative, they must surmount a critical flaw: a constitutional inability to answer to the people they profess to serve."¹²³

9.4.6.4. Regardless of what men attempt to do in setting up world governments, we do not need to fear. God will never allow their schemes to succeed.

9.5. *Confidence* – We can be confident in all that God does and says.

9.5.1. Daniel knew he had the solution to the mystery of the dream. He went into the king confidently and proclaimed truth. We can trust God's word in the same way. We have the word of truth in the Bible.

9.5.2. We should never be ashamed of what the Bible says and attempt to reconcile it with 'science' or 'archaeology', 'psychology' or 'religion'. The Bible is without error and its

¹²¹ Kenneth Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation* (Tyler, Tx, Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

¹²² William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1982).

¹²³ Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception – The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, Harvard, 2008) p. 380.

description of creation, history, human psychology, and theology, are truth not requiring rationalizations, compromise, or external validation. Whatever God has revealed we can depend upon.

- 9.5.2.1. When ‘science’ claims the world is 4.5B years old we can respond, in spite of the scorn, with the fact that God created it ~6,000 years ago.
- 9.5.2.2. When ‘history’ says there was no king named Ahasuerus (book of Esther) and that he cannot be identified. We can confidently say that there was a king who ruled Persia who the Jews called Ahasuerus by the Jews.
- 9.5.2.3. When ‘archaeology’ claims there is no evidence of the fall of Jericho’s walls in the strata presumed to be from around 1400 BC, we can declare with certainty that Joshua and the army of Israel brought down the walls with the blast of many trumpets.
- 9.5.2.4. We can also confidently believe and state that God made the sun stand still when Joshua fought against the enemies of the Gibeonites, regardless of the supposed impossibility of stopping the earth’s revolution because of its inertial mass.
- 9.5.2.5. When ‘psychology’ says that man is innately good and needs only state-funded education to become a useful citizen of world with a ‘green’ conscience and a spirit of ‘tolerance of diversity’; we can respond with the truth, stating that man is a seriously depraved sinner who needs to repent of sin and believe in Jesus as saviour before he can do anything that approaches being good.
- 9.5.2.6. When the mainstream media claim that all religions are essentially the same and that any one of the three ‘monotheistic’ religions (Christianity, Judaism, or Islam) can be looked to for moral principles, we must stand on the uniqueness of Jesus the God-man, the Trinitarian unity of the Godhead, and the absolute Biblical standard for morality summarized in the Ten Commandments.
- 9.5.3. We must not think of the Bible as a series of isolated texts that give us moral moments or salvation snippets. We need to see the Bible as a unified whole, that provides an absolutely unique outlook on all areas of life. The word of God is true and can be trusted in every dimension in which it speaks, from the creation of the universe to human psychology, from how to deal with poverty to the roles of husband and wives, from personal property rights to provisions for restitution of crimes.
- 9.5.4. Trust the word of God, as given in the Bible, with total confidence!

Selection (Dan 2.46-49)

- 1. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the resolution of the mystery of his dream?
 - 1.1. He honoured Daniel and God. We will consider first his honouring of Daniel.
 - 1.2. He honoured Daniel in a number of ways: bowing in worship before him, offering incense in worship to him, giving gifts to him, promoting him above the other magistrates, and making him the chief of the wise men. In summary, we can say that Daniel received:
 - 1.2.1. *Prestige* – high honour and recognition among men, including honour from the most mighty monarch of all time.
 - 1.2.2. *Property* – wealth and material rewards.
 - 1.2.3. *Power* – authority over both the civil rulers of a significant territory and over the advisors to the king.
 - 1.2.4. Maslow, in his theory of human motivation suggested a five-tier hierarchy of human needs that people seek to fill. An adaptation of his theory, is as follows:
 - 1.2.4.1. People first strive (sometime with desperation) to meet their *physiological* needs (e.g., air, food, water) and to stay alive.
 - 1.2.4.2. Once those essential needs are met, people work on meeting their *physical* needs (e.g., clothing and shelter, health) and the material means (income or wealth) of providing for the physical needs. If one of their physical means is deficient they will expend resources on attempting to fill the need. For example, a wealthy

- person who has cancer will spend a significant amount of his wealth trying to fight the cancer.
- 1.2.4.3. Once the basic needs are met, people begin to work on achieving their *psychological* needs (e.g., friendship, intimate love).
 - 1.2.4.4. Then follows pressure for people to fill the need for *prestige*. This includes seeking self-esteem, meaning from work, and honour and recognition from others.
 - 1.2.4.5. Above these are *philosophical* needs that include a sense of creativity and independence of mind, intellectual growth, and a desire to live a moral life.
- 1.2.5. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not based on a Biblical psychology or morality.
- 1.2.5.1. It is a reasonable analysis of the hierarchy of needs or general goals of many sinful men.
 - 1.2.5.2. However, natural men, steeped in original sin, often do not rise above their basic needs. Many people are content to live as brute-beasts once their physiological and physical needs are met. For example, they would be content to eat, drink, copulate and be entertained indefinitely, if they didn't have to work.
 - 1.2.5.3. Some unbelieving men sensing God's presence through the innate knowledge in them (Rom 1.18-20) know that man was called to a higher purpose and incorrectly seek meaning in power and prestige. They find these unrewarding and yet continually quest for more, for example:
 - 1.2.5.3.1. A dictator over a small principality is not happy unless his territory is being expanded by conquest.
 - 1.2.5.3.2. A pop entertainer isn't content to have just the cheering crowds at a concert but wants her name on the tip of every teen's tongue.
 - 1.2.5.4. Believers, on the other hand, will often place the highest level 'needs' in Maslow's hierarchy above some of their basic needs, defying Maslow's theory. For example:
 - 1.2.5.4.1. A monk or missionary might be willing to give up intimate family relationships, a secure food supply, or comfortable accommodation for the sake of preaching Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11.16-32).
 - 1.2.5.4.2. A Pastor might be willing to forgo his freedom and to be jailed or put to death for proclaiming truth about Christ in opposition to false religious practices (Dan 1.8; Dan 3.18; Acts 4.10-13, 19).
- 1.2.6. Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel rewards that, from a human perspective, are the most that men can achieve.
- 1.2.6.1. Daniel's peers and contemporaries would have envied his property, power, and prestige. From their perspective what more could he have wanted?
 - 1.2.6.2. In the context of the ancient paganistic, absolute dictatorship, even with these rewards a man did not have his real needs met—the ability to know and worship the true God.
 - 1.2.6.3. Daniel, in contrast, already had moral accountability, knew the true God, and was determined to worship the true God alone. This placed Daniel in a unique position above the rewards given to him.
 - 1.2.6.3.1. We know that Daniel did not let these rewards possess him and lose a proper perspective on reality since he continued to take a stand for God and his truth in the face of the world's most powerful monarchs throughout his life.
 - 1.2.6.3.2. Approximately sixty years later (~603-539 BC) Daniel showed that he had no interest in temporal rewards that kings could give (Dan 5.17).
 - 1.2.6.3.3. Daniel as a true believer in God and expecting the coming Messiah (i.e., a Christian) would have believed the rewards from God to be far better than anything that could be given to him in this world (Ps 37.16;

- Mt 5.12; Acts 5.41; 2 Cor 6.10; 2 Cor 12.10; Eph 1.18; Heb 11.26, 39).
- 1.3. We will consider, shortly, Nebuchadnezzar's honouring Daniel with worship and his promoting Daniel into two powerful positions. At this point, let's consider only the honour of *property* that Nebuchadnezzar gave to Daniel.
 - 1.4. What gifts might the king have given to Daniel?
 - 1.4.1. The text says simply 'many great gifts'.
 - 1.4.2. The gifts probably included a large villa or palace, lands producing food and income, suits of clothing, gold and jewels, and servants.
 - 1.4.3. These would have been the minimum required resources of a person in his position as governor of the province of Babylon and overseer of the wise men.
 - 1.5. Why did Nebuchadnezzar give these honours to Daniel?
 - 1.5.1. He kept his promise (6).
 - 1.5.2. He was so thankful for having received the interpretation of the dream that had troubled him and caused him to lose sleep (1, 3), that he wanted to reward the person who had lifted this burden from him.
 - 1.5.3. He had nothing better with which to reward Daniel.
 - 1.5.3.1. He couldn't reward Daniel with something that would appeal to an enlightened, intellectually superior believer who was not duped by superstitious paganism.
 - 1.5.3.2. He couldn't offer Daniel valuable information in exchange for the information he had given the king.
 - 1.5.3.3. He couldn't teach Daniel anything about the ultimate meaning of life.
 - 1.5.3.4. He couldn't give Daniel spiritual insight. Solomon gave this kind of award to those who came to him, such as the Queen of Sheba (1 Ki 10.6-8), but Nebuchadnezzar was, comparatively an intellectual and spiritual pauper, and the best that he had to offer was that which would decay and pass into oblivion (Mt 6.19-21).
 2. How did Nebuchadnezzar honour Daniel with worship? (46)
 - 2.1. He fell down prostrate (with his face on the ground) and commanded that incense be offered to Daniel. Why?
 - 2.1.1. He realized that he was in the presence of God and/or God's true messenger, and was prepared to think of Daniel as a god or at least god-like.
 - 2.1.2. It was customary in the AME to honour kings by falling prostrate before them and to pay them homage as if they were divine. Nebuchadnezzar sensed that he was in the presence of someone, or something, greater than himself.
 - 2.1.3. Some commentators suggest that Nebuchadnezzar did not worship Daniel. They point to Alexander the Great falling before the high priest in Jerusalem. When asked by Parmenio why he bowed before a priest of the Jews when all men bowed to him as king, Alexander said, "I did not adore him, but that God who hath honoured him with his high priesthood."¹²⁴
 - 2.2. Why is Nebuchadnezzar's response surprising?
 - 2.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar gave an honour to a man that would normally have been reserved only for the gods of Babylon.
 - 2.2.2. It is incredible to think that the most powerful monarch in the world would be humbled in any way before a man, especially a young man who was a Hebrew captive/slave.
 - 2.2.3. It is even reasonable to think that Nebuchadnezzar would have been angry with Daniel who prophesied of the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, instead of worshiping him. Kings have killed messengers for bringing news of less importance than that their aspirations to set up eternal kingdoms would fail.
 - 2.3. What is the significance of incense being offered to Daniel?

¹²⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 11; chapter 8, paragraph 5; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-11.htm.

- 2.3.1. Incense is an aromatic paste or powder made with tree resins, gums, spices, oils and mineral salts. When burned, incense releases a fragrant or pungent smoke.
- 2.3.2. Incense was used in religious ceremonies, e.g., in purification rites, during prophetic utterances when some formulas were used to cause intoxication, and to invoke the spirits of the departed. It was used in the ceremonies of every religion with a recorded history from Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Arabia, India, China, Japan, Greece, Rome, Mexico, Peru, etc. This is probably a cultural memory based on the ‘pleasing aroma’ of Noah’s sacrifice (Gen 8.21).
- 2.3.3. In this case, the offering of incense was probably viewed as an oblation—a simple form of sacrifice or offering to Daniel. The aroma and smoke from the burning incense would have been considered an honour. It is possible that the composition of the incense was very expensive and that the consumption of the expensive incense in smoke was considered to be an extravagant honour—an honour for a god.
- 2.3.4. The first explicit mention of incense in the Bible is in Exodus 25.6.
 - 2.3.4.1. There is no reference to incense being offered in the worship of Jehovah/Yahweh in the period of the patriarchs. In general, we take the view that if there is silence about an element of worship then it was not used; but we cannot be sure.
 - 2.3.4.2. There may be a reference to incense burning in Genesis 15.17.
 - 2.3.4.3. If incense was not used in the worship of the patriarchs, then Moses introduced it for use in the Tabernacle, under God’s direction. This raises the question of whether a religious practice of the pagan religions was taken over and included in the worship of God. It is simpler to explain God’s inclusion of ceremonial practices (like sacrificing animals) when they appear first in the true religion and then imitations appear in other religions, than to explain why God would have incorporated a practice used in pagan religions.
- 2.3.5. The use of incense in the OT worship symbolized somewhat different things than when it was used in pagan religions. Incense burning in the true religion, as mentioned in the Bible, symbolized the following:
 - 2.3.5.1. Atonement (Num 16.46-47)
 - 2.3.5.2. Prayer (Ps 141.2; Mal 1.11; Rev 5.8; Rev 8.3, 4).
- 2.3.6. In addition, the incense used in the OT Tabernacle and Temple was composed of a unique mix of: spices, stacte, galbanum, and frankincense (all three are tree gum resins), onycha (ground seashells), and salt (Ex 30:34-35).
- 2.3.7. We are not to use incense today in worship of God because:
 - 2.3.7.1. It was associated with the sacrificial system of the OT economy which has been replaced with spiritual equivalents since Christ offered himself as the final sacrifice.
 - 2.3.7.2. Incense burning was a physical type associated with a spiritual antitype, prayer. We use only the spiritual elements of worship, unless Jesus has given specific instruction otherwise—for example with the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper and water in baptism.
 - 2.3.7.3. We have no warrant to continue the use of incense as there is no instruction to use it or example of its use in the NT Apostolic Church assemblies.
- 2.4. What are some examples of men attempting to honour men (or angels) as if they were divine?
 - 2.4.1. Egyptians worshiped their kings as divinities.¹²⁵
 - 2.4.2. Julius Caesar received many political and military honours and received religious honours. Apparently (the sources disagree) he was deified in his lifetime. This appears to have been an event never before seen in Roman history since until then the only human the Romans worshipped as a god was the (semi-)mythical Romulus.
 - 2.4.3. Cornelius attempted to worship Peter, and Peter told him not to do it because he was also

¹²⁵ eawc.evansville.edu/essays/howard.htm and www.touregypt.net/featurestories/royalcults.htm.

- a man (Acts 10.25-26).
- 2.4.4. In Lystra Paul healed a crippled man and the people wanted to worship him as Hermes and Barnabas as Zeus. Paul tried to restrain the people by informing them that he and Barnabas were also men (Acts 14.11-18).
- 2.4.5. When John fell at the feet of the angel to worship, the angel told him not to do it because he also was a servant, and told him to worship God only (Rev 19.10; Rev 22.8-9).
- 2.4.6. One example that stands out was October 1st, 1999 in Edmonton. The Edmonton Oilers and the NHL officially retired the number 99 before 17,000 adoring fans who bid farewell to the greatest hockey player in the history of Hockey—Wayne Gretzky. I recall watching that event on TV and seeing someone holding up a sign in the background which read “Gretzky is God.”
- 2.5. Why was it wrong for Nebuchadnezzar to honour Daniel in this way?
- 2.5.1. God alone is to be worshiped (1 Sam 7.3; Mt 4.10).
- 2.5.2. We are not to worship men or angels (Acts 10.25-26; Acts 14.11-18; Rev 19.10; Rev 22.8-9).
- 2.5.3. Men (and angels) are creatures.
- 2.5.4. Mordecai refused to bow before Haman (Esther 3.2-5). This may indicate that it is wrong to bow before kings (and any man).
- 2.6. Even though it was wrong for Nebuchadnezzar to worship Daniel, it was God’s plan to begin humbling him:
- 2.6.1. God had begun the process of revealing his mighty power to Nebuchadnezzar. There are additional events yet to follow in Daniel’s account that are going to strengthen God’s witness to Nebuchadnezzar of his (God’s) greatness.
- 2.6.2. God brought a proud potentate to his knees before another man.
- 2.6.3. God had a Gentile bowing at the feet of a Jew. This may be a prophetic symbol of the Gentiles bowing before the Jewish Messiah, Jesus.
- 2.7. How did Daniel responded to this attempt to worship him?
- 2.7.1. We are not told, but we can surmise his reaction based on what we already know about Daniel.
- 2.7.2. What key aspects of his character are particularly relevant?
- 2.7.2.1. He was a man of prayer. He worshiped the true God (Dan 2.18-23)
- 2.7.2.2. He knew that God alone was worthy of worship (Dan 2.27-28)
- 2.7.2.3. He declared that honour belongs to God (Dan 2.30)
- 2.7.2.4. He did not consider himself more important or better than his peers (Dan 2.17, 49)
- 2.7.2.5. He would not defile himself with false worship (Dan 1.8).
- 2.7.3. We can reasonably conclude that Daniel refused the honours that were offered to him. He probably refused the honour in a similar way as Paul did when he spoke to the people of Lystra and the angel did when he spoke to John: “I am a man (creature) just like you, you should offer worship to the God of Heaven only.”
- 2.7.4. Why is this refusal not recorded in the account?
- 2.7.4.1. It is probably not recorded because Daniel, as the author of this account, is not seeking to bring honour to himself but to God. He mentions things about himself only as they are important to bring out what God did in humbling the kings of the ancient world empires.
3. What confession did Nebuchadnezzar make? (47)
- 3.1. Nebuchadnezzar explicitly acknowledged that Daniel’s God was:
- 3.1.1. Superior to all the gods of Babylon
- 3.1.2. The supreme ruler over all kings of the earth
- 3.1.3. The only one who could reveal mysteries
- 3.2. What additional, implicit, confessions does Nebuchadnezzar make?

- 3.2.1. Since he acknowledged that Daniel's God was superior to pagan idols, he also acknowledged that God is real. The only way that a God could be greater than idols is not if he were another idol but if he is the one true God.
 - 3.2.1.1. Daniel's God acts, knows (sees), speaks. Idols do not think, hear, speak, or act.
 - 3.2.1.2. He put down his own god by saying that God is greater. His god was either:
 - 3.2.1.2.1. Bel (Dan 4.8) or Marduk, the chief god in the Babylonian pantheon; the god of water (storms), vegetation, and judgement.
 - 3.2.1.2.2. Nabu, since his name includes a reference to Nabu.
- 3.2.2. Since he acknowledged that God is the ruler over earthly kings, he also acknowledged that God is above all the highest rational creatures (kings); therefore, he is the almighty Creator. He accepted the fact that even he, the greatest king on earth, was subject to God.
- 3.2.3. Since he acknowledged that God is the only one who can reveal mysteries, he also acknowledged that God is a God who is all-knowing and wise, and who communicates. To be a God who can know things and communicate them he must be more than a force and, therefore, a personal God.
 - 3.2.3.1. If Nebuchadnezzar's god is Nabu, this is also a put down to Nabu, who was the Babylonian god of wisdom.
- 3.2.4. So, Nebuchadnezzar made a confession as follows: Daniel's God is the one true God who is the all-powerful creator of this universe, a personal God who is sovereign over the lives of all his creatures.
- 3.3. What may be a limiting factor in his confession?
 - 3.3.1. He referred to God as 'your God'.
 - 3.3.1.1. This may indicate that he had in mind a tribal god—the god of the Jews as distinct from his gods. He may have only acknowledged that one tribal god is better than another.
 - 3.3.1.2. However, it is also possible that he used the expression in another way, "the God you believe in is ..."
 - 3.3.2. Note, 'your' is plural. This may mean that he is speaking of the God of Daniel and his three friends, or the God of the Jews collectively.
- 3.4. Was Nebuchadnezzar's confession true?
 - 3.4.1. Yes, it probably was a true confession. He probably truly believed what he was saying about God.
 - 3.4.2. Does this mean that his confession was a saving confession? No, for the following reasons:
 - 3.4.2.1. He was acknowledging what he already knew in his inner being since all men know that God is God even though they suppress that truth (Rom 1.18-23). He was acknowledging nothing more than what all men know innately because God has implanted the knowledge in his image-bearers.
 - 3.4.2.2. We can be sure that the devils in Hell can make the same confession (James 2.19). They know that God is a personal God who is the almighty creator and sovereign over the created realm. Knowing this they tremble. But their confession is not a saving confession because they hate God.
 - 3.4.2.3. This confession was not the result of a change of heart that led to a confession of sin and a change of behaviour in Nebuchadnezzar. As we will see in chapter 4 God has to humble Nebuchadnezzar further to bring him *closer* to true repentance and a change of heart. [We will determine when we look at chapter 4, if Nebuchadnezzar made a saving profession of faith.]
 - 3.4.2.4. Salvation requires not only confession of sin but also a belief in Jesus as saviour. The OT Jews who were true believers understood, through the types of the sacrificial system, that the Messiah would provide their salvation. Nebuchadnezzar needed to declare that Jesus is Lord—the Saviour is Lord—in order to make a complete confession there must be belief in the facts about God,

faith as trust in God as saviour, and repentance of sin.

4. To what position(s) was Daniel promoted? (48, 49)
 - 4.1. He was given two positions of highest authority:
 - 4.1.1. He was made governor over the entire province of Babylon.
 - 4.1.1.1. Babylon likely had more than a dozen provinces (some of the provinces, beside Babylon, may have been: Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Celicia, Accad, Sumer, etc.).
 - 4.1.1.2. At the time of Esther (Ahasuerus/Darius I Hystaspes¹²⁶ reigned from 522-486 BC), the Persian Empire had 127 provinces (Est 1:1; Est 9:30). But it covered a much larger geographic extent (including territory to near the Indus River).
 - 4.1.2. He was made the chief administrator over the wise men of Babylon. In Canada, this would be a bit like holding the position of Ontario Premier and also sitting on the Canadian Supreme Court as the chief justice.
 - 4.2. What power might have accompanied his promotion to governor of the province of Babylon?
 - 4.2.1. He likely also had authority over the city of Babylon
 - 4.2.2. Being governor of the chief province in the Empire, he may have been second in command over the entire Empire. When the king was absent (e.g., leading a military campaign) Daniel may have acted as the representative of the entire government of the Empire.
 - 4.3. What power might have accompanied his promotion to chief administrator over the wise men?
 - 4.3.1. He would likely have been the chief advisor/counsellor to the king.
 - 4.3.1.1. The (Aramaic) text says, literally (end of 49): “and Daniel at opening of king”. This can be translated as “and Daniel was at the king’s gate/door”. This is likely an idiom indicating that Daniel served in the king’s court.
 - 4.3.2. The wise men of Babylon would have been under his direction.
 - 4.3.2.1. This raises the question of what role Daniel had relative to the religious rituals, divinations, astrology, and sorcery of the wise men.
 - 4.3.2.2. It is undoubtedly true that Daniel kept clear of their pagan practices.
 - 4.3.2.3. How he was able to do this, we aren’t told.
 - 4.3.2.3.1. God gave Daniel such wisdom that his advice was always sound and the king sought it out, over the advice of his pagan counsellors.
 - 4.3.2.3.2. Daniel may have simply refused to participate in pagan practices and absented himself when they were being performed.
 - 4.3.2.3.3. He may have refused to organize events, festivals, and ceremonies that were required, under Babylonian religion. The king, knowing Daniel’s stand on conscience and having respect for his capabilities would have delegated these tasks to others.
 - 4.3.2.3.4. It is also possible that during the ~40 years that Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar he was able to have such an influence that the majority of the pagan practices were kept out of the court.
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 - 4.4. Why are these promotions important?
 - 4.4.1. God prepared his man to be in a key position of authority in the pagan empire so that when Jerusalem was destroyed (586 BC) and the Jews taken into captivity (597 BC and 586 BC) there was someone able to watch over their welfare.
 - 4.4.1.1. Daniel was probably able to advise as to the re-location of the people so that families and communities were able to be kept together and not scattered throughout the Empire.
 - 4.4.1.2. Daniel was probably able to provide for the needs of those who came out of Judea in extreme poverty and hardship and enable them to get re-established.

¹²⁶ Claimed to be Xerxes I (486-465 BC) by most commentators; however, See, “The Identity of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther” in Floyd Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 199-205.

- 4.4.2. What are other examples of godly people who were in important government positions and were able to protect the interests of God's people?
 - 4.4.2.1. Joseph in Egypt looking out for his family (Gen 50.19-21). In this instance it was also through revealing dreams that Joseph was raised to a position of authority in the pagan government. Pharaoh called Joseph Zaphenath-paneah (Gen 41.45), possibly from the Egyptian for 'the god speaks and he lives' or, as suggested by one of the Targums (an Aramaic translation of the OT) a word play meaning 'revealer of secrets'.
 - 4.4.2.2. Esther (she became the wife of Ahasuerus/Darius I Hystaspes¹²⁷, who reigned from 522-486 BC; Est 2.1-18) and Mordecai (Est 10.3) in Persia were able to defend the Jews against the vile plans of Haman and pursue the welfare of the Jews.
 - 4.4.2.3. Ezra appears to have been a scribe known to Artaxerxes (Ezra 7.6) and was thus able to ask for permission to lead back a delegation of captive Jews to Jerusalem and restore the regular teaching of the law and the Temple services.
 - 4.4.2.4. Nehemiah wine steward to Artaxerxes, was permitted in 445 BC to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and provide for the welfare of the dispirited returned exiles.
 - 4.4.2.5. A topic for a life-time of research would be to identify 'Daniels' who God has raised up in governments throughout history.
- 5. What additional boon did Daniel request of the king? (49)
 - 5.1. He asked that his three friends be appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon.
 - 5.1.1. Even though he was governor of the territory of Babylon and had authority to make appointments he asked the king to make the appointments.
 - 5.1.2. He did not take unilateral action that might have later caused his jealous peers to complain to the king about favouritism, even though nepotism and the appointment of friends was standard practice throughout the kingdoms of the ancient world.
 - 5.1.3. By obtaining approval from the king, Daniel displayed wisdom and insight into human nature that was beyond his years and peers.
 - 5.2. Daniel did not forget his friends when he was promoted, but asked that they also be recognized.
 - 5.2.1. Daniel has shown a willingness to share with and depend on his believing friends. For example:
 - 5.2.1.1. He asked them to pray with him, 2.17.
 - 5.2.1.2. He included them in the solution to the mystery in his prayer, 2.23.
 - 5.2.1.3. He appears to have included them when he reported the solution of the mystery to the king, 2.47 ('your' is plural).
 - 5.2.1.4. He included them in the problem and in having them recognized for their part in finding the solution to the problem.
 - 5.2.2. What does this show about Daniel?
 - 5.2.2.1. Daniel was a team player.
 - 5.2.2.2. Daniel displayed a true team-oriented management style.
 - 5.2.2.3. Daniel was a humble man. Humility is:
 - 5.2.2.3.1. Not being proud or arrogant but having a modest opinion of one's own importance or rank, even though being successful.
 - 5.2.2.3.2. Being courteous and respectful of others.
 - 5.3. What was their role?
 - 5.3.1. They were appointed as sub-administrators in the province of Babylon.
 - 5.3.2. They were to serve under Daniel in the same province.

¹²⁷ Claimed to be Xerxes I (486-465 BC) by most commentators; however, See, "The Identity of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther" in Floyd Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 199-205.

- 5.3.3. It is possible that they were his assistants, but it is more likely that they were given independent duties within the province, reporting to Daniel. For example, they might have been appointed over aspects of the province such as the irrigation systems, roads, public buildings, slave labour pool, food procurement for the king, or administration of the palace, etc.
- 5.4. What would have been the impact of these promotions?
 - 5.4.1. Someone else had to be demoted.
 - 5.4.2. The appointment Daniel and his three friends is similar to the situation when a company brings in outsiders to senior positions over the heads of long-term employees and those who thought they should have received a promotion.
 - 5.4.3. It is likely that there were a number of people in Nebuchadnezzar's court who were jealous because of the promotion of Daniel and his three friends. It is possible that they held a grudge which led to their attempt to have the three men put to death in the fiery furnace (chapter 3).
- 6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 6.1. *Promotion* – God speaking to Eli said: “those who honor me I will honor” (1 Sam 2.30).
 - 6.1.1. The truth of this promise is made apparent in the life of Daniel.
 - 6.1.2. He received honour and rewards in this life and ultimately a place in heaven.
 - 6.1.2.1. We may receive no reward or recognition in this life. Our honour may be reserved entirely for heaven. But it is just as sure and certain that we will be rewarded, because God's promise cannot fail.
 - 6.1.3. We are not, however, to honour and serve God assuming or expecting rewards.
 - 6.1.3.1. We are to honour and serve God because he is worthy of our obedience and allegiance.
 - 6.1.3.2. We are not to do something for God and then stick out our hands and say. “Okay, now where is my reward?”
 - 6.1.3.3. Our focus must be on faithfulness not on favours.
 - 6.1.4. God made Daniel great before Nebuchadnezzar made him great.
 - 6.1.4.1. Daniel was a man of faith, reverence, character and discipline. Daniel was a man who feared God
 - 6.1.4.2. He was already a great man before he was honoured by the king.
 - 6.2. *Preparation* – God places Christians in strategic positions in various times and places.
 - 6.2.1. God appoints his people in key places of power and responsibility. He gives them positions as leaders and as advisors to leaders in government and business.
 - 6.2.2. This does not mean that Christians are in important positions in every place and at all times.
 - 6.2.2.1. Where God has removed his gracious hand and placed a nation under damnation he will remove Christian influence. For example, you won't find Christians providing advice to the leaders in countries destined for destruction such as Saudi Arabia or Iran.
 - 6.2.2.2. When a nation has Christian leaders or administrators we should praise God that he has not totally handed the nation over to go its own way in evil. There is hope that the Christians may be able to provide a leavening influence in the society in which they serve.
 - 6.2.3. Sometimes God places Christians in key positions in governments as a means of softening the punishment he is bringing on his Church.
 - 6.2.3.1. Before God sent Jerusalem and Judea into captivity he placed Daniel in a key position in the conquering government so that he could provide amelioration of the punishment that was in store for the people.
 - 6.2.3.2. Other Biblical examples: Joseph sent ahead to Egypt to provide for the Jews' forefathers (Gen 50.19-21), Obadiah protecting the prophets from Ahab (1 Ki

- 18.3), Esther and Mordecai saving the Jews, Ezra (probably) a court scribe (Ezra 7.6) bringing back the people from captivity, Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem, the people on the ship being saved because Paul was present (Acts 27.23-25).
- 6.2.3.3. If we look closely at our history since the time of Christ we will find that God has used his people in positions of power to soften the power of the abusive state and persecuting forces of anti-Christian religions.
- 6.2.4. Questions are sometimes raised about the role Christians should have in politics and government.
- 6.2.4.1. Some argue that believers should not participate in the administration of wicked governments.
- 6.2.4.2. Some suggest that it is impossible to participate without being compromised. They suggest that it is impossible to be effective in government without making compromises.
- 6.2.4.3. The example of Daniel teaches that:
- 6.2.4.3.1. God has a place for Christians in the governments of this world.
- 6.2.4.3.2. It is possible to participate in government without necessarily making compromises.
- 6.2.4.3.3. Believers within the ‘power structure’ of society can be an influence for good.
- 6.2.4.3.4. Christians in government can remain faithful to God and influence the direction of events.
- 6.2.5. God continues to raise up Daniels today.
- 6.2.5.1. *World* magazine has a ‘Daniel of the Year’ recognition. This has included:
- 6.2.5.1.1. Philip Johnson (a professor of Law and philosopher who launched the Intelligent Design movement)
- 6.2.5.1.2. Ken Starr (laid out the ugly moral and legal case against Bill Clinton)
- 6.2.5.1.3. John Ashcroft (attorney general who lost popularity by pursuing the legal case against Muslim terrorists)
- 6.2.5.1.4. Franklin Graham (Samaritan’s Purse ministry leader who told the truth about Islam as politicians dithered)
- 6.2.5.1.5. Baroness Caroline Cox (a crusader for human and religious rights in Sudan who traded aristocratic settings for hardship)
- 6.2.5.1.6. Michael Yerko (a native Christian Pastor in Muslim Sudan).
- 6.2.5.1.7. Zakaria Botros, a Coptic priest, who challenges Islam in Arabic on TV and via Internet discussion rooms.
- 6.2.5.2. We need to pray that God will continue to raise up Daniels and that he will protect those who are currently active, that they can have an influence for Christ.
- 6.3. *Praise* – All men know there is one true God and that he is worthy of worship.
- 6.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar, deemed a god by his people, fell before a captive slave and acknowledge that one true God rules over the affairs of men.
- 6.3.2. The world continues its slide toward destruction and ultimate renovation. Each successive generation and dominion faces only defeat. Their systems and schemes (political, religious, social, economic, scientific, technological, etc.) end up in the dustbin of history. In contrast, God’s people and the Kingdom of his Son go from strength to strength (Ps 84.7).
- 6.3.3. At all times and in all places, in spite of their hardened hearts, all men grudgingly end up giving God the honour and praise that is his due.
- 6.3.3.1. Whether or not they want to honour him they must and will.
- 6.3.3.2. God receives the glory even from those who rebel against him because he shows his power over them by bringing them into subjection at their death and on the Day of Judgement.
- 6.3.3.3. Jesus in particular of the Godhead will receive honour from every rational

creature, Phil 2.10-11.

6.3.4. God's honour is the joy of his people. When he is praised, we rejoice for he is the Creator who is worthy to receive all honour and praise (Rev 4.11).

Devilish Totem (Dan 3.1-30)

Stipulation (Dan 3.1-7)

1. What are the attributes of the image Nebuchadnezzar made?
 - 1.1. It's height was ninety feet (sixty cubits; equivalent to a modern eight-story building) and it's width was nine feet (six cubits).
 - 1.2. It was made of/with gold.
 - 1.2.1. It may have been made with a wooden core overlaid with gold (compare, Ex 39.38 and Ex 40.5 with Ex 37.25, 26; see also, Is 40.19; Jer 10.3-9), or possibly it was made of stone (e.g., if it was an obelisk [see below]) and plated with gold.
 - 1.3. It was likely set on a platform.
 - 1.3.1. Archaeologists have discovered, 10kms southeast of Babylon, a large platform 4 meters square (45 square feet) and 6 meters (20 feet) high which may have been the pedestal for Nebuchadnezzar's image.¹²⁸
 - 1.3.2. The platform may have been included in the height dimensions.
 - 1.4. It was an 'image'. What kind of image might it have been?
 - 1.4.1. The Aramaic word translated 'image' (ܫܠܡܐ, *selēm*) appears to be a general term (something like 'sculpture') that may include a human form (possibly like the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream) or may apply to an obelisk.
 - 1.4.2. The size dimensions do not have the proportions of a human figure. A 10:1 ratio of height to width would be too thin for a human-like statue (Dan 4.1).
 - 1.4.2.1. An obelisk with a 9-foot base could taper to a point over 90 feet.
 - 1.4.2.2. If it was a human-like statue placed on a platform, the statue may have been shorter and more accurately proportioned. Placing the statue on a platform would make it more imposing. Many human statues from antiquity were placed on pedestals or platforms.
 - 1.4.2.3. Alternatively Babylonian sculptures were often grotesque and disproportioned.
 - 1.4.3. If it was a representation of a human figure it could have been ~10 times taller than a man, assuming it stood on the (or similar) platform discovered southeast of Babylon.
 - 1.4.4. Examples of human statues from the literature of the ancient world, include:
 - 1.4.4.1. Statue of Zeus in Babylon, Diodorus Siculus (Greek historian from Sicily, 80-20 BC) "Semiramis [legendary Babylonian wife of king Shamshi-Adad V, King of Assyria (or of a king Ninus), who ruled 811-808 BC], built in the centre of the city a temple of Zeus whom, as we have said, the Babylonians call Belus. Now since with regard to this temple the historians are at variance, and since time has caused the structure to fall into ruins, it is impossible to give the exact facts concerning it. But all agree that it was exceedingly high, and that in it the Chaldeans made their observations of the stars, whose risings and settings could be accurately observed by reason of the height of the structure. Now the entire building was ingeniously constructed at great expense of bitumen and brick, and at the top of the ascent Semiramis set up three statues of hammered gold, of Zeus, Hera, and Rhea. Of these statues that of Zeus represented him erect and striding forward, and, being forty feet high, weighed a thousand Babylonian talents; that of Rhea showed her seated on a golden throne and was of the same weight as that of Zeus; and at her knees stood two lions, while nearby were huge

¹²⁸ R. B. Hughes & J. C. Laney, *Tyndale concise Bible commentary*. Rev. ed. of: New Bible Companion. 1990. The Tyndale reference library (316), (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000); Daniel 3:1-7. See also: David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, Astrid B. Beck; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), p. 359.

serpents of silver, each one weighing thirty talents.”¹²⁹

1.4.4.2. Statue of Zeus/Jupiter in Babylon – Herodotus (484-425 BC) describes it as follows: “Below, in the same precinct, there is a second temple, in which is a sitting figure of Jupiter, all of gold. Before the figure stands a large golden table, and the throne whereon it sits, and the base on which the throne is placed, are likewise of gold. The Chaldeans told me that all the gold together was eight hundred talents' weight. ... In the time of Cyrus there was likewise in this temple a figure of a man, twelve cubits high, entirely of solid gold. I myself did not see this figure, but I relate what the Chaldeans report concerning it. Darius, the son of Hystaspes, plotted to carry the statue off, but had not the hardihood to lay his hands upon it. Xerxes, however, the son of Darius, killed the priest who forbade him to move the statue, and took it away.”¹³⁰

1.4.4.3. The Colossus of Rhodes -- A statue of the Greek god Helios, erected on the Greek island of Rhodes by the sculptor Chares of Lindos between 292 and 280 BC (about 300 years later than Nebuchadnezzar's statue). It stood over 30 meters (100 ft) high. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and the tallest statue of the ancient world.¹³¹ His teacher, the sculptor Lysippos, had constructed a similar bronze statue of Zeus at Tarentum.

1.5. What might the image have represented? It may have represented:

1.5.1. Nebuchadnezzar himself; implying worship of him as semi-divine.

1.5.2. One of his gods, Marduk or Nabu.

1.5.3. His world-dominating kingdom (e.g., an obelisk) with the chronicles and laws of his dominion inscribed on it.

1.5.4. Images or statues were used throughout the ancient world as objects/idols for worship, being representations of deities, or for reverence and worship of humans. It was believed that the greater the image, the more impressive or important was the god or human that was represented.

2. When was this image erected by Nebuchadnezzar?

2.1. The text does not tell us. However, it was after the appointment of Daniel's three friends to their offices in the province of Babylon (Dan 2.49) and before the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in chapter 4, which was probably near the end of his life. So, it occurred sometime between 603 and 562 BC.

2.2. Some commentators suggest that it occurred not long after the dream of the statue in chapter 2. They argue that the dream, and its interpretation, influenced Nebuchadnezzar to honour himself as the head of gold.

2.3. Other commentators (including Calvin) argue that many years had passed before the image was erected and Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his confession of the God of Israel as the supreme Deity.

2.4. Some writers suggest that the events of chapter 3 occurred in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the year *before* he captured Jerusalem and took Jehoiachin and Ezekiel into captivity (597 BC).

2.5. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his vassals to Babylon in 594 BC, and that this event occurred in 593 BC. If, so Zedekiah, Judah's last king, may have been among those summoned to Babylon for the dedication ceremony (Jer 51.59).¹³²

2.6. The Septuagint (LXX), in Dan 3.1, indicates that this event occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year (587 BC) after Nebuchadnezzar carried away additional captives from Jerusalem (Jer

¹²⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, Book 2, chapter 9, p. 383;

penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/2A*.html.

¹³⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book I, paragraph 183; classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt.

¹³¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_of_Rhodes.

¹³² William H. Shea, "Daniel ch. 3: Extra-Biblical Tests and the Convocation on the Plain of Dura," Andrews University Seminary Studies 20. Spring 1982:29-52.

- 52.29).
- 2.6.1. The events recorded in chapter 3 would then have occurred during the year before the fall of Jerusalem (2 Ki 25.8) in 586 BC.
 - 2.6.2. Some suggest that this cannot be correct, since the destruction of Jerusalem was part of Nebuchadnezzar's final conquest and the events of chapter 3 would have occurred *after* Nebuchadnezzar had completed his conquests.
3. Where did Nebuchadnezzar set up the image? Why?
- 3.1. On the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon
 - 3.2. 'Dura' generically means 'an enclosing wall' and could be a walled city or a city surrounded by hills/mountains. It appears that there are a number of locations in Mesopotamia named Dura.
 - 3.3. Being in the province of Babylon, this particular Dura appears to have been a city to the south of the city of Babylon in the valley plain between the Tigris and the Euphrates.
 - 3.3.1. The remains of a large platform have been found in this location which may have been the base of Nebuchadnezzar's image.
 - 3.3.2. The platform is centrally located in valley-plain. This would have provided an unobstructed and impressive view for a large crowd of magistrates.
 - 3.3.3. The proximity of this site to the city of Babylon would have provided a place for assembling the king's officials (like Tiananmen Square in Beijing with the Great Hall of the People to the west, Red Square in Moscow adjacent to the Kremlin, or the National Mall in Washington DC).
4. Whom did Nebuchadnezzar require attend the dedication of the image he had made?
- 4.1. All the officials of the provinces.
 - 4.1.1. Satraps – chief representatives of the king. Possibly the chief governor of each province (as Daniel was in Babylon (Dan 2.48)). The word translated 'satrap' (סַטְרַפָּא) may be a Persian loanword probably meaning 'protector of the realm'. The term 'satrap' is a Greek word and the translation given in the Septuagint (LXX).
 - 4.1.2. Prefects – possibly military commanders. The term (קִנִּי) used here appears to be an Aramaic word,
 - 4.1.3. Governors – civil administrators (such as Daniel's three friends [2.49]). If this assembly occurred in 593 BC, Zedekiah, Judah's last king, may have been among those summoned to Babylon for the dedication ceremony (Jer 51.59).
 - 4.1.4. Advisors (counsellors) – counsellors to those in governmental authority, probably including the classes of wise men encountered in chapter 2. The word used here may be a Persian loanword.
 - 4.1.5. Treasurers -- administered taxes and may have been tax collectors (e.g., collecting poll taxes and import/export duties).
 - 4.1.6. Judges – codifiers of law and intermediate judges. The king would have had the final judicial authority. The word used here may be a Persian loanword.
 - 4.1.7. Magistrates – may have been equivalent to police in our jurisdictions.
 - 4.1.8. All the other provincial officials – probably included all senior officials who reported to the Satraps and who represented Nebuchadnezzar throughout the empire.
 - 4.1.9. Some argue that the use of (apparently) Persian terms means that the book was written after the exile, after the Persians had conquered Babylon. What optional explanations can we provide?
 - 4.1.9.1. Daniel could have composed this book late in his life. He was still around after the conquest of the Persians (Dan 1.21). He could have used official terms from that time.
 - 4.1.9.2. Daniel could have updated his account with Persian terms after he had written it.
 - 4.1.9.3. Alternatively, the words that appear to be of Persian origin may have been

- contemporary loanwords used in the Semitic languages of Babylon. This would be much like our using a term such as ‘coup d’état’ or ‘détente’.
- 4.2. Sargon II, king of Assyria (reigned 722-705) used similar terms for his officials, after he had completed building his palace: “Sargon established himself in his palace with the princes of all lands, the rulers of his lands, the governors, presidents, magistrates, honorable and senators of Assyria, and instituted a feast.”¹³³ See also Esther 1.3 for an example.
- 4.3. Who were *not* included in the list of invitees to the dedication of the image?
- 4.3.1. There is no mention of the common people or general citizenry.
- 4.3.1.1. Not everyone in the kingdom could have assembled in one place.
- 4.3.1.2. Undoubtedly there were numerous assistants and retainers with the officials, and some of the local citizens from Babylon may have been permitted to attend.
- 4.3.1.3. This assembly was probably a political meeting in which the administrators swore allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. We will consider the reason for the assembly below.
- 4.4. Who is *not* mentioned as having attended the dedication ceremony?
- 4.4.1. There is no reference to Daniel in this chapter.
- 4.4.1.1. Where was Daniel at this time?
- 4.4.1.2. Was Daniel required to attend the dedication ceremony?
- 4.4.2. Daniel may have been in attendance, but as second in command over the entire realm, he was not asked to bow to the image, and no one could complain about his noncompliance.
- 4.4.3. If he had been present we can assume that he would not have bowed down to the image. So, it is likely that he was not in attendance.
- 4.4.4. Daniel, as second in command in the Empire and governor of the territory of Babylon, may have been left in the capital city (Dan 2.49). He was running the administrative affairs of the empire when Nebuchadnezzar was away.
- 4.4.5. Daniel may have been aware of what was going to happen (i.e., the worship of the image) and may have requested, on the basis of conscience, permission from the king not to attend the event. If so, the king had such respect for Daniel that he excused his attendance.
5. What did Nebuchadnezzar require of the provincial officials?
- 5.1. Assemble for dedication of the image (2, 3).
- 5.1.1. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar told the people in advance the reason they were to assemble.
- 5.1.2. The dedication ceremony of the image would likely have been similar to ceremonies that people have when they have a ground-breaking, open a new building, christen a ship, or dedicate a statue of a war veteran. You can find many examples of these if you enter into a Web search engine topics such as ‘museum dedication,’ ‘statue of liberty dedication,’ etc.
- 5.1.3. There was probably some form of unveiling of the image.
- 5.1.4. What likely would have accompanied the unveiling of the image?
- 5.1.4.1. Speeches, flag waving, military displays, and music, dancing and singing.
- 5.1.4.2. There may have also been a meal and free-flowing alcohol.
- 5.2. Worship the image (5).
- 5.2.1. At minimum this included a prostration (falling on their knees with their foreheads placed on the ground) before the image
- 5.2.2. It may have included recitation of some form of oath or singing of some form of praise.
- 5.2.3. What may this requirement indicate about the nature of the image?
- 5.2.3.1. The image had some form of religious, as well as political, significance.

¹³³ From Sargon's Prism, quoted by: H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 140; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 86.

- 5.2.3.2. No specific Babylonian god is mentioned, it may be surmised that Nebuchadnezzar was not honouring an existing god.
 - 5.2.3.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have been instituting a new form of religious worship or dedicating a new god (which may have been himself).
6. Why did Nebuchadnezzar make the image and require worship of it?
- 6.1. He may have been influenced by the statue in his dream (chapter 2) and may have decided to emulate the dream's image by creating a large human statue.
 - 6.1.1. The revelation of his significance in history (Dan 2.37-38) may have caused him to have had an inflated view of his power and position, and he responded by memorializing himself, compare:
 - 6.1.1.1. The pillar Absalom raised for himself (2 Sam 18.18)
 - 6.1.1.2. The image of Saddam Hussein that was toppled in the main square in Baghdad 2003-04-09.
 - 6.1.2. As he was identified in the dream as the head of gold he may have had the entire image coated in gold.
 - 6.2. He may have been *celebrating* a significant military victory through the subjection of another territory and incorporation into the empire as a province.
 - 6.2.1. He may have set up an obelisk, based on one he had seen during his Egyptian campaign. For example, the four obelisk that Queen Hapshetsut (who may have been the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon in 941 BC) erected at Karnak may have served as his prototype. One of them still stands today and is 97' high (about the same height at the image Nebuchadnezzar erected).
 - 6.2.2. If he set up an obelisk, the record of his exploits and conquests could have been recorded on it.
 - 6.3. He probably intended to have his officials recognize and *submit* to his absolute authority over the empire.
 - 6.3.1. He likely had them take an oath of allegiance, and the demand to worship the image was understood as a ratification of the oath—similar to someone placing his hand on the Bible when taking an oath in a courtroom.
 - 6.3.2. It has been suggested that Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his vassals to Babylon in 594 BC to ensure their loyalty after an attempted revolt in the preceding year.¹³⁴
 - 6.3.3. The demand that they fall down before the image and worship, would require of them a public display of obedience. Nebuchadnezzar abused his power (given to him by God) to bind the minds and wills of all his subjects by compelling them to engage in false worship practices at his command.
 - 6.3.4. The effect of having many officials standing before the image and then bowing before it would have impressed all assembled with the solemnity of the act and the power of the king requiring it.
 - 6.3.5. All the officials who served him were to recognize both his political and religious authority.
 - 6.4. He probably used the dedication ceremony to *unify* his empire and show his consolidated authority as ruler.
 - 6.4.1. The image may have served as the unifying focus of his empire, similar to a flag or icon.
 - 6.4.1.1. "He feared dissension as a cause of disunion in his empire."¹³⁵ (Calvin)
 - 6.4.2. The religious observation associated with the dedication ceremony may have served to add a unifying dimension.
 - 6.4.2.1. A new idol or religious ceremony served to give the people a new identity.
 - 6.4.2.2. Compare this with Jeroboam's new religious ceremonies and idols (1 Ki 12.25-

¹³⁴ William H. Shea, "Daniel ch. 3: Extra-Biblical Tests and the Convocation on the Plain of Dura," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20. Spring 1982:29-52.

¹³⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html

- 33), which he used to unify the northern tribes and keep them from going to Jerusalem to participate in the God-instituted worship ceremonies.
- 6.4.2.3. Babylon was already full of idols, as were all the other territories in the empire (even, sadly, Judea). The confusion engendered by many false gods would have led some of the people to conclude, correctly, that none of these gods was the true God. However, rather than abandoning all the false gods, Nebuchadnezzar probably set up another which he declared to be the ‘only’ god, or ‘most high’ god.
- 6.4.3. Nebuchadnezzar established himself as the head of the civil and religious establishments.
- 6.4.3.1. He usurped to himself a priestly function and made a god of his own invention.
- 6.4.3.1.1. He based this activity on his own opinion, and did not consider God’s prohibition against anyone who was not his designated prophet or priest promulgating edicts concerning worship.
- 6.4.3.1.2. Fabricating a deity displays a supreme hubris on the part of man. Of course men do not see the irony in what they are doing—creating a god is nonsense, since God by definition cannot be created (Is 40.18-20; Is 41.6-7).
- 6.4.3.2. From earliest history, political affairs and religion have been intimately interwoven.
- 6.4.3.2.1. A single religion was often endorsed by the leader of the government (king, emperor, chief), and the leader of the government often had some form of control over the tribe’s, country’s, nation’s, or empire’s religion.
- 6.4.3.2.2. When a country’s leader converted to a new religion, the whole country went along. For example, since the time of Henry VIII, the Church of England and the government of the state have been, nominally, subject to the royal personage.
- 6.4.3.2.3. The idea of the separation of religion and state is a modern concept. It arose primarily with Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) who consigned religion to the irrelevance of private observance. His division of reality into facts related to the sensory world and feelings about the non-physical realm created a false dichotomy about facts that he held to be certain (e.g., about horses and turnips) and beliefs that are uncertain (e.g., about God, love, beauty, morality, etc.).
- 6.4.3.3. The state’s direct control over religion is called Erastianism. However, it has not always been the accepted order of things. In some cultures, the religious leaders have as much or more control than the political leaders (e.g., in Islam). From the time of Constantine until the early modern period of European history, there was a tension between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor as to who was superior to the other.
- 6.4.3.4. The historic Presbyterian and Reformed view of the role of the king is: “The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide, that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.”¹³⁶

¹³⁶ “Of the Civil Magistrate,” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 23, para. 3.
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- 6.4.3.5. This view is not accepted today in the West. Kant's ideas were picked up by Thomas Jefferson and have since become the famous 'wall of separation' that has driven the true religion out of the public forum, not only in the US but in all Western democracies that espouse the 'politically correct' view of religious tolerance—which actually means, endorse any form of religion as long as it isn't Christianity.
- 6.4.4. Nebuchadnezzar may have been specifically testing the loyalty of the Jewish officials. If this statue was set up in 593 BC or in 587 (before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC and deportation of the Jews), he may have been using the requirement to worship his image to see how loyal the leaders of the provinces (including Judah) were. The leaders of other provinces would have been polytheistic and would not have objected to the worship of additional (existing or new) Babylonian gods and likely had essentially the same hierarchy of gods in their pantheon. The Jewish leaders, in theory, should have objected to idolatry and should have refused to obey the command to worship the false god.
 - 6.4.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar may have used this test as a means of corrupting the beliefs of the Jews and making them pliable to his will and commands. Zedekiah may have been present (Jer 51.59).
 - 6.4.4.2. Ironically, his test would have been a success if Daniel's three friends had not been present. The other Jewish leaders, from Judah, that were likely present, appear to have capitulated to the King's demands and have fallen down in worship before the image.
 - 6.4.4.3. It was only the three men who had been taken captive as youths, before the complete subjugation of Judah and Jerusalem, and who had been living in the pagan realm's capital, who stood firm against idolatry.
- 6.5. He may have been *declaring himself to be divine*.
 - 6.5.1. He may have had the image cast as a representation of himself. However, Calvin does not think that Nebuchadnezzar "wished to include himself in the number of the deities."
 - 6.5.2. The Egyptian kings positioned themselves as gods.
 - 6.5.3. Alexander claimed that he was the descendant of Zeus.¹³⁷
 - 6.5.4. How many times does the name 'Nebuchadnezzar' appear in these seven verses? Seven times (on average one time in every verse).
 - 6.5.4.1. In contrast his name appears 29 times throughout the first 4 chapters of Daniel (on average, 1 time for every 4-5 verses). [Note: for comparison, the name 'Daniel' appears 30 times in the same range of verses.]
 - 6.5.4.2. Daniel's repetition of Nebuchadnezzar's name so many times in a short passage reinforces the idea that a mere mortal was attempting to raise himself to a great height of honour.
- 6.6. Regardless of the specific reason, there is undoubtedly an element of pride in Nebuchadnezzar's actions, showing that his profession of God's sovereignty (Dan 2.47) over all other gods was largely lip-service and not heart-service.
 - 6.6.1. The natural impiety of the human heart came out in Nebuchadnezzar's actions on the plain of Dura.
 - 6.6.2. God was setting the scene for a more significant humbling of this great king (chapter 4), which would lead him to make a more sincere confession of the God of Heaven (Dan 4.37)—we will determine whether his confession showed a converted heart when we consider that chapter.
- 7. What accompanied the bowing before the image?
 - 7.1. The playing of numerous musical instruments (5, 7)

¹³⁷ Andrew Erskine, *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 435.

- 7.2. The specific instruments *mentioned*, appear all to be in the classes of wind and stringed instruments:
- 7.2.1. horn (ram's horn, trumpet),
 - 7.2.2. flute (whistle, pan pipe),
 - 7.2.3. zither (lyre-like instrument with an undetermined number of strings),
 - 7.2.4. lyre (a triangular board with short strings and high pitch); 'trigon' as in the ESV (referring to the triangular¹³⁸ shape of the instrument),
 - 7.2.5. harp (twenty strings),
 - 7.2.6. pipes (bagpipes)
- 7.3. The reference to all kinds of other musical instruments, probably brings in percussion instruments including drums, xylophones, bells, timbrels (tambourines), castanets, rattles, cymbals, etc..
- 7.4. The names of some of the instruments (in the Aramaic text) appear to be of Greek origin.
- 7.4.1. Possible Greek terms:
 - 7.4.1.1. קִיְתָרֹס (*qî·tērōs*) may come from the Greek word κιθάρα (used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Aramaic word.
 - 7.4.1.2. פְּסַנְתְּרִין (*pēsān·tē·rîn*) appears to have a similarity to the Greek word ψαλτηρίου (used in the LXX to translate the Aramaic word).
 - 7.4.1.3. סוּמְפֹנְיָה (*sūm·p·pō·neyā(h)*) appears to sound like συμφωνίας (used in the LXX to translate the Aramaic word).
 - 7.4.2. If correct (i.e., the terms are from Greece) then they were included in the book of Daniel about 250 years before the Hellenistic period of wide-spread Greek influence.
 - 7.4.3. Some argue that this indicates that the book was written after the time of Alexander, and not at the time of Daniel or the events recorded. They assign a date to the book of Daniel around the time of the Maccabean uprising (c 165 BC).
 - 7.4.4. What explanations allow for the writing of Daniel to be contemporary with the events, and yet allow for the inclusion of Greek terms for the musical instruments?
 - 7.4.4.1. Communication and commerce between Greece and the Middle East had been carried on for centuries before the conquest by Alexander.¹³⁹
 - 7.4.4.2. Greek mercenaries served in the armies of Psammetichus II king of Egypt (595 BC-589 BC) and Nebuchadnezzar¹⁴⁰ and may have brought their musical instruments with them.
 - 7.4.4.3. Therefore, the musical instruments could have been of Greek origin and imported into the Middle East. They may have kept their Greek names as we have violin, viola, ukulele, etc. from other languages.
 - 7.4.5. The presence of Greek words in Daniel does not provide a problem for concluding that the book was written by Daniel himself or a near contemporary.
- 7.5. Why were the musical instruments used?
- 7.5.1. The instruments were used to make the occasion emotionally stimulating.
 - 7.5.1.1. We know that music is used to calm (1 Sam 16.14-23) or heighten emotions (for example in movies), and is used at various ceremonies such as the opening of the Olympics.
 - 7.5.1.2. In Sweden, Uppsala University's Department of Psychology has a project underway (as of 2008) called AMUSE (Appraisal in Music and Emotion) to study our emotional responses to music.¹⁴¹
 - 7.5.1.3. In the broader Church today music is often used to set the mood. You can even find Web-sites with mood music for church services where you can download

¹³⁸ Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary; www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trigon

¹³⁹ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Daniel and Contacts Between the Aegean and the Near East Before Alexander," *Evangelical Quarterly* 53.1 (January-March 1981) pp. 37-47.

¹⁴⁰ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 87.

¹⁴¹ www.psyk.uu.se/hemsidor/musicpsy2/

instrumental versions of Amazing Grace, Sweet Hour of Prayer, How Great Thou Art, Ave Maria, Rock of Ages, Nearer My God to Thee, Just As I Am, What A Friend We Have in Jesus, Abide With Me, etc.¹⁴²

- 7.5.2. Special pieces of music may have been composed for the event. The unveiling of the image may have been accompanied by a conducted orchestral composition.
- 7.5.3. However, it is also possible that the multitude of instruments was not used in a coordinated symphony but rather to provide a loud blast of continuous raucous and harsh sound.
 - 7.5.3.1. We may be seeing false religion at its worst and Satan's imitation of true worship is not harmony and symphony but cacophony.
 - 7.5.3.2. The image we might have is similar to what happened when the prophets of Baal raved and danced trying to bring down fire from Heaven (1 Kings 18.28-29), or to the wild dancing, to a rapid drum tempo, of an animistic tribe.
 - 7.5.3.3. The noise of Hell broke out on the plain of Dura.
- 7.5.4. The nations around Israel used musical instruments in their worship of false gods. "According to the concepts of antiquity, music was a part of each sacrifice even when only incense or a libation were offered. Flutes, various stringed instruments, noisy kettle-drums, trumpets, and little bells, the so-called *sistrum*, were employed. The music was meant to ward off the demons and to invite the coming of the gods."¹⁴³
- 7.6. What is the role of music instruments in the worship of God? The fact that musical instruments were used in this false worship ceremony and also in Temple worship in Jerusalem, may raise perplexing questions:
 - 7.6.1. How did the purpose for musical instruments in Jewish ceremonial worship differ from the purpose in the pagan worship of their neighbours?
 - 7.6.1.1. Pagans, including the Babylonians, used musical instruments in their false worship to reach a point of emotional frenzy. They viewed this as a means of:
 - 7.6.1.1.1. Demonstrating sincerity to the god they were appealing to
 - 7.6.1.1.2. Attempting to appease the god
 - 7.6.1.1.3. Warding off evil spirits.
 - 7.6.1.2. The pagans also believed that what pleased them would also please their gods. This is a similar view held by many in the Church today—men find music appealing to their senses, therefore so must it appeal to God, they believe. It is a false belief, based on a false logic. There are many things men, in their sinful natures find appealing, that God hates: illicit sexual relations, gluttony, laziness, drug-induced stupors, etc.
 - 7.6.1.3. Musical instruments in the Temple worship of the OT ceremonial system were used at the time the sacrifice was being offered up [more below].
 - 7.6.1.3.1. It appears that the instruments were used to inform the crowd who could not see the actual sacrifice that the sacrifice was happening. The music was a surrogate for vision—substituting one sensory perception for another.
 - 7.6.1.3.2. The musical instruments also may have been used to engender an emotional response in the people, not in God.
 - 7.6.2. When did God introduce the use of musical instruments into his worship?
 - 7.6.2.1. There were no musical instruments (or singing) in the worship of Abraham and the other patriarchs.
 - 7.6.2.2. For the Tabernacle system of worship, a trumpet announced the time of the offering of the sacrifice; but no other instruments were used and singing,

¹⁴² www.audiotreasure.com/mp3/Music/index.htm

¹⁴³ Josef A. Jungmann, Tran. Francis A. Brunner, *The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press), 1959, p. 124.

accompanied by musical instruments, was not included as part of the ceremonial system of worship. The trumpet was used only in the context of the sacrifice (Lev 23.24, 25; Num 10.10; Num 29.1-4). It may have been used to let the people outside the immediate courtyard know that the sacrifice was being offered, since it would have been impossible for all the people in the camp to enter the courtyard at one time. The trumpet was not used in the Tabernacle to accompany singing. There is no reference in the Bible to singing in the Tabernacle worship. Beyond the specific use of the trumpet at the time of the sacrifice, the trumpet was also used for signalling the times of worship (Num 10.1-9; Num 31.6).

- 7.6.2.3. God first instituted the use of different kinds of musical instruments to accompany singing as worship at the time of David. This change occurred with the changes in the sacrificial system that were introduced for the Temple that would be built by Solomon.
- 7.6.2.4. Under David, musical instruments were used before the Temple was actually built, wherever the sacrifices were offered up (1 Chron 16.37-42). At this time, there were two shrines and (apparently) two high priests. One of the high priests, Zadok, was with the Tabernacle at Gibeon, the other, Abiathar (1 Chron 15.11), was with the Ark in Jerusalem. It appears that David introduced the use of additional musical instruments and singing to accompany the worship of the sacrifice offering at both the Tabernacle (1 Chron 16.41, 42) and the Ark. When the Ark was first brought into Jerusalem, it was brought up from Kiriath Jearim where it had been for twenty years (1 Sam 6.21-7.2), and placed near the area of the future Temple. While the Ark was being moved, there was a continuous offering of sacrifices accompanied by an offering of music and singing as worship (2 Sam 6.2-5, 13-18 [especially verses 13, 18]; 1 Chron 15.14-28 [especially v 26]).¹⁴⁴
- 7.6.2.5. Musical instruments were used in the Temple in Jerusalem built under Solomon and rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Joshua, according to the plan and order of David (e.g., 2 Chron 5.11-14; 2 Chron 7.4-6; Is 38.20). Throughout the Temple era, the collection of musical instruments (i.e., trumpets, harps, cymbals, lyres, etc.) accompanying singing was used *only* during the offering of animal sacrifices (2 Chron 29.25-28; 2 Chron 30.15, 21, 24). When the sacrifices ended, the music ceased.
- 7.6.2.6. When musical instruments were used outside the Temple, after the time of David, they were used in conjunction with *sacrifices* (2 Chron 7.1, 5-6; Neh 12.36, 40-43). Even when God rebuked the Jews for their misuse of songs and musical instruments, he associated them with the misuse of the sacrificial elements of worship (Amos 5.21-23), showing their intimate connection.
- 7.6.3. Why did God introduce and permit the use of musical instruments in the Temple when musical instruments were apparently first used in pagan worship?
 - 7.6.3.1. This is a difficult question to answer.
 - 7.6.3.2. Calvin suggests that God permitted the use of musical instruments to stir up men from spiritual laziness as a stimulant to cause the Jews to worship more fervently.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ The Ark was transported to Jerusalem in two stages, separated by a three-month interval (2 Sam 6.11). During the first stage, musical instruments are mentioned (2 Sam 6.5) without specific reference to sacrifices. In the second stage, musical instruments (2 Sam 6.15; 1 Chron 15.24, 28) are explicitly associated with sacrifices (2 Sam 6.13, 18; 1 Chron 15.26). It is not unreasonable to assume that: 1) musical instruments and sacrifices occurred together during the first stage, or 2) if musical instruments and sacrifices were not used together during the first stage, they were associated during the second stage because David was concerned about doing everything correctly—even as he corrected the way the Ark was transported (compare, 2 Sam 6.3, 4 with 2 Sam 6.13).

¹⁴⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html

- 7.6.3.2.1. Following this line of thinking, it may be that God allowed aspects of what was used in pagan practice to be introduced into worship for a similar reason as Jesus says he permitted divorce (Mt 19.7, 8).
- 7.6.3.2.2. God may have permitted musical instruments because of the hardness of human hearts and man's need/desire for outward expressions of worship.
- 7.6.3.3. A practical reason may be, as we noted above:
 - 7.6.3.3.1. The singing and the instruments would inform the crowds in the courtyards, who could not see the actual sacrifice, that the sacrifice was happening. The music was a surrogate for vision—substituting one sensory perception for another.
 - 7.6.3.3.2. The musical instruments also may have been used to engender an emotional response in the people, not in God.
- 7.6.3.4. There may be another reason, based on the anticipation of NT worship.
 - 7.6.3.4.1. God may have introduced the additional musical instruments to accompany the singing of the Psalms.
 - 7.6.3.4.1.1. It would have been difficult to sing a Psalm accompanied by the sound of trumpet, especially one such as the shofar (ram's horn) which had only one, or a few notes.
 - 7.6.3.4.1.2. The combined melody of the instruments along with the singing of the Psalms by the Levite choir during the time the sacrifice was being offered, would have been heard by those unable to see the sacrifice.
 - 7.6.3.4.2. This leads to another question, why did God introduce the singing of the Psalms in Temple worship?
 - 7.6.3.4.2.1. God may have introduced the singing of Psalms into/as worship at this time in anticipation of the change in form that would come with NT spiritual worship.
 - 7.6.3.4.2.2. The Psalms in Temple worship accompanied the offering of the sacrifice and therefore were an element of the sacrificial system.
 - 7.6.3.4.2.3. However, in the NT economy the Psalms would become the non-bloody spiritual sacrifice that would replace permanently the sacrifice of animals. The singing of Psalms is the spiritual equivalent of offering thank-offering animal sacrifices to God (Ps 69.30, 31; Ps 107.21, 22; Hos 14.2; Heb 13.15).
 - 7.6.3.4.2.4. The singing of the Psalms has the added value of increased instruction, directing the hearer to Christ (Lk 24.44), that the offerings alone did could not provide.
- 7.6.4. What was the context of musical instruments in the Temple worship ceremonies?
 - 7.6.4.1. The context for the use of musical instruments in worship appears consistently in the Bible to be that of animal sacrifices. We have seen this with respect to the use of the trumpet. Instruments (other than the trumpet) along with singing were only introduced with the express provision of God for the new liturgy that would be associated with the Temple sacrifices. These changes were introduced under the direction of David as a prophet (*not* by virtue of his kingly office), with revelation from God.
 - 7.6.4.2. The ceremonies of the OT sacrificial system, including musical instruments and incense, were introduced by God as physical types pointing to the eternal antitype, Jesus Christ.
- 7.6.5. What, if any, is the role for musical instruments in NT worship?

- 7.6.5.1. Since musical instruments were used to accompany singing in the OT Temple worship can we use them to accompany singing in the NT spiritual Temple worship?
- 7.6.5.2. After the destruction of the Temple (586 BC), the Jews did not use musical instruments to accompany singing in worship, even though they sang Psalms that called for the use of musical instruments.
- 7.6.5.2.1. For example, the Levites hung up their harps (Ps 137.2)—apparently, this means that they did not perform their liturgical duties while in captivity in Babylon as there were no sacrifices being offered, since Solomon’s Temple had been destroyed.
- 7.6.5.3. When Jews met for worship outside of Jerusalem and the Temple, they did not use musical instruments in worship. They understood the use of musical instruments to be part of the Temple sacrificial liturgy and did not use them. “People who appeal to Psalm 150.3-5 as a justification for the use of musical instruments in new covenant worship violate a number of standard interpretive procedures. First, what did this Psalm mean to the original old covenant Jewish audience? Did the Jews use this Psalm and other such Psalms as a justification for the introduction of musical instruments in their synagogue worship? No. They most certainly did not. Jewish synagogues did not use musical instruments in praise until 1810.”¹⁴⁶
- 7.6.5.4. Since the old covenant sacrifices were replaced by the work of Christ, the Early NT Church did not use musical instruments in worship. Most of the earliest NT congregations consisted of Jews who had learned that musical instruments were used as part of the Temple liturgy and associated with the bloody sacrifices. The view that musical instruments were part of the OT ceremonial system that was replaced with the final sacrifice of Christ and NT spiritual equivalents was the predominant view throughout the early NT Church. Musical instruments were universally excluded from worship. “An absolute rejection of ... noisy music as a whole was achieved only by Christianity. The Church excluded in those days [i.e., the first half dozen centuries] all musical instruments from her worship; plain homophonic singing only was allowed, unaccompanied by any musical instruments. The human voice and the human heart alone were to sing God’s praises; the use of the one voice only was to symbolize the unity which was to obtain in the Church.”¹⁴⁷ The following are (only) three examples of the teaching of the early Church fathers.
- 7.6.5.4.1. Justin Martyr (—165): “Plain singing is not childish, but only the singing with lifeless organs, with dancing and with cymbals, etc. Whence the use of such instruments and other things fit for children is laid aside, and plain singing only retained.”¹⁴⁸
- 7.6.5.4.2. Eusebius (church historian/bishop, Palestine, c. 325): “Of old at the time those of the circumcision were worshipping with symbols and types it was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the psalterion and kithara and to do this on Sabbath days (breaking the rest and transgressing the law concerning the Sabbath). But we in an inward manner keep the part of the Jew, according to the saying of the apostle...(Romans 2.28f.). We render our hymn with a living psalterion and a living kithara, with spiritual songs. The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical

¹⁴⁶ Brian Schwertley, *Musical Instruments in the Public Worship of God*; reformedonline.com/view/reformedonline/music.htm#r87

¹⁴⁷ Josef A. Jungmann, Tran. Francis A. Brunner, *The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1959), p. 124.

¹⁴⁸ John L. Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Havertown, PA: New Covenant Publication Society, 1983, reprint of the 1888 edition), p. 157.

instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one mind and in agreement of faith and piety, we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms.”¹⁴⁹

7.6.5.4.3. Athanasius (—373): “Indeed the melodic reading is a symbol of the mind’s well-ordered and undisturbed condition. Moreover, the praising of God in well-tuned cymbals and harp and ten-stringed instruments was again a figure and sign of the parts of the body coming into natural concord like harp strings, and of the thoughts of the soul becoming like cymbals ... Do not let anyone amplify these words of the Psalter with the persuasive phrases of the profane, and do not let him attempt to recast or completely change the words. Rather let him recite and chant, without artifice, the things written just as they were spoken ...”¹⁵⁰

7.6.5.5. It was not until well into the Middle Ages that musical instruments came into use in the Western Church, and even then, their use was not universally accepted. For example, Thomas Aquinas (c 1225-1274) said: “Instruments of music such as harps and psalteries, the church does not adopt for divine praises, lest it should seem to Judaize.”

7.6.5.6. Protestants, at the time of the Reformation, held to the position that the modes of worship associated with the sacrificial worship of the OT ceremonial system have been changed in the NT economy. Reformed Protestants did not accept the use of *any* components of worship associated with the bloody sacrificial system (except the singing of Psalms, as the NT tells us to do this [Eph 5.19, 20; Col 3.16; James 5.13—the Greek has ‘psalms’]).

7.6.5.7. Musical instruments were re-introduced into Reformed Protestant worship about 150 years ago. This has been only the beginning. Incense, liturgical dance, non-Scriptural hymns, holy days, Lent, etc. are all coming back into churches, even those that claim to hold to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*—The Assembly’s *Directory for Public Worship* explicitly rules out the introduction of these elements of the OT ceremonial worship and manmade worship.

7.6.5.8. The modern Church is mistaken in using musical instruments in, or as, worship, as they were part of the never-to-be-repeated sacrificial system and we have no express or implied command to use them in NT worship.¹⁵¹

8. What was to be the punishment for improper observance at the dedication of the image?

8.1. Whoever did not fall down and worship the image was to be thrown into a blazing furnace.

8.1.1. Those who failed to comply would face instant death—with no trial.

8.1.2. The harshness of the penalty indicates that submission by the officials was obligatory.

8.1.3. False religions and tyrannical governments must enforce compliance by threatened severity. Only true Christianity is able to achieve willing adherents out of love.

8.2. The furnace may have been (probably was) a brick kiln used for firing bricks on the plain of Dura. Remains of furnaces for this purpose have been found in excavations outside of the ruins of ancient Babylon.

9. How did the administrators respond to the command?

9.1. All the people (officials) of every nation (province) and language group fell down and worshiped the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up; with, of course, the exception of the three Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (12).

¹⁴⁹ Eusebius, “Commentary on Psalm [91/92] vv. 2-3”, *Patrologia Graeca* 23, 1171.

¹⁵⁰ Athanasius, “Letter to Marcellinus,” in *Athanasius – The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus* (Translation and Introduction by Robert C. Gregg) (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 125-127.

¹⁵¹ For an analysis of objections to the view presented here (e.g., that the Psalms command us to use musical instruments), see: Chapter 10 – “Praise Him with the Spiritual Harp and Lyre” in: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires* (*Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship*), 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 9.2. Why did the people fall before the image?
 - 9.2.1. The king's command—as an absolute and arbitrary tyrant he could command what he wished.
 - 9.2.2. The threat of severe punishment for disobedience—in general sinful men, without the indwelling of the Spirit, are willing to do anything (from false worship, to stealing, and even murder) to preserve their own lives, if they feel they can get away with the evil action.
 - 9.2.3. The overwhelming influence of the awesome image—people are easily influenced by spectacle. We see how each generation comes up with more ways to impress. For example, the Roman Emperors tried to gain recognition through the spectacles at the games and triumph parades; each Olympic Committee attempts to outdo the previous one with a greater spectacle at the opening ceremonies; cities aspire to have the tallest structures, rock concerts use more and more lights, projection screens, and fireworks to impress; at the 2008 DNC, Obama gave his acceptance speech from an elaborate set that was reminiscent of a Greek temple.
 - 9.2.4. The power of the emotional response to the music—we can think how different kinds of music such as marching bands, rhythmic drums, quiet piano pieces, a stirring rendition of Beethoven's 9th Symphony or the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah can stir very different emotions.
 - 9.2.5. The peoples had no religious principles—falling before one idol or god was no different from falling before another. Even the traditions of their ancestors were of no relevance since the nations had been made subject to Nebuchadnezzar. From their perspective, his god or gods had defeated their gods and they were subject to a more powerful god. If a person does not know God personally and experientially one religion (other than the true one) is as good as another, depending on which way the wind blows on a particular day.
- 9.3. What would have been the expected outcome of the officials and leaders of each nation (province) in the empire having paid homage to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image?
Nebuchadnezzar's could expect the:
 - 9.3.1. Officials to act as representatives of the people's they governed. The concept of federal representation and covenant obligations were well entrenched throughout the AME. The idea of individual freedom was essentially non-existent.
 - 9.3.2. Officials to be fully subservient to him in the future.
 - 9.3.3. Subject people of each province to follow the same course of obeisance as their rulers.
10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 10.1. *Presumptive Illusions* – Nebuchadnezzar had grand ideas. His head was filled with his own perceived merit and power.
 - 10.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar was no different from all prideful men who are elevated to positions of absolute dictator with the 'freedom' to exercise tyrannical control over their subjects.
 - 10.1.2. These men want to honour themselves and have crowds of their followers around them.
 - 10.1.3. We might wonder how it is possible for so many totalitarian dictators to arise.
 - 10.1.3.1. They have appeared in every generation—starting with Lamech before the Flood, and continuing again with dictators after the Flood—e.g., Sargon, Hammurabi, Khufu, Thutmose III ...
 - 10.1.3.2. Examples in recent history include: Adolf Hitler, Kim Il-sung or his son Kim Jong-Il, Nicolae Ceausescu, Idi Amin, Robert Mugabe, Saddam Hussein, Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, etc.
 - 10.1.3.3. Why do people allow men to become dictators over them? Possible answers include:
 - 10.1.3.3.1. *Fear's potency* – Dictators are generally mean and cruel and

average people cannot resist the weapons they wield—whether the weapons are economic or a secret police force.

- 10.1.3.3.2. *False promises* – Dictators make promises, such as providing peace and prosperity that they cannot fulfill, but sound good. People are fooled by the appeal to their baser desires. Politicians, today, are notorious for making false promises. Likewise, those seeking office and power in every age have fallen into the same pattern.

- 10.1.3.3.2.1. “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.” Joseph Goebbels.

- 10.1.3.3.2.2. “A lie told often enough becomes truth” Vladimir Lenin.

- 10.1.3.3.3. *Faith perverted* – People born in sin are willing to let themselves be made subjects. By nature men are slaves to sin and Satan (Prov 5.22; Jn 8.34; Rom 6.16; Titus 3.3) and as a result actually cultivate their enslavement to other men. The only truly free man can be the one set free by Christ (Lk 4.18; Jn 8.36, 44; 2 Cor 3.17; Gal 5.1).

- 10.1.3.4. It is the lot of men who try to live without the true God, to become subject to men who set themselves up as gods and control their subjects through the harsh use of power.

- 10.1.4. Today the primary descendant of the tyrannical empires of the AME is the Islamic Caliphate, in which adherents of Islam wish to establish a world-controlling empire under the political headship of a single Caliph who would be the successor to the Mohammed and exercise his political authority. Nebuchadnezzar’s empire and all tyrannical realms since use the same basic tactics that Islam uses today to maintain control over people:

- 10.1.4.1. Permit only one-party rule and/or prohibit and limit elections.
 - 10.1.4.2. Hold people’s behaviour in check through threats of violent punishment, not through the love of what is right.
 - 10.1.4.3. Apply arbitrary procedures under the guise of law: arrest, confiscation, punishment, and execution.
 - 10.1.4.4. Prohibit freedom of thought and expression.
 - 10.1.4.5. Nationalize and expropriate private property.
 - 10.1.4.6. Play favourites with special interest groups.
 - 10.1.4.7. Provide ‘cradle-to-grave’ care (in health, education and welfare) so that the citizens become dependent subjects of the largess of the government
 - 10.1.4.8. Use nationalistic and human religious traditions to engender allegiance to the state.

- 10.1.5. Nebuchadnezzar *presumptive illusions* are a warning to us:

- 10.1.5.1. We must not be surprised that men want to set themselves up as tyrannical gods. This is the only course that is consistent with man’s depraved nature. It was the course that Adam and Eve pursued at the beginning of time (Gen 3.5), it was the means by which Satan attempted to tempt Jesus (Mt 4.8, 9), and it is the source of attraction for all power mongers (Rev 13.4-7, 11-18).

- 10.1.5.2. We must not think that men are getting better and that there is less of a tendency today for men to pursue the course of absolute, and abusive, dictatorship. Recent history teaches otherwise.
- 10.1.5.3. We must always be on our guard and, through prayer, wise application of our freedoms and rights, and the use of the franchise and civil procedures, protect ourselves and our neighbours from evil men.
- 10.2. *Pervasive Idolatry* – Idolatry is the natural course that all men will follow if the Holy Spirit does not rein them in.
 - 10.2.1. Idolatry can take many forms:
 - 10.2.1.1. In the instance we have been considering in this chapter, idolatry is worshipping a man or an image of a created being. We see this kind of idolatry in the way people worship politicians, athletes, or celebrities.
 - 10.2.1.2. One of the definitions of idolatry is ‘adoration, reverence, or devotion to something other than God’.
 - 10.2.1.2.1. Certainly, people can set themselves up as idols, since a person can have an excessive devotion to himself.
 - 10.2.1.2.2. People can also make material objects (gold, money, jewellery, houses, cars) the objects of their reverence and thus idols.
 - 10.2.1.2.3. Also, there can be excessive or blind devotion to a system of thought or an idea. So, adherents of Darwinian Evolution, atheism, environmentalism, or global warming theories are idolaters.
 - 10.2.1.3. If God is not our primary focus and first priority (Mt 6.33), then anything that is put in his place is an idol.
 - 10.2.2. Adherents of *all* false religions, and even many (most) Christians are guilty of introducing objects of blatant or subtle idolatry.
 - 10.2.2.1. We don’t have to look very far to find idolatry in Buddhism or Hinduism. But it is also in Judaism and Islam since both of these religions, although they claim to worship the one true God, have replaced the true personal God (Trinitarian, Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, Saviour) with a caricature. The same applies to Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, etc.
 - 10.2.2.2. Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism have idols as much as the pagans and false religions. They dedicate icons, paintings, statues, graves, saints, Mary, etc. for devotion; and associate rites with their devotion.
 - 10.2.2.3. Evangelical Protestants are also idolaters. They have adulterated and polluted the true worship of God with their manmade hymns and their introduction of unauthorized practices such as instrumental music. They also are idolaters in their adoration of men and false doctrines (e.g., dispensationalist speculations, human free will to choose salvation).
 - 10.2.2.4. However, lest we look smugly at others, Reformed Presbyterians are also guilty of idolatry. In our hearts we can make men and systems, rather than God our primary focus. We are hardly less immune to idolatry than were Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men or an Incan priest. We just hide it better. To the extent that we are kept from idolatry, it is by God’s grace alone.
 - 10.2.3. Idol worship is pervasive throughout the human race, throughout history.
 - 10.2.3.1. Men have no compunction about falling before or reverencing their idols.
 - 10.2.3.2. It really does not require compulsion or fear of reprisal to get people to bow before idols because our natural instinct is to worship idols.
 - 10.2.4. People go to great expense for their false views:
 - 10.2.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar expended sums of wealth building and gilding his image. Most images worshiped as idols throughout history have been expensive (with gold and precious stones; Is 46.6). Men believe that if their idols are

- not lavish and if their construction of them does not cost them a degree of discomfort, then the god represented by the idol will not be honoured.
- 10.2.4.2. The kings of Egypt destroyed thousands of slaves building their mausoleums. Canaanites offered their children to different Baals. And, Aztec and Incan priests offered the lives of thousands of virgins and captive warriors.
- 10.2.4.3. Today we can consider the funds (sometimes in very poor counties) that are spent building mosques, temples, and even church buildings under the false belief that the sacrifice on the part of the suppliant will appease or please the god.
- 10.2.4.4. God requires a tribute of one tenth of our increase as a means of reminding us that we are his subjects and that ultimately the universe is his possession. But he does not require his worshipers to exhaust their resources in vain attempts to placate him. Rather he looks for worship in Spirit and in truth (Jn 4.24).
- 10.2.5. Idolatry is a pernicious evil that pervades all of man's thinking and practice. Thus, the NT writers warn us to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10.14; 1 Jn 5.21). We must be aware of idolatry's hold and avoid it with great care.
- 10.3. *Pliant Inconsistency* – Men with false beliefs and worldviews can be easily and quickly turned to almost any false beliefs—but not to truth, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- 10.3.1. What demonstrates this truth from the account in Daniel?
- 10.3.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar would have professed the gods of his ancestors, as the priest-king head of the empire, yet he introduces another god—the implication being that the gods already recognized and honoured were not sufficient for the care and superintendence of the empire.
- 10.3.1.2. The leaders of the nations within the empire had also professed the gods of their own ancestors and nations to be the true gods, yet they easily fell before a new god in compliance with a human command. This shows that their commitment to their god(s) was superficial.
- 10.3.1.3. Of course, adding another false god in a system that espouses a pantheon of gods is not really an inconsistency since one god is as good as another.
- 10.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar had made a profession that Jehovah/Yahweh is the true God (46). Yet, the impression made upon him was not lasting. In direct defiance and contradiction of that profession, he set up a false god and demanded that it be worshiped.
- 10.3.3. Men today are no different:
- 10.3.3.1. Men on whom God has made a marked impression, but who have not been truly converted, quickly return to their former idolatries and even extend them
- 10.3.3.2. Men with strong convictions often fall short of sound conversion.
- 10.3.3.2.1. Expressions of zeal, compassion, or exuberance do not guarantee on-going compliance with truth (Mt 13.3-9).
- 10.3.3.2.2. Men often profess belief in the true God only as far as they feel it can help achieve other ends.
- 10.3.3.2.3. Politicians (especially in the US) become very 'religious' around election time. For example, Obama attended church during the campaign, but six months into his presidency, apparently, had not attended a single service.
- 10.3.3.2.4. People who are facing disasters (relatives trapped in a mine, an approaching hurricane, facing chemotherapy, seeing off loved ones heading into a war zone, experiencing a rapid descent in an airplane due to a failed engine, etc.) often claim prayer as their

means of support.

10.3.3.2.5. But these people have no interest in what God requires of men.

10.3.3.3. Many who have felt conviction of guilt over their actions continue to wallow in the same sins.

10.3.3.3.1. For example, someone with a severe hangover says, 'I won't drink like that again.' But the next weekend he is partying in the same way. Or a person who spreads rumours finds out that he has really hurt a friend and swears to himself he won't do that again. But the next time juicy gossip comes along he sends out an e-mail repeating it.

10.3.3.3.2. The speed with which people lapse from their New Year's resolutions is a proverbial example of this tendency in human nature to profess reformation without carrying it out.

10.3.4. Men today are as gullible as they were in Nebuchadnezzar's day. Even with our modern pretensions of being scientific and not subject to myths, men today are as superstitious and deceived as were the ancient pagans.

10.3.4.1. Superstition takes many forms. Today it appears in the guise of Darwinian, psychological, sociological, or political myths—such as: man is the product of chance events in a pool of amino acids a couple of billion years ago, man is innately good, society can correct all misbehaviour through education, or governments is responsible for providing for our needs.

10.3.4.2. Men jump from one form of nonsense belief to another without seeing the inconsistencies and contradictions.

10.4. *Personal Imperative* – Each person must take personal responsibility for ensuring that he worships only the true God.

10.4.1. We must make sure that we do not profess belief in the true God and then bow down to idols.

10.4.2. We must not be fooled by the pressures of our culture or our 'friends' to abandon our adherence to the one true God or to compromise his uniqueness by reverencing false gods.

10.4.2.1. Solomon's later life is a warning of how easy it is for even professed (and true) believers to fall into syncretism and worship idols (1 Ki 11.1-8).

10.4.3. It is important that each generation understand what is the true worship that God requires and embrace it.

10.4.3.1. Knowing that the human heart can easily deceive us and lead us to follow idolatry, we need to be continually subject to the Word of God.

10.4.3.2. We need to ensure that we avoid and resist temptations to introduce false worship.

10.4.3.3. We need to stand immovable in the true worship of God and not compromise, even if 'kings' command otherwise or the threat of death compels us.

10.4.3.4. We need to pray for grace, through the indwelling of the Spirit, to restrain us from falling into idolatry.

Snitches (Dan 3.8-12)

1. Who took action to see that the king's decree was observed? (8)

1.1. Some of the astrologers.

1.2. When Nebuchadnezzar made the decree requiring worship of the image, he probably did not think about the possibility, or realize, that some of his subjects might disobey his command.

1.2.1. He probably was not specifically testing the Jews to see if they would obey.

1.2.2. Note, however, that Calvin suggests that he might have been testing the Jews: "[T]he king expected to meet with many differences of opinion, and so he placed the statue in a

- celebrated place by way of trial and experiment, whether the Jews would adopt the Babylonian rites.”¹⁵²
- 1.3. It was the guardians of the established order, a group of the wise men, who noted that the three young men disobeyed the decree and reported it to the king.
 - 1.3.1. The astrologers may not have been enemies specifically of the Jews (as a nation) at this point. But they may have been enemies of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. We will consider possible reasons for the denouncement below.
 - 1.3.2. Rather, it appears that they objected, in general, to anyone disrupting the observance of their sacred practises and the established order.
 - 1.4. They were members of the first ACLU (Akkadian/Astrologers Court Liturgical Union)—it was at work in Daniel’s day as much as it is today!
 - 1.5. Today there are numerous organizations that claim to be preservers of the established order.
 - 1.5.1. Of course, they mean their liberal, socialistic, left-wing, ‘politically correct’ views.
 - 1.5.2. Organizations in the US and Canada include: ACLU, GLAD (homosexual activists, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders), NOW (National Organization of Women), NEA/AFT (National Education Association or American Federation of Teachers), HRC (Human Rights Councils).
 2. Whom did they denounce? (8, 12)
 - 2.1. The word translated ‘denounced’ (NIV) or ‘maliciously accused’ (ESV) is an idiom in the Aramaic [אָכַל קֶרֶן (*ʾāḵal qerāṣ*)] which means: ‘eat/chew to pieces’ or ‘devour’.
 - 2.2. The Jews (8, 12) in general or certain Jewish men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (12).
 - 2.2.1. It is possible that the only Jews present who refused to worship the image were the three men. If this is so, then they denounced the specific men and referred to them by their nation of origin.
 - 2.2.2. It would be similar to someone in the southern US saying something like, “There are certain Mexicans who have taken jobs illegally in the meat processing plant.” They would not be denouncing all Mexicans or all illegal immigrants of Mexican origin. However, their statement could easily be construed as a comprehensive denouncement against the entire national group.
 - 2.3. Why were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego present and, apparently, Daniel was not?
 - 2.3.1. We have already noted that Daniel is not mentioned as having been present. He may have been absent because:
 - 2.3.1.1. As second in command in the Empire and governor of the territory of Babylon, he may have been left in the capital city (Dan 2.49). He was running the administrative affairs of the empire when Nebuchadnezzar was away.
 - 2.3.1.2. He was aware of what was going to happen (i.e., the worship of the image) and may have requested of the king, on the basis of conscience, that he be permitted not to attend.
 - 2.3.2. Leupold says, “Daniel does not deem it worth reporting his absence.”¹⁵³
 - 2.3.3. Daniel may have been in attendance, but as second in command over the entire realm, he was not asked to bow to the image, or no one dared to complain about his noncompliance.
 - 2.3.4. Whatever the reason for Daniel’s presence or absence not being mentioned, we can be sure that he would not have bowed before the image and compromised his testimony against blatant idolatry.
 - 2.3.5. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not as powerful or as well respected as Daniel and they could not excuse themselves from attendance. Also, as obedient subjects of the empire they went as far as possible in their obedience to the king without compromising their profession of Jehovah/Yahweh as the only true God.

¹⁵² Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html.

¹⁵³ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 148.

3. Was it wrong for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to attend the assembly on the plain of Dura?
 - 3.1. We will assume that they knew that the intent of the assembly was to dedicate and worship the image.
 - 3.1.1. They did not feel that attendance at the dedication ceremony was improper so did not make a case for avoiding attendance, and obeyed the king's command.
 - 3.1.2. Whereas, when it came to the command to worship the image, they refused to participate in idolatry.
 - 3.2. Can one make a distinction between being present at a pagan ceremony and actually participating in it?
 - 3.3. In general, we should start with the view that it is very dangerous for a person to attend a false worship ceremony.
 - 3.3.1. Even if one does not participate in the false worship ceremonies, attendance can soften a person's views about what is right and wrong and weaken his resolve not to participate. Continual attendance could eventually lead to participation.
 - 3.3.2. We should therefore not make it a regular practice to attend pagan or false worship exercises.
 - 3.4. There may be circumstances where other reasons may make it necessary to attend. We'll consider some examples in a moment.
 - 3.4.1. Mere observation and attendance does not imply agreement. This is, in principle, not really different from someone reading a book about Evolution. Reading the book does not mean that the reader agrees with the argument or conclusions presented.
 - 3.5. We can possibly derive some guidance from:
 - 3.5.1. 2 Kings 5.17-19: The fact that Elisha tells Naaman to go in peace seems to imply that he understood the situation that Naaman was in and that his attendance at the false worship did not mean that Naaman would participate in it or agree with it.
 - 3.5.2. 1 Corinthians 10.25-29: Paul indicates that eating meat sacrificed to idols does not imply that we agree that eating meat with this status will bring us a special blessing. This may have an indirect application to the situation of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their mere attendance at the dedication of the image may be in the same class of indifference to false worship as is eating the meat that was sacrificed to idols and then sold in the market.
 - 3.6. What are some possible valid reasons for attending a false worship observation:
 - 3.6.1. *To evaluate.* It could be useful to attend false worship, to see what is done to understand it, so as to provide a basis for a critique. We have to be careful here as we might want to make the same argument in other areas—e.g., viewing pornography to critique it. However, even here there may be legitimate reasons. A police officer might have to create an inventory of pornography on a person's PC in order to develop charges.
 - 3.6.2. *To protest.* A person may attend a false worship observation (or some other event that is perpetrating or teaching falsehood) in order to stand in protest. It may be that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego deliberately attended, knowing that their enemies would protest their nonparticipation and they would be able to make a public protest against idolatry. Randall Terry's Operation Rescue *may* be similar to this.
 - 3.6.3. *An opportunity for witness.* There may be opportunities to witness to the truth. For instance, when we lived in Sudbury and attended a Baptist church which sang human compositions, I would not sing the hymns. Some people noticed and it provided an opportunity for me to present the concept that God regulates and requires pure worship. If nothing else, it caused my associates to think about the matter of what constitutes pure worship—even if they thought I was a kook.
 - 3.6.4. *In obedience.* If the civil magistrate commands that we obey a law, we are to go as far in our obedience as we can, without sinning, even if we disagree with the law (Mt 22.21; Rom 13.1; Titus 3.1; 1 Pt 2.13-17).

- 3.6.4.1. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* provides guidance in this area: “It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience’ sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates’ just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them ...”¹⁵⁴
- 3.6.4.2. There will be some people who will argue that attendance at false worship without participation is not possible. However, the principle is the same as looking at an idol (e.g., a statue of a Hindu goddess, an image of Mary, or a carved Aztec god or image of Aphrodite in a museum) without worshipping it.
- 3.6.4.3. We have to be careful with this reason, as our motives for attendance may be valid yet we might be misunderstood as giving in to an unjust or unlawful command.
- 3.6.5. *By virtue of office*. A person in a particular government office may feel compelled to attend a false worship ceremony because of the circumstances of his office. For example, to attend the wedding or funeral of another government official. If that government official were a Jew, Hindu or Muslim it may be wise to attend the ceremony rather than to cause insult.
 - 3.6.5.1. As with the above reason, we may be misunderstood if we attended a false worship ceremony.
- 3.7. What are some examples where we might be placed in a situation where it might be appropriate to attend at the observance of false worship, without participating in it?
 - 3.7.1. Baron Mackay of Clashfern (b. 2 July 1927) is a mathematician and Scottish advocate who was appointed by Margaret Thatcher as Lord Chancellor (1987–1997). Lord Mackay has also been the Queen’s Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2005 and 2006 and was appointed by the Queen to the office of Lord Clerk Register in 2007. Lord Mackay is a devout Christian who observes the Sabbath-keeping principle. In 1986 Lord Mackay attended the funeral of a senior judge who was a Roman Catholic. In 1988 he attended another funeral service for one of his colleagues, held in a Roman Catholic church. He was an Elder in the Free Presbyterian Church. For his attendance at the funerals he was suspended from communion. The FPC Synod reviewed the action of the local congregation and upheld the censure. Lord Mackay, with great sadness, left the Free Presbyterian Church. The censure of Lord Mackay was a key factor that led to split in the FPs and the creation of the Associate Presbyterian Church (APC).¹⁵⁵
 - 3.7.2. If you were invited to a wedding of two Roman Catholics, you would probably witness them taking part in the sacrifice of the Mass as part of the wedding ceremony.
 - 3.7.3. A preacher asked to preach in another church where they do not worship according to the historic Reformed principles may have to observe aspects of worship that he disagrees with before/after he preaches. In situations like this, I have asked the Elders or ‘worship’ team leaders to conduct most of the service and I would read the Bible and preach.
- 3.8. We must be *very* careful about passing judgement on those who attend a pagan worship ceremony, without actively *participating* in the ceremony.
 - 3.8.1. We are all guilty to some degree of falling into false worship practices. No one is immune from false worship, whether in practice or attitude.
 - 3.8.2. Modern Reformed Presbyterians who might denounce the Roman Catholic Mass or some other aspect of their practice (e.g., veneration of Mary, genuflection before images of saints, or the use of confessional), are often just as involved in idolatrous worship practices but are unwilling to admit it:

¹⁵⁴ “Of the Civil Magistrate,” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 23, para. 4.

¹⁵⁵ www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Biographies/Mackay.html and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Mackay,_Baron_Mackay_of_Clashfern

- 3.8.2.1. Singing human compositions during a time of worship instead of the Psalms inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁶
 - 3.8.2.2. Using musical instruments during worship, which are symbols of animal sacrifice and are a regression to the types of the OT economy.¹⁵⁷
 - 3.8.2.3. Attending Christmas Eve or Easter services—which are not permitted by God (1 Ki 12.33 with 1 Ki 13.1-12; Is 1.13, 14; Gal 4.9-11) and are contradictory to the Westminster standards: “THERE is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord’s day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.”¹⁵⁸
 - 3.8.2.4. Paul would ask us (paraphrase), “Who has bewitched you? Wasn’t the sacrifice of Christ complete and sufficient? Why are you returning to the shadows of the OT economy?” (Galatians 3.1-3)
 - 3.8.3. We are over scrupulous about the things that we think are idolatrous but not scrupulous enough in areas where we have decided (without Biblical warrant) that our practice is acceptable and pleasing to God—largely because we like it.
4. Why did the astrologers/Chaldeans denounce the Jews?
- 4.1. We can suggest the following possible reasons:
 - 4.1.1. *Protective* – They were concerned about protecting their own positions of religious authority.
 - 4.1.1.1. As custodians of their religion, they were concerned that if anyone was permitted to be a non-observer of their gods or religious practices, others might follow his example and denounce their religion or gods.
 - 4.1.1.2. They were concerned that their positions of prominence and influence in the empire might be reduced or diminished.
 - 4.1.1.3. They were not specifically concerned about the worship of Nebuchadnezzar’s new image, but rather that their will would be done by the people—power-hungry people cannot countenance any challenges to their authority.
 - 4.1.1.4. They were not particularly concerned if people practiced other religions and observed other worship practices, as long as they also worshiped Nebuchadnezzar’s image. They lived in, and endorsed, a syncretistic polytheism so one more god wasn’t the problem. Rather it was exclusion or ignoring of their god that caused them concern.
 - 4.1.2. *Prideful* – The astrologers were envious of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They did not like the fact that these men had been promoted to positions of authority so soon after graduating from the civil service academy (Dan 2.49). They also objected to the fact that these captives/slaves had been promoted over natives or long-term citizens of the empire, rather than being relegated to positions of servitude.
 - 4.1.2.1. Ironically, it was the prayers of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that had been instrumental in saving the lives of these men (chapter 2).
 - 4.1.2.2. They would take the benefits of true religion without being grateful—much like modern folk are happy to have peace and prosperity that can only be found in societies based on Christianity, but do not want anything to do with the Lord of Christianity.
 - 4.1.3. *Parasitic* – Their apparently patriotic behaviour is actually indicative of the spirit of

¹⁵⁶ See: Chapter 9 – “The Psalter: the Hymnbook of the Church” in: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

¹⁵⁷ See: Chapter 10 – “Praise Him with the Spiritual Harp and Lyre” in: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

¹⁵⁸ “An Appendix touching Days and Places of Publick Worship,” *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.

servile sycophants. They were attempting to curry favour¹⁵⁹ with Nebuchadnezzar by snitching on the three Jews.

4.1.4. *Pawns* – Ultimately because they were pawns of Satan who was acting behind them.

4.1.4.1. Satan hates the worship of God, true religion, and the Church, and attempts to use every opportunity presented to silence those who are practicing truth and denouncing falsehood.

4.1.4.2. The force of the astrologer's denouncement, which as we noted is expressed in idiomatic Aramaic as 'eat/chew to pieces' or 'devour', is consistent with the tactics of false prophets (Ezk 22.25) and Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pt 5.8).

4.2. We see the same kind of behaviours in all false religions (whether Islam, Hinduism, Secular Humanism, or Darwinianism). Sadly, we even see some elements of this behaviour displayed in professed Christianity. Wherever the indwelling of the HS is not supremely evident, there is a marked tendency for religions to be:

4.2.1. *Protective* – Religious leaders in most systems—whether Islamic imams, Hindu priests, 'scientists,' or cultural elites in the universities, etc.—who feel that their personal positions may be undermined by expression of the true religion quickly become protective. They claim to be interested in protecting the 'truth' of their own systems but are mostly concerned that their positions of influence and power over people will be usurped. They will even use the power of the civil authority in an attempt to force compliance with their systems. For example:

4.2.1.1. Islamic imams expect infidels, from their perspective, to be brought into submission or punished by the government of Arab or other states that proclaim Islam as their primary religion.

4.2.1.2. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has pushed to have the UN pass a resolution to outlaw religious defamation—which is really an attempt to stop anyone from voicing legitimate criticisms of Islam.¹⁶⁰

4.2.1.3. Hindu extremists in the Indian state of Orissa violently attacked Christians over concern that conversions would reduce the number of adherents to Hinduism¹⁶¹ and have been instrumental in having a law passed that requires people to obtain government permission before they change their religion.

4.2.1.4. The ACLU uses the courts to shut down debate on Intelligent Design or arguments against Evolution, as it did in Dover, PA.

4.2.1.5. 'Scientists' punish editors of journals which accept and print articles favourable to creation or intelligent design.¹⁶²

4.2.2. *Prideful* – Religious leaders are as full of pride as any other man and react, sometimes with violence and certainly with verbal attacks, if historic Christianity is given any prominence. They do not like it when professing Christians are elevated to positions of prominence. An example is how the mainstream media and liberal politicians reacted to the appointment of Sarah Palin as the Vice Presidential candidate on the Republican ticket, in the 2008 US election.¹⁶³ They sent a team to Alaska to dig up 'dirt' on her and invented smears against her character.

4.2.3. *Parasitic* – Leaders of false religions are as parasitic as were the astrologers of Daniel's day. They want to be seen as having influence with world political leaders. However, there is a far more insidious way in which religious leaders are philosophically parasitic.

¹⁵⁹ From Middle English *currayen favel*, or Old French *correier fauvel*, which means to curry a fallow-colored horse. In the Middle Ages a fallow horse was a symbol of deceit. Thus, to curry favour became an idiom for 'be hypocritical'.

¹⁶⁰ www.cnsnews.com/public/content/article.aspx?RsrcID=36143; snooper.wordpress.com/2007/12/31/united-nations-ban-criticism-of-islam/

¹⁶¹ Edward T. Oakes, S.J. "The Forgotten Pogrom," *First Things*, 2008-10-08; www.firstthings.com

¹⁶² www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=42600; www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/18/AR2005081801680.html

¹⁶³ candacesalima.blogspot.com/2008/09/liberal-media-attacks-sarah-palin-and.html

- 4.2.3.1. They disavow Christianity but live off the societal capital that was put in place by Christian influence from the late Middle Ages through the Reformation.¹⁶⁴ For example, they use freedom of speech in the West to propagate their false views, without acknowledging that freedom of speech is an inheritance of the Christian West and is unavailable in nations that are under the autocracy of Communism or benighted Islam.
 - 4.2.3.2. They claim to follow the facts in their scientific research, while ignoring what the facts really show us about the hand of God being visible throughout nature. While they emphatically state that science is to be based on empirical evidence gathered through our five senses alone, they cannot demonstrate that this statement is a logically valid premise nor prove that their own thoughts are real using their ‘empirical’ evidence. Further, they deny the reality that modern science is founded on a Christian worldview—e.g., causality, repeatability of phenomena.
 - 4.2.4. *Pawns* – False religions along with most governments, are the two pawns—the False Prophet and the Beast (Rev 16.13; Rev 19.20; Rev 20.10)—that Satan uses to attack Christianity. They (false religion and national governments) will do anything (including bribes, intimidation, lies and murder) to attack Christianity. They hate the true God, his true religion, his Son, his laws and requirement, his plan of Salvation, and his Church. They particularly hate it when Christianity makes the exclusive claim to be the only true religion.
5. How did the astrologers/Chaldeans address the king? (9-12)
- 5.1. *Adulated* – They used the typical flattery of servile subjects and said, “O king, live forever!”
 - 5.1.1. We considered this greeting when the wise men attempted to get Nebuchadnezzar to reveal the contents of his dream (Dan 2.4). We noted about this particular adulation that:
 - 5.1.1.1. It was likely used as a wish that the king’s reputation be perpetuated.
 - 5.1.1.2. When used by the court astrologers, it was probably nothing more than an empty formality; although it was still a sign of respect.
 - 5.1.2. The wise men appeared to be concerned with advancing the interests of the king, but were more likely concerned about maintaining and advancing their own positions and power.
 - 5.2. *Appealed* – They appealed to the king’s decree and associated punishment for noncompliance.
 - 5.2.1. They undoubtedly had no real concern for upholding law.
 - 5.2.2. They only appealed to the exercise of law when it suited their purposes.
 - 5.2.3. They were like most people who look for any opportunity to get around or ignore laws if they think they can get away with disobedience, but are quick to bring down the demands of law and its censures if it serves their own purposes. For example, people:
 - 5.2.3.1. ‘Forget’ to declare income when they are paid cash, but watch gleefully when tax cheats are fined or jailed.
 - 5.2.3.2. Drive above the speed limit on the 401, but feel vindicated when the guy who went by them 10kms faster is caught in the speed trap under the next overpass.
 - 5.2.3.3. Solicit sexual favours when on business trips to Las Vegas but become angry if they discover that someone had an affair with their wives.
 - 5.2.4. People everywhere, throughout time, have displayed this kind double-standard. It also appears in other areas of behaviour such as:
 - 5.2.4.1. When automobile drivers wish that others would take public transit so that they can have less crowded roads.
 - 5.2.4.2. People complain about the price of gasoline but are unwilling to have a refinery built in their municipality.

¹⁶⁴ See for example, Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

- 5.2.4.3. People are happy to use airplanes to travel to the Caribbean but are not willing to have an airport built near them.
- 5.2.4.4. They want taxes kept low but also want services funded by taxes—and especially want their salaries increased if they are on the public payroll.
- 5.3. *Accused* – They not only made an accusation against the three men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—but presented the grave consequences that were associated with this breach of law.
 - 5.3.1. “Over the affairs (appointed) of the province”: They reminded the king that since these men were in positions of authority over the affairs of the province of Babylon that their behaviour could influence others, and therefore needed to be dealt with (compare with, Est 1.16-22).
 - 5.3.2. “Some Jews”: They implied that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were being insolent. They were mere Jews, a subject and captive people, and it was disrespectful of them to think that they could disobey the king and his royal religious advisors.
 - 5.3.3. “Who pay no attention to you, O king”: They reminded the king that his will was absolute law and that these men had clearly been disobedient to a direct command.
 - 5.3.3.1. They astrologers/Chaldeans claim that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego paid no attention to the king’s command. They didn’t ignore it. They took it seriously, but chose to disobey. Choosing a different course of action is not ignoring but rather disagreeing.
 - 5.3.3.2. They appear to suggest that their refusal to obey the king’s command was based on a rebellious contempt for the king’s authority rather than a principled response to a great evil.
 - 5.3.4. “Whom you have set”: They insinuated that the king had created the problem by setting these impertinent Jews in positions of authority in the Babylonian Empire.
 - 5.3.5. “They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up”: They appeal to a greater ‘good’ by suggesting that the disobedience of the three men went beyond disobedience to the king but showed disrespect for the gods of Babylon.
 - 5.3.5.1. They lay the charge of being irreligious before Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, which is ironic as the three men were likely more sincerely religious than were the astrologers/Chaldeans.
 - 5.3.5.2. Early Christians were accused by both Jews and Romans of being irreligious. The Jews accused them of irreligion for not accepting the ceremonial ordinances of the OT economy and the Romans accused them of irreligion for not agreeing to worship the Roman gods and, in particular, the Emperor.¹⁶⁵
- 6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 6.1. *Precedence of Cults* – False religion in whatever forms it takes (Islam, Hinduism, Secular Humanism, Darwinianism, etc.) will always try to take precedence over the true religion.
 - 6.1.1. As we saw above, the leaders of false religions are: protective, prideful, parasitic, pawns.
 - 6.1.2. False religions cannot allow free inquiry and discourse lest their flimsy foundations be discovered and destroyed.
 - 6.1.3. The proponents of false religions will do whatever they can do, and think they need to do, to suppress Christianity (or other religions) to maintain the precedence of their own religion. They use intimidation and violence (often by the power of the state and with the endorsement of the state) to maintain their supremacy. For example, Islamic *jihadism* and Islamic states prohibiting other religions or Hindu extremists in the Indian state of Orissa having a law passed that requires people to obtain police permission before they change their religion.
 - 6.2. *Persecution of Christians* – There will always be attacks against the true religion until Christ returns to bring everyone in his Church home to Heaven.

¹⁶⁵ *Tertullian*, To the Heathen (Nations), 1.17; *Athenagoras*, 13; see: Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Christians in Their Own Words* (The Bruderhof Foundation, Farmington, PA. 2003), p. 48; www.plough.com/ebooks/pdfs/EarlyChristians.pdf.

- 6.2.1. In OT times, the Jews lived in relative isolation from the other nations. However, during periods of captivity, in Egypt or Babylon, or during times of occupation under the Seleucids (312-164 BC) and after the Maccabean period (63BC to 70 AD) under Rome, they suffered greatly. True believers before the time of Christ were persecuted for their faith in God and his coming Messiah.
- 6.2.2. Christians have been persecuted for their faith and worship since the earliest days of Christianity: from the earliest martyrs under Rome,¹⁶⁶ through the time of the Inquisition and into the Reformation era¹⁶⁷. Christians continue to suffer greatly today.¹⁶⁸ It is estimated that more people were martyred for Christ in the 20th century than in all the preceding centuries together.¹⁶⁹ “[A]bout 70 million faithful have given their lives for the faith, and of these, 45.5 million—fully 65%—were in the last century, according to “The New Persecuted”.¹⁷⁰

Steadfast (Dan 3.13-18)

1. What is Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction on hearing that the three men had not worshiped his image?
 - 1.1. Anger (furious rage)
 - 1.1.1. The Aramaic uses an idiom that cannot be translated directly into English. The Aramaic uses two words in succession that could both be translated as ‘anger’ or its synonyms. The KJV, NKJV and NASB translate the two words with the ‘and’ literally as ‘rage and fury’ or ‘rage and anger’ but miss the subtlety of the idiom by using the ‘and’ directly. The Aramaic idiom is similar to the situation when the Hebrew (and its cognates) redouble a word to emphasize it (e.g., ‘to die you will die’ for ‘surely you will die’ Gen 2.17). So, we can translate the words in verse 13 something like: ‘*in anger of wrath*’ or ‘*shaking/raging with anger*’ and thus we get the form in our English translations of ‘*furious with rage*’ (NIV) or ‘*in furious rage*’ (ESV).
 - 1.2. Why was he angry with the three men?
 - 1.2.1. The astrologers/Chaldeans had been successful in their attempt to attack the noncompliance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and had been able to get the king’s attention and direct his displeasure against the three men.
 - 1.2.2. In general, men (and women) who are not believers and who have obtained positions of power, expect other people to obey their commands immediately.
 - 1.2.2.1. They become distraught if their subordinates have other opinions about what should be done or take a different course of action.
 - 1.2.2.2. Calvin observed, in regard to this verse, that kings find it troublesome when their authority is despised and want everyone to be obedient to them, even if their commands are unjust,
 - 1.2.2.3. As we noted previously and as Lord Acton said in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”
 - 1.2.2.4. By God’s general grace, this tendency is restrained in most people
 - 1.2.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have had a short fuse and a violent temper (Dan 2.12; Dan 3.19), even though he is generally considered to be a magnanimous ruler. He could control the practices of his subjects, but not the passions of his spirit.
 - 1.2.4. A man who has been converted by the Spirit learns to bring his passions under control and checks his anger.
 - 1.2.4.1. An un-Christ like spirit is given to anger (Prov 19.19; 2 Cor 12.20; Gal 5.20).
 - 1.2.4.2. A person filled with Spiritual grace refrains from temperamental anger (Ps 37.8;

¹⁶⁶ www.innvista.com/culture/religion/earlmar.htm.

¹⁶⁷ John Foxe (ed. William Byron Forbush), *Foxe’s book of Martyrs*; www.ccel.org/ccel/foxe/martyrs/files/martyrs.html

¹⁶⁸ Voice of the Martyrs; www.persecution.net/.

¹⁶⁹ www.gcts.edu/ockenga/globalchristianity/gd/gd16.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/681473/posts.

Eph 4.31; Col 3.8; 1 Tim 2.8; James 1.19, 20).

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar do on hearing of their disobedience?
 - 2.1. He commanded that the three men be brought to him. (13) Why is this significant?
 - 2.1.1. He could have easily commanded that they be thrown into the fire without an audience with him.
 - 2.1.2. He could have behaved like the capricious Queen of Hearts in *Alice and Wonderland*. When Alice wasn't able to inform the Queen about the identity of the three gardeners lying at the base of the rose tree, "The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, screamed 'Off with her head!'"
 - 2.1.3. They were Hebrew captives/slaves who had been promoted to positions of authority at the request of Daniel. They were not necessarily favourites of the king, so any special consideration of them warrants notice.
 - 2.1.4. To be given an audience with the greatest king on earth would have been remarkable, under any circumstance.
 - 2.2. He queried them about the truthfulness of the claim of the astrologers/Chaldeans that they had not bowed down to the golden image (14). Why might he have made this query?
 - 2.2.1. From the king's perspective, it was hard to believe that anyone would dare to disobey him, so he displayed a willingness to find out if it could even be a possibility.
 - 2.2.2. He may have wondered about the truthfulness of the astrologers/Chaldeans. They had not been very accurate when they said that no one could interpret his dream, so he might have thought that they were mistaken in their report about the three men's behaviour.
 - 2.2.3. He probably had a degree of respect for them, as he did for Daniel, and hoped that the message from the astrologers/Chaldeans was incorrect.
 - 2.2.4. He gave them the benefit of the doubt. He gave them an opportunity to defend themselves and used the equivalent of a court procedure and a form of due process, in spite of his anger.
 - 2.3. He gave them another chance to conform their behaviour to his laws and commands (15).
 - 2.3.1. Being granted a second chance by a king of the ANE was likely not a common occurrence.
 - 2.3.2. It appears that there is some moderation in his words and even a willingness to remove any blame from them if they conformed their behaviour to his command. It is as if he said, "There must be some mistake here. We'll overlook this if you are willing to obey my command".
 - 2.3.3. He even appears willing to repeat the worship ceremony so that they have a chance to bow down to his image. This is an amazing concession on his part to their rebellion against his command.
 - 2.3.4. All of the English translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV) add an expression like 'well', or 'good' to the first part of verse 15. The Aramaic text leaves the outcome of their compliance unstated, "If you do—but if not ..."
 - 2.3.4.1. In logic, this is referred to as a protasis without an apodosis; where a protasis is the if-clause in a conditional sentence. For example, in "If A, then B", the protasis is "If A" and the outcome ("then B") is the apodosis.
 - 2.3.4.2. It may have been better to have left the sentence dangling, rather than supplying the implied missing word. It is more accurate and it heightens the sense of expectancy and foreboding in the discourse.
3. What threat and boast did Nebuchadnezzar make?
 - 3.1. He repeated the threat of execution by fire for disobedience (Dan 3.6).
 - 3.1.1. Turn or burn.
 - 3.1.2. Notice that the threat is somewhat hollow in that the initial warning of immediate execution was not carried out.

- 3.1.3. We have noted previously that false religions have to resort to physical violence in an attempt to achieve their ascendancy over the true religion (OT Messianic faith and NT Christianity).
- 3.1.4. Pagan religions cannot defend their positions rationally so they have to resort to either force or farce to challenge Christianity.
- 3.2. He boasted that no god could rescue or save them.
 - 3.2.1. Where do we find similar claims from other pagans in the Biblical account?
 - 3.2.1.1. Pharaoh: Exodus 5.2.
 - 3.2.1.2. Sennacherib through the Rabshakeh (field commander): 2 Kings 18.35.
 - 3.2.1.3. The Psalms speak of men in general who take this view about God (Ps 10.4; Ps 12.4; Ps 14.1)
 - 3.2.1.4. Herod received worship due to God, and effectively boasted to be the god who controlled the famine and food supply of the province of Judea: Acts 12.20-25.
 - 3.2.1.5. Job and Paul tell us that this is normal behaviour for man steeped in sin (Job 21.15; Rom 1.28).
 - 3.2.2. What is the essence of this boast?
 - 3.2.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar claims to be stronger than any god, and to have supreme power, even the power to fabricate a god.
 - 3.2.2.2. He is declaring himself to be the measure of all things.
 - 3.2.2.3. He is effectively declaring himself to be God. If no god is stronger than him, then he is the strongest being or entity in the universe, and therefore (by definition) he must be God.
 - 3.2.3. What is the irony in this claim?
 - 3.2.3.1. If no god was stronger than Nebuchadnezzar, then why would Nebuchadnezzar bother to worship the gods? What could they do that he could not, himself, do?
 - 3.2.3.2. Without realizing it, he is declaring the worthlessness of all manmade religions. The pantheons of the pagans, the delusions of the deists, the mumblings of the Muslims, blasphemies of the Buddhists, and the heresies of the Hindus are all pretentious prattle. In the end they resort to human definitions of God and of true religion.
 - 3.2.3.3. Manmade gods are worthless (Is 40.18-20; Is 44.9-20).
 - 3.2.3.4. Biblical Christianity is unique among all religions in that only through the Bible and Christ does God reveal himself as the infinite and eternal Creator, one God in three persons.
 - 3.2.4. Why then did Nebuchadnezzar pretend to worship the gods?
 - 3.2.4.1. As a man, he was by nature religious and knew that there is a true God. He groped after God and created his own substitutes.
 - 3.2.4.2. He knew that his subjects also were religious beings and he was seeking to provide them with an outlet for their religious sentiments, which he controlled. From his viewpoint, it would be better to direct their religious affections to strengthen his control over them than to allow them to worship in their own ways.
- 4. What do Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego mean by their response in verse 16?
 - 4.1. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer (ESV)/defend ourselves before (NIV) you in this matter."
 - 4.2. What could they be saying?
 - 4.2.1. There is no need of an answer and we won't explain ourselves.
 - 4.2.2. There is no need to give an explanation because your pagan mind is darkened and you could not understand the truth if it were explained to you.
 - 4.2.3. We don't need to give you an answer because we are accountable only to God.
 - 4.2.4. We don't need to answer but will explain ourselves.

- 4.3. Before we determine what their answer means, what do you notice about their direct address to the king?
- 4.3.1. There is no honorific used in their address. They don't use the term 'king' or other expression such as that used by the wise men or Daniel (Dan 2.4, 28, 29, 31, 37).
 - 4.3.2. Their response may have been too personal and arrogant on their part.
 - 4.3.3. Alternatively, it may be that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had become personal friends of King Nebuchadnezzar and this is why he is patient with them and giving them a chance to explain themselves.
 - 4.3.4. Alternatively, it may be an abbreviated account of their address to the king.
- 4.4. We should conclude that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not being evasive, impertinent, or prideful in their answer. This is inconsistent with their display of godly faith and the overall tone of the book of Daniel which is to show the supremacy of the true religion which humbles men and exalts the true God.
- 4.5. Whatever they are saying, we should understand it as a direct statement of truth and absolute trust in God. We need to understand the statement in verse 16 in the context of verse 17.
- 4.5.1. The best way to interpret it seems to be: "There is no need for us to provide a defence of our actions because we are being obedient to God and we appeal to him in this matter."
 - 4.5.2. We find an example of this in the martyrdom of Cyprian who was sentenced to death (probably 258 AD) under the edict of Valerian in 257 AD. In the official court transcript of his examination we read the following:
 - 'On the morning of September 14 [this is the date in the translation, however the Latin¹⁷¹ seems to refer to a different date; I haven't researched this, it may be due to the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar], a large crowd gathered at Sesti by order of proconsul Galerius Maximus. And the same proconsul Galerius Maximus ordered that Cyprian should be brought to the hearing which he conducted on that same day in the Sauciolus Hall. When Bishop Cyprian stood before him, the proconsul said to him, "Are you Tascius Ciprianus?"
 - Bishop Cyprian answered, "Yes, I am."
 - Proconsul Galerius Maximus said, "Are you the one who has presented himself as the leader of a sacrilegious sect?"
 - Bishop Cyprian answered, "I am."
 - Galerius Maximus said, "The most holy emperors bid you to sacrifice."
 - Bishop Cyprian said, "I will not do it."
 - Proconsul Galerius Maximus said, "Think it over."
 - Bishop Cyprian said, "*Do what you have been ordered to do. In such a just cause there is nothing to think over.*"¹⁷²
5. What character traits are displayed by the response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (16-18)
- 5.1. *Confidence*. They displayed a strong confidence that God could save them and would, if it agreed with his sovereign will to do so.
 - 5.1.1. On what was their confidence based? On neither arrogance nor fanaticism.
 - 5.1.1.1. It was not based on their own abilities or perceived worth.
 - 5.1.1.2. Nor was it based on disrespect for the value of their lives.
 - 5.1.1.3. They were not seeking martyrdom by throwing away their lives.
 - 5.1.2. They had reason to hope and expect that God would deliver them by resolving this issue in some manner.
 - 5.1.2.1. The display of blatant idolatry and presumption—"[W]ho is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"—was so dishonouring of God that the three believed that God would deal with the extreme display of human arrogance according to the Scriptures they had been taught (Ps 74.18-19; Ps 89.50; Ps 94.2-

¹⁷¹ www.ultramontes.pl/cypriani_martyrium.htm.

¹⁷² *Acta Proconsularia*, 3-6; philthompson.net/pages/martyrs/cyprianmart.html.

- 8; Is 37.23-24; Is 43.1–2).
- 5.1.2.2. However, we should not conclude that they had been given a vision or had an intuition that God would perform a miracle on their behalf as he had at time of Moses or Elijah.
 - 5.1.3. Their confidence was based on a trust in God’s providential governance of the universe and his benevolence toward his own people.
 - 5.1.3.1. They knew God personally (“our God”) and confidently expected him to be faithful to them in response to their faith and trust in him.
 - 5.1.3.2. They believed that God would provide a way of deliverance (not necessarily miraculous) or he would take them into his nearer presence and they would then know the perfect and God-glorifying reason for their death at that time.
 - 5.2. *Courage.* They refused to obey the unlawful command of the king even if it meant a painful death.
 - 5.2.1. They were not ashamed to align with and profess the true religion, and to denounce false religion (18).
 - 5.2.2. They were not afraid to tell the most powerful monarch in the world that they would not obey his command, because they were obeying the command of a greater king.
 - 5.2.3. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image and did not insult or affront them; nor did they rashly thrust themselves into a trial.
 - 5.2.3.1. They were prepared to participate in a form of peaceful civil disobedience.
 - 5.2.3.2. They did not become terrorists for a cause.
 - 5.3. *Conviction.* They declared themselves ready to die rather than to yield to practices that God had proscribed.
 - 5.3.1. They faced imminent death but did not hold their lives of more value than a commitment to truth.
 - 5.3.1.1. They treated God’s honour and glory of greater importance than clinging to their own lives for a few more years.
 - 5.3.1.2. Their unwillingness to participate in idolatrous worship was not because they were ‘scientific rationalists’ who did not believe in the existence of the gods. They were not atheists. Rather their unwillingness was due to the fact that they were believers in the only true God.
 - 5.3.1.3. They feared God rather than men (Mt 10.28; Heb 10.31).
 - 5.3.2. They did not compromise. They didn’t say something like “It is better for us to capitulate to the king’s command, after all we aren’t really worshiping the image, than to destroy any hope that we could have an influence for morality and the safety of our people at a future date.” They didn’t believe, as many do, that they were indispensable for the cause of the Kingdom.
 - 5.3.2.1. Many in the Church attempt to defend various forms of compromise, such as telling lies to avoid death. These men realized that dying for truth is preferable to denying truth.
 - 5.3.2.2. In this regard, Calvin said, “But at this day, this fallacy deceives the multitude, since they think it lawful to debate whether it is allowable to swerve from the true worship of God for a time, whenever any utility presents itself on the opposite side.”¹⁷³
 - 5.4. *Commitment.* They were committed to observing only true worship and understood that all forms of false worship are an abomination to God.
 - 5.4.1. They took the Second Commandment (Ex 20.4-5) seriously.
 - 5.4.1.1. Their worship of God was not based on expediency, but principle.
 - 5.4.1.2. We should remember the relative young age of these three and be impressed by

¹⁷³ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html.

- their understanding and commitment to the Law of God, regardless of the cost.
- 5.4.2. They understood that ultimately there is nothing more important for mankind than to render to God true and lawful worship.
- 5.4.2.1. Man's primary purpose in existence is to glorify God through worship and service, and to gain meaning and purpose from that action.
- 5.4.3. People in the Church today generally don't understand this commitment.
- 5.4.3.1. The Church, in general, has little understanding about what constitutes true worship and what falls within the scope of false worship.
- 5.4.3.2. We do not comprehend how much false worship has been embraced by the Church—not just by the Orthodox denominations and Roman Catholicism, but also by much of Protestantism.
- 5.4.3.3. Even if it is the Lord's purpose that we should die for refusing to participate in false worship, we should not participate in it—for any reason.
- 5.4.3.3.1. At the time of the Reformation in the 16th and during the 17th century many Protestant believers understood how important it is to render to God only true worship and lost their lives because of their unwillingness to compromise.
- 5.4.3.3.2. They understood that true worship excludes not only veneration of images and participation in the Roman Catholic Mass, but also the use of human compositions (called 'hymns') and instrumental music in worship, and the observance of human authorized holy days (e.g., Christmas and Easter).
- 5.4.3.3.3. They did not consider the number who agreed with them to be the factor for determining right from wrong. As there were only three who protested against Nebuchadnezzar's false worship, the Reformers were usually outnumbered.
- 5.4.3.3.4. Today the broad spectrum of the Church (including Protestant Evangelical and Reformed) compromises true worship by accepting practices that had polluted the Church during the middle ages.
- 5.4.3.4. A person today who is willing to die for the preservation of true worship and to avoid false worship would be considered a fanatic or crackpot. It is a concept that is so foreign to modern thinking in the Church that it is considered to be suspect.
6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 6.1. *Rebellion against God* – The haughtiness of men, and in particular rulers, in their rebellion against God.
- 6.1.1. Men think they are God and have ultimate control over their lives and the lives of others.
- 6.1.1.1. Monarchs of the ancient world considered themselves to be equivalent to God and their people honoured them as gods.
- 6.1.1.2. They ruled with absolute authority and believed that they ruled by divine right, being only accountable to God or their gods. The concept of 'divine right' can be found in the ancient world as far back as the Gilgamesh Epic and Sargon I and is the impetus behind the events in Genesis 11.4.
- 6.1.1.3. Men today are just as susceptible to the god-like claims of rulers and people often attempt to deify their rulers.
- 6.1.1.3.1. During the 2008 US presidential election, many people declared Obama to have Messianic status.¹⁷⁴
- 6.1.1.3.2. Rulers of the 20th century (Hitler, Idi Amin) and 21st century (Saddam Hussein and Kim) have claimed the equivalent of divine rights or even

¹⁷⁴ www.obamaformessiah.com/; obamamessiah.blogspot.com/.

near-divinity.

- 6.1.2. Rulers often claim to have faith or religious beliefs (as evidence, note how in the 2008 US presidential primaries both Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama claimed to be Christians); yet in reality they despise God and true religion.
 - 6.1.2.1. They think nothing of claiming their own greatness and blaspheming the true God by denying that they owe to God any allegiance or service.
 - 6.1.2.2. Calvin said, “Hence, they traffic in the name of God to attract greater reverence towards themselves...”¹⁷⁵
- 6.1.3. It is very difficult for any human ruler to be entirely purged of these tendencies. Even Christians in positions of power can let their ascendancy to positions of power influence their opinion of themselves and their behaviour.
- 6.1.4. Without being cynical, we should learn that it is a natural sinful human trait to seek and abuse power.
- 6.1.5. Even the system of separation of powers that the founders of the US attempted to put in place is not sufficient to control abusive power (whether of presidents, congresses, or judges). Prime ministers with strong parliamentary mandates can be just as convinced that they rule by divine right (consider the Trudeau years in Canada).
- 6.1.6. We must be discerning and ever watchful. Rulers do not like being defied and as their power increases they become more demanding of obedience. As we noted previously, Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”
- 6.2. *Resignation toward God* – We are to have an accepting, unresisting attitude of submission to the will of God. We are to obey God in every circumstance.
 - 6.2.1. What is the principle that governed the behaviour of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
 - 6.2.1.1. It is our duty to obey God *before* we obey men
 - 6.2.1.2. We are to obey the commands of men (Mt 22.21; Rom 13.1; 1 Pt 2.13-17).
 - 6.2.1.3. However, if the commands of men and the commands of God are in conflict, the commands of God are to supersede man’s law. God’s laws are higher than man’s laws, while man’s laws are to be consistent with and subject to the laws of God. Man’s laws are to be:
 - 6.2.1.3.1. *Derivative*: it must be possible to demonstrate that each specific human law is a direct application of one, or more, of the Ten Commandments and follows the example of the case laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (e.g., speed limits on highways are a direct application of the 6th commandment; laws requiring fences around swimming pools or construction sites are an application of the case law requiring parapets on flat roofs [Dt 22.8]).
 - 6.2.1.3.2. *Consistent*: No human law may be contrary or contradictory to God’s Law (e.g., permitting Sunday shopping or the ‘marriage’ of homosexuals).
 - 6.2.1.3.3. *Subordinate*: No human law can be of greater importance than God’s law (e.g., a mother’s ‘right’ to abortion cannot ‘trump’ the father’s right over a child or a child’s right to life).
 - 6.2.1.4. If the commands of men require that we do something that is contrary to the commands of God we are to obey God and not man (Acts 4.19; Acts 5.29).
 - 6.2.1.5. We are to obey God and the king ... in that order.
 - 6.2.2. What are the practical implications, of this principle?
 - 6.2.2.1. We have a duty to obey even unjust, unnecessary, or silly laws of the civil magistrate, as long as they don’t *require* us to go contrary to God’s law.
 - 6.2.2.1.1. We are to obey as far as we are permitted by God, but to go no further

¹⁷⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html.

in our obedience.

- 6.2.2.1.2. The principle of ‘God first and then the king’ does not mean that we can ignore the laws of the state that we don’t like or disagree with. For example, we cannot:
 - 6.2.2.1.2.1. Open our business on statutory holidays because we believe the state has no right to prohibit us from making a livelihood,
 - 6.2.2.1.2.2. Refuse to pay taxes because the taxes are used to fight an unjust war or to perform abortions, or
 - 6.2.2.1.2.3. Go over the speed limit in a rural area where no one is around because we feel that the speed limit is unreasonably low.
- 6.2.2.1.3. We are only to disobey the laws of the state when the laws would *require* us to do something that is contrary to God’s law. For example, worshiping an idol, aborting a child, euthanizing an elderly relative, working on the Lord’s Day, professing to believe a pagan practice.
- 6.2.2.1.4. We cannot claim that a king’s command is ultimate. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were captives/slaves; subjects of the greatest king on earth, but they did not let that influence their thinking about God’s rights and say ‘But Nebuchadnezzar told us to do it. It is never legitimate to say, “But he commanded me to do *x*”. Our responsibility is to obey the commands of God, not to give into the whim and will of people (Gen 3.17; 1 Sam 15.24; Mk 7.7-9).
- 6.2.2.2. Civil disobedience is only to be exercised through passive disobedience to a command that would cause to break God’s law.
 - 6.2.2.2.1. Civil disobedience for Christians cannot include active rebellion against a civil magistrate (Rom 13.1; 1 Pt 2.13-17).
 - 6.2.2.2.2. We have numerous examples of individuals in the Bible who refused to obey the commands of men, where that would have caused him to sin, but who never engaged in rebellion against those in positions of authority over them:
 - 6.2.2.2.2.1. David didn’t lead a rebellion against Saul.
 - 6.2.2.2.2.2. Elijah and Obadiah didn’t lead a rebellion against Ahab and Jezebel.
 - 6.2.2.2.2.3. John didn’t lead a rebellion against Herod.
 - 6.2.2.2.2.4. Jesus didn’t lead a rebellion against Herod or Rome.
 - 6.2.2.2.2.5. Paul didn’t lead a rebellion against Herod or Rome.
 - 6.2.2.2.3. It is never right to do evil that good may come about (Rom 3.8).
 - 6.2.2.2.4. Although rulers (laws) may require us (even on pain of death) to obey, we are to be guided by an overriding principle—it is our duty to obey God first and thereby please and honour him.
- 6.2.2.3. In spite of what others in the Church may do, we are to do right in our obedience to God, particularly in worship.
 - 6.2.2.3.1. It is irrelevant what others in the Church may choose to do with respect to obeying God’s laws. Our attitude must be, “If God requires it, I will obey!”
 - 6.2.2.3.2. The rest of Israel had capitulated and worshiped false God’s even in the land of Judah. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (along with Daniel) were on their own in pagan territory and they stood firm by refusing to bow to an idol.
- 6.2.2.4. On the other hand, Elders/Pastors are never to require false worship from the members of the congregations over which God has made them stewards.

- 6.2.2.4.1. If it is wrong for kings to impose false worship on their subjects, it is more heinous for Church leaders to implement and call for false worship from the people.
- 6.2.2.4.2. If during worship the officiating preacher called for false worship (e.g., use of a nonbiblical hymn), then a person who refused to sing the hymn—because he believed that only Psalms are to be offered to God as the sacrifice of Praise—would be disobedient to the Elders of that congregation and should be subject to censure. In this instance his conscience would be bound. The Puritans and, in particular, the authors of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* were scrupulous in their concern that nothing should be introduced into worship that isn't demonstrably required by God. They state: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to His Word; or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."¹⁷⁶
- 6.3. *Reliance upon God* – We are to have an absolute trust and assurance in God, knowing that he will take care of us.
 - 6.3.1. Our reliance on him is not to be conditional on the expectation that he will rescue us from all worldly danger.
 - 6.3.2. Rather, it is to be based on the reality that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego displayed—God's purposes for us may include our having to forfeit our lives before a normal lifetime or lose it at the hands of unjust men.
 - 6.3.2.1. Most of us are spoiled in NA because we do not know of extreme persecution against Christians.
 - 6.3.2.2. We need continually to think about immortality in Christ so that we are prepared should we need to stand for the confession of our faith in Christ.
 - 6.3.2.3. We need to make this life seem cheap in comparison to an everlasting existence.
 - 6.3.2.4. We need to prepare now so that we won't be cowards if the day were to come in which we have to give our lives as martyrs.
 - 6.3.3. We must believe that God will ultimately rescue us from the hands of Satan by protecting us into an everlasting existence.
 - 6.3.3.1. Their (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) standing firm against sinful compliance to the king's command was a greater miracle than their being saved from the fiery furnace. It showed that God had saved them by grace and was working his grace in them.
 - 6.3.3.2. Being saved from the fires of Hell is infinitely more important than being saved from the furnace of men (Mt 10.28).
 - 6.3.3.3. Even an early and untimely death for a believer is God's working out all things, ALL things, for our good and his glory (Rom 8.28)

Salvation I (Dan 3.19-30)

1. How did Nebuchadnezzar's react when the three men refused to serve his gods or worship the golden image he had set up?
 - 1.1. *Great Exasperation* – Nebuchadnezzar became very angry or furious.
 - 1.1.1. He seems to have had a temper (Dan 2.12; Dan 3.13).
 - 1.1.2. His anger with their unwillingness to bow before his image, caused him to revoke their second chance to worship the image.

¹⁷⁶ "Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 22, paragraph 2.
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- 1.1.3. Temperamental anger is generally a reaction of the base, brutish sinful nature of mankind.
 - 1.1.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar, in this anger, replaced the majesty of a prince with a miserable passion that distorted his face into ugly contortions. He probably became red (or ‘blue’) in his rage.
 - 1.1.3.2. As men grow more powerful, the power consumes them and they expect to be obeyed. As a result, they often (usually) become more violent and more prone to anger. They may hide it from their broader constituency but display it with their immediate subordinates. For example, a number of US presidents (and/or their wives) have been noted for their extreme tempers): Bill Clinton¹⁷⁷, Hillary Clinton¹⁷⁸, Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson and Harry Truman, etc.¹⁷⁹ Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, was also known for having a fiery temper.¹⁸⁰
 - 1.1.3.3. One writer said, “Most Presidents—and nearly all successful Presidents—have displayed some kind of temper at some time in their tenures. It’s simply too difficult to get that far in politics without so valuable a tool. Sooner or later any President is going to have to get tough with truculent senators, evil foreign dictators, willful special-interest groups, corrupt criminal syndicates, recalcitrant state governors, shilly-shallying bureaucrats, and feckless relations. And then there’s the rest of us. Any man who could get to be President without becoming at least occasionally fed up with all the silly, self-serving demands we make of him would have to be possessed of an almost unnatural serenity.”¹⁸¹
 - 1.1.3.4. Christians are not to give in to the passion of anger (2 Cor 12.20; Gal 5.20; Eph 4.30, 31; Col 3.8; 1 Tim 2.8; James 1.19, 20). Anger grieves the Holy Spirit and breaks the Ten Commandments). The Larger Catechism, Q136, speaks of sinful anger being forbidden by the 6th Commandment.
 - 1.1.3.5. It is possible to have a righteous anger (e.g., against sin); but this should not be used as an excuse for Christians to be angry (Eph 4.26).
- 1.2. *Got Even* – Temperamental anger leads to further sins through its desire to get even and strike at others.
 - 1.2.1. Satan uses temperamental anger as a means of controlling and consuming his human subjects. Anger boils the blood, builds bitterness, and broods bondage.
 - 1.2.2. What is the first recorded example of this kind of anger?
 - 1.2.2.1. Cain became angry with Abel (Gen 4.5-7) and then he killed his brother to vent his anger (Gen 4.8).
 - 1.2.2.2. Temperamental anger is not content to burn within the subject but lashes out against the objects of the anger.
 - 1.2.3. What action did Nebuchadnezzar take to get even?
 - 1.2.3.1. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter.
 - 1.2.3.2. How could the fire be made seven times hotter?
 - 1.2.3.2.1. Using available materials (e.g., dung, dried reeds, wood, charcoal, and possibly coal) the hottest fire available would likely not have exceeded 1,500°C. Pumping more air (oxygen) into a fire with bellows will increase the combustion process and raise the temperature, but will not make it burn seven times hotter. Adding more carbon-based fuel will increase the size of the fire, but not markedly change the temperature. In addition, the surface temperature of the sun is about 6,000°C (with hydrogen burn or nuclear fusion).
 - 1.2.3.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar couldn’t perform a miracle, so we do not need to

¹⁷⁷ www.nytimes.com/2008/01/18/us/politics/18bill.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

¹⁷⁸ raymondpronk.wordpress.com/2008/04/19/john-mccain-and-hillary-clinton-anger-management-issues/

¹⁷⁹ www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2000/3/2000_3_86.shtml

¹⁸⁰ www.cbc.ca/news/background/martin_paul/

¹⁸¹ www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2000/3/2000_3_86.shtml

think that he actually made the fire hotter than would be naturally available.

1.2.3.2.3. In addition, what we have recorded is a statement of Nebuchadnezzar's arrogant command, not necessarily a statement of historical fact.

1.2.3.2.4. We may interpret this in different ways:

1.2.3.2.4.1. They added much more fuel (seven times) to the fire and blew in more air with bellows, making it somewhat hotter and much larger, extending the heat to a wider area.

1.2.3.2.4.2. Figuratively (Ps 12.6) they added more fuel/air to make it as hot as they could. This is the idea of completeness or intensity with seven as a symbolical representation (Gen 33.3; Lev 4.5; Mt 18.21).

1.2.3.3. What was Nebuchadnezzar's purpose for heating the fire hotter?

1.2.3.3.1. It would not have made their death any more certain or painful and likely would have made little practical difference in how fast they would have died.

1.2.3.3.2. Rather it was a symbol for heightening the punishment because Nebuchadnezzar viewed their disobedience to be seven times more grievous and he wanted the punishment to fit the crime and their death to be heightened in ignominy.

1.2.3.3.3. Nebuchadnezzar was sending a stern warning to any who might think of rebelling against his commands.

1.3. *Guaranteed Execution* – Nebuchadnezzar wanted to ensure the impossibility of a failure in the execution of the three men.

1.3.1. What actions did he take to ensure the 'impossibility' of a failure in their execution?

1.3.1.1. He commanded that the fire be made hotter. [We considered this above.]

1.3.1.2. He commanded that they be bound.

1.3.2. Why did he command that they be bound? So that:

1.3.2.1. They could not struggle and offer resistance against their executioners.

1.3.2.2. There was no chance of them running out of the fire through the opening at ground level.

1.3.3. The point of these actions was to exclude the possibility of natural or supernatural intervention, by either the men themselves or the god's of Babylon. What Nebuchadnezzar discounted was the real possibility of intervention by the true God, Creator and Sovereign over the universe.

2. What demonstrates the urgency of the king's command?

2.1. They were tied up while still wearing their garments

2.1.1. The Aramaic words used for the listed items of clothing are not easy to translate. The most accurate translation may be something like, boots, leggings/trousers, turbans, and robes.

2.1.2. In the ancient world, into the modern era, it was common practice to remove the clothing of anyone who was being executed (e.g., Mt 27.35).

2.1.3. Clothing was valuable and people did not want to waste clothes by leaving them on an executed person. The clothing of the court administrators in ancient Babylon would have been especially valuable and it is unlikely that the clothes would have been left on the men to be burned up with them, if it had not been for the urgency of the king's command.

2.1.4. Execution in nakedness was a means of exposing the criminal or political opponent to additional shame.

2.1.5. This execution was to be different:

2.1.5.1. Their clothes would have been burnt with them, implying that even their very

clothing was polluted by their unwillingness to participate in the king's prescribed worship observance.

- 2.1.5.2. All of their clothing items are identified from their boots or leggings to their turbans.
- 2.2. The soldiers who carried the three men to the top of the furnace were killed by the heat.
 - 2.2.1. There was no time for the soldiers to make any provision for their own protection. For example, they could not take precautions to let the heaviest flames die down, wait until the wind shifted the flames and smoke, or use some form of a device to keep away from the worst of the flames (e.g., a spear or javelin to use as a goad).
 - 2.2.2. The death of the soldiers reminds us that it is wrong for a person to hide behind the command of another to commit sin. We must never do wrong because we are commanded to, and use the excuse, "But he told me to do it." Nevertheless, the soldiers executing the sentence of death did not expect that they would die from the heat and probably took pleasure in casting the three to their apparent deaths.
 - 2.2.3. Their death also points out that God was able to protect his servants from death, whereas Nebuchadnezzar, with claims to deity, could not protect his own servants.
 - 2.2.4. A note in an apocryphal addition to Daniel says that the flames ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. We will make further reference to the apocryphal additions to Daniel below.
- 2.3. They were thrown into a burning furnace to execute them as quickly as possible.
 - 2.3.1. They were not tied to stakes with wood piled around them (as for example, in executions at the time of the Inquisition, in England during the days of Henry VIII or Mary, or in Scotland during the time of the Covenanters).
 - 2.3.2. What kind of furnace was it?
 - 2.3.2.1. The furnace may have been a brick kiln used for firing bricks on the plain of Dura. Remains of furnaces for this purpose have been found in excavations outside of the ruins of ancient Babylon.¹⁸²
 - 2.3.2.2. The bricks baked in these kilns (see, 2 Sam 12.31) were not sun-dried like in Egypt, but were made of fired white clay mixed with organic material (e.g., straw or reeds) and glazed with coloured ceramics and often had symbols of the empire included stamped into them. Five different stamps have been found with Nebuchadnezzar's inscription (name and dedication).¹⁸³ Glazed bricks from the time of Nebuchadnezzar can be seen in many museums around the world.
 - 2.3.2.3. Baking bricks in Mesopotamia was a well-developed technique by the time of Nebuchadnezzar. We find a reference to the technique in the Bible from a time that was about 2,000 years earlier (Gen 11.3).
 - 2.3.2.4. The bricks would have been stacked and fired in batches.
 - 2.3.3. What did the furnace look like?
 - 2.3.3.1. It was large enough for the men to walk inside of it. The remains of brick-firing furnaces from around ancient Babylon indicate that the furnaces could have been as high as a modern 2-3 storey building with a footprint the size of modern house. They had a large enough opening (flue) at the top through which the men could be thrown down into the furnace.
 - 2.3.3.2. It could have been built into the side of a hill or have been like a small pyramid, with a ramp/path to the top. It had a main opening in the top used as a flue or chimney and a large opening in the side for entry to stack the bricks and to place the fuel (the fuel was placed in openings along the walls, called fire-mouths, which would have had individual air draws for controlling the temperature).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² W. A. Elwell & P. W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), p. 237.

¹⁸³ D. R. W. Wood, *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, c1996, c1982, c1962), p. 147.

¹⁸⁴ en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Brick.

The opening in the side also permitted observers to look into the kiln to watch the brick firing process (the colour of the bricks and ceramic surfaces would be used as a temperature guide).

- 2.4. Between verses 23 and 24, the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version of the OT includes an additional account about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
 - 2.4.1. This addition is usually called the *Prayer of Azariah* (i.e., Abednego) and the *Song of the Three Young Men*.
 - 2.4.2. It is one of the three apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel (the other two are Susana, inserted as chapter 13, and Bel and the Dragon, added as chapter 14).
 - 2.4.3. The apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel are not included in Protestant translations of the Bible:
 - 2.4.3.1. They are only known in Greek manuscripts and are not found in Hebrew manuscripts of the OT, and were not considered to be canonical by the Jews.
 - 2.4.3.2. Jesus appears to have accepted the Hebrew canon. The order of the books in both the Greek and Latin versions of the OT is not the same as the order that was accepted by the Jewish rabbis before the time of Christ. In both the Latin and the Greek OT, the books of Chronicles usually appear following the books entitled Kings. However, in the Hebrew order, 2 Chronicles is the last book of the canon. Thus, Jesus' in referring (Mt 23.35) to the prophets who were killed from Abel (Gen 4.8) to Zechariah (2 Chron 24.20-21), is essentially saying, "From the beginning to the end of the Bible". By making this reference, Jesus endorses the Hebrew OT canon— which does not contain the books of the Apocrypha—as Scripture.
 - 2.4.3.3. No NT writer quotes from the Apocrypha.
 - 2.4.3.4. Jerome rejected the Apocryphal books when he translated the Bible into Latin around 450 AD because no Hebrew version of these texts could be found. They eventually were accepted by the Church during the middle ages and added to the Vulgate.
 - 2.4.3.5. The Protestant Reformers rejected these books during the Reformation as lacking divine authority.
 - 2.4.3.6. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (the Counter Reformation) declared, in 1546 that the Apocryphal books were to be accepted as Scripture.
 - 2.4.3.7. The King James Version (1611) included other portions of the Apocrypha between the OT and the NT.¹⁸⁵
 - 2.4.3.8. The Apocrypha was no longer included in printings of most Protestant Bibles after the British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1824, resolved: "that no pecuniary grants be made by the Committee of this Society for the purpose of aiding the printing or publishing of any edition of the Bible, in which the Apocrypha shall be mixed and interspersed with the Canonical Books of Holy Scriptures." The society reversed its position in 1966.¹⁸⁶
- 2.4.4. The *Prayer of Azariah* and the *Song of the Three* consists of the following sections, in 68 verses:
 - 2.4.4.1. Introduction (v. 1¹⁸⁷; v. 24¹⁸⁸)
 - 2.4.4.2. Prayer of praise and acknowledgement of God's justice in punishing Israel (vv. 2-10, vv. 25-33)
 - 2.4.4.3. Request for deliverance and punishment of enemies of Israel (vv. 11-22, 34-45)
 - 2.4.4.4. Narrative of the heating of the furnace and descent of the Angel of the Lord (vv. 23-27, 46-50): "23 And the king's servants, that put them in, ceased not to make

¹⁸⁵ www.archive.org/details/holybiblefacsimi00polluoft.

¹⁸⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible.

¹⁸⁷ Bible, King James Version, Apocrypha; [3 Holy Children's Song 1:1 \(KJVD\) \(ebible.org\)](http://3HolyChildrensSong1:1(KJVD)(ebible.org))

¹⁸⁸ Douay-Rheims (1899).

the oven hot with rosin, pitch, tow, and small wood; 24 So that the flame streamed forth above the furnace forty and nine cubits. 25 And it passed through, and burned those Chaldeans it found about the furnace. 26 But the angel of the Lord came down into the oven together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; 27 And made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them.”¹⁸⁹

2.4.4.5. Song of praise (vv. 28-68, 51-90). Most of this portion of the Apocrypha is incorporated into the Order for Morning Prayer in the 1559 Anglican book of Common Prayer¹⁹⁰ after the *Te Deum*.

2.4.5. The account *may* be based on truth and may have been handed down from the time of Daniel along with the Scriptural account. It could also have been an addition invented later by someone who supposed what they might have said while in the fire. Whether or not it is accurate, we cannot determine. One portion of the apocryphal additions (Bel and the Dragon) seems to be mythical. Even if this account is historically accurate that does not mean that it belongs in the Bible. There were other historical records of Israel (outside of the Bible) passed down by the Jews which are not included in the OT Scriptures (for example, the names of the magicians whom Moses encountered in Pharaoh’s court [2 Tim 3.8]; the dispute over Moses’ body [Jude 9], and Enoch’s words mentioned in Jude 14, 15).

2.4.6. Calvin in his commentary on Daniel makes no reference to this apocryphal addition to Daniel. Matthew Henry refers to it but does not accept it as Biblical.

3. What did Nebuchadnezzar observe in the furnace?

3.1. He saw four (men), fine, and free.

3.2. *Free*:

3.2.1. They were loosed from their bonds.

3.2.1.1. The ropes that had bound them may have burned away, but their bodies and clothes (27) were not burned.

3.2.2. They walked in the midst of the fire unharmed.

3.2.2.1. The edge of the heat from the fire had killed the soldiers who took them to the mouth of the furnace, but the three men who had been thrown into the midst of the fire had not been hurt by the fire.

3.2.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar may have seen fakirs (or their equivalent in his day) walking on hot coals as part of the pagan religious rituals. The firewalkers who had learned how to walk on hot coals¹⁹¹ may have claimed mystical powers and deceived the people. But, even a skilled firewalker could not accomplish what these men were doing.

3.2.2.3. The furnace (assuming that it was a brick kiln) would have been large (at least as big as a modern two storey house).

3.2.2.3.1. The three men would have had room to walk among the stacked bricks that were being fired.

3.2.2.3.2. They would have been walking on a paved surface.

3.2.2.3.3. They would *not* have been walking on coals or burning wood. The fire would have been in inset areas in the walls of the furnace.

3.3. *Fine*:

3.3.1. They had suffered no ill consequences from being thrown from the roof into the centre of the furnace, or from the heat of the fire.

3.3.1.1. They were not seen lying in agony on the hot floor of the furnace.

¹⁸⁹ Bible, King James Version, Apocrypha; text.virginia.edu/kjv/browse.html

¹⁹⁰ justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1559/MP_1559.htm

¹⁹¹ skepdic.com/firewalk.html.

- 3.3.1.2. They did not display any signs of being in pain.
- 3.3.1.3. They were not seen running for the exit.
- 3.3.2. How was this possible?
 - 3.3.2.1. Their walking freely in the fire was a miracle: a direct action of God which temporarily suspends the proximate means ('laws') by which God normally directs events in the natural realm.
 - 3.3.2.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar would have understood that the free walking of the men in the fire could only be explained by divine intervention.
 - 3.3.2.1.2. We must not be sceptical about God's power to protect these three men from the heat of a furnace.
 - 3.3.2.1.2.1. God created, and is sovereign master of, all the natural realm. He can do what he pleases with it.
 - 3.3.2.1.2.2. Preventing harm to three men who are walking in a furnace displays, relatively, an insignificant control of nature compared with creating the universe, creating life, or raising a dead person back to life.
 - 3.3.2.2. God promised that he will protect his people, even at times from the heat of a fiery furnace (Is 43.2).
 - 3.3.2.3. They received the promise by faith (Heb 11.34).
- 3.4. *Four*:
 - 3.4.1. He saw a fourth person with the three men.
 - 3.4.2. The three men were having some form of communion, discussion, or fellowship with the fourth person—this is implied by their walking together in the midst of the furnace.
- 3.5. What was the nature of Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to seeing the four, fine and free?
 - 3.5.1. Total surprise: astonished or amazement.
 - 3.5.1.1. He was so surprised that he arose in haste, or leaped to his feet.
 - 3.5.1.2. He asked his advisors to confirm for him that they had thrown three men into the furnace.
 - 3.5.1.2.1. He might have wondered if he could trust his own eyes and memory.
 - 3.5.1.2.2. He might have thought that he was losing his mind or hallucinating.
 - 3.5.1.3. He realized that what he was seeing was not possible in mere human terms, or even possible by the power of his gods.
 - 3.5.2. Why was he looking into the opening of the furnace?
 - 3.5.2.1. It appears that he may have been sitting on a chair (throne) at a distance from the opening of the furnace to watch what would happen to three men.
 - 3.5.2.2. He may have had a passing curiosity about the nature of the God they worshiped and was, in effect, calling their bluff—"Okay, let's see if the God you worship can save you!"
 - 3.5.2.3. He likely had a morbid curiosity, and wanted to see the three suffer in agony to assuage his anger. He pulled up a seat to watch the spectacle of their execution. Men throughout history (whether in the circus in Rome, a hanging during the Middle Ages, or at a boxing match or hockey game today) have had a blood lust.
 - 3.5.2.4. Nebuchadnezzar lived in a more *openly* cruel cultural context than we 'civilized' Westerners live in and it would have been natural for him to watch the execution to its completion to ensure that the men were fully dead. [I used the word 'openly' because man's heart has not changed. Men are just as cruel today but prefer their cruelty to be vicariously offered through TV and movies or somewhat hidden such as in abortion.]
 - 3.5.3. God can cause astonishment and fear of him to come upon the hearts of those who are adamantly in rebellion against him.
 - 3.5.3.1. This is not an astonishment of respect, or a fear in awe, that accompanies conversion. Rather, it is the reaction of someone who has been caught in sin.

God reminds mankind that he sees all and knows all.

3.5.3.2. Even the greatest tyrant or dictator can be made to pause and consider, by God.

3.5.3.3. The reaction of Nebuchadnezzar at seeing the four, fine, and free is a reminder to all mankind that they are in for a much greater surprise at the end of time when Christ returns to claim the bodies of his people from their graves, to judge all people, and to establish his eternal Kingdom. At that time men will plead with the mountains to fall on them to hide them from Christ (Rev 6.16).

4. Who was the fourth person in the furnace with the three men?

4.1. Nebuchadnezzar said that the fourth person had the appearance of a son of the gods.

4.1.1. The KJV/NKJV translation ('the Son of God') is not a legitimate translation.

Nebuchadnezzar didn't know of the Trinity or of Christ and wasn't even speaking prophetically but in ignorance (as for example, Caiaphas did; Jn 11.49-51) from his superstitious and polytheistic perspective. The correct, and literal translation is, 'a son of the gods' as in the NIV and ESV.

4.1.2. What he saw in the fourth person impressed him so much that he thought the person to be a demigod, angel or a divine being of some kind. In Nebuchadnezzar's pantheon, the gods had human-like bodies but were more impressive than mere men.

4.2. What might it have been about the appearance of the fourth person that impressed Nebuchadnezzar?

4.2.1. He (or his clothing) might have been gleaming or dazzling (Mk 9.3). If so, the light radiating from the person could have been brighter than the flames coming from the fires along the walls of the furnace.

4.2.2. Bright light is associated with the gods in pagan religions and with God in the Bible (Dan 7.9; Ps 104.2). As we noted when considering the brightness of the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream (chapter 2), there is an association between light and the gods in most ancient pagan pantheons.

4.2.3. The fourth person may also have been taller than the other three men and possibly appeared dressed in a magnificent robe (e.g., of gold).

4.2.4. In addition, the fourth person may have had a natural appearance of authority and leadership.

4.3. Opinions vary among Christian interpreters as to whom the fourth person was.

4.3.1. An angel – A rational creature sent as a messenger of God

4.3.1.1. Angels appear to be called sons of god (Job 38.7; Ps 89.6; Heb: sons of God, or 'sons of gods' בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים).

4.3.1.2. Daniel later refers to an angel shutting the lions' mouths when he was thrown into their den (Dan 6.22).

4.3.1.3. References to angels being sent as God's messengers include: Gen 19.1-22 (21 implies it is God speaking, but it may be an angel empowered to make decisions on behalf of God); Gen 21.17; Gen 32.1; Exodus 14.19 (this may have been a Christophany); Daniel 10.13, 21; Luke 1.11, 19, 26.

4.3.2. A theophany – The appearance of the LORD in a human form; i.e., God the Father or a member of the Trinity

4.3.2.1. References to God generically and members of the Trinity appearing in human form on earth prior to Christ include: Genesis 16.7-11 (10 implies that it is God speaking); Gen 19.1-22 (21 implies it is God speaking, but it may be an angel); Gen 18.1-3; Gen 22.11, 15-16; Gen 31.11; Exodus 3.2; Numbers 22.22-35; Judges 6.11-16 (14 LORD, 15 Lord); Judges 13.1-22). Note: Some of these theophanic appearances also refer to the 'angel of the LORD'.

4.3.3. A Christophany – The specific appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ in a human form.

4.3.3.1. Some argue that this could not have been the pre-incarnate Lord, because Nebuchadnezzar did not deserve a vision of Christ in his glory. However, Christ

in the flesh appeared to men who did not deserve to see him and will appear in his glory to all men, including those who do not deserve to see him. Regardless, if the fourth person was the third person of the Trinity, his appearance was not primarily for the benefit of Nebuchadnezzar but for the encouragement of the three men.

- 4.3.3.2. A references to the second person of the Trinity, specifically, appearing in human form may be found in Joshua 5.13-15 (the fact that he accepted worship indicates that he was not a created angel; contrast with Rev 19.10).
- 4.3.4. The person appearing with the three was likely Christ himself in pre-incarnate form.
- 4.4. Whoever the person was specifically, it would have been a great encouragement for the three men to have him present.
 - 4.4.1. They were vindicated for their stand against participation in pagan worship.
 - 4.4.2. Their faith in God's ability to overrule the most powerful king on earth was proved valid and rewarded.
 - 4.4.3. They were given assurance of everlasting deliverance from the fires of Hell.
- 5. What happened after Nebuchadnezzar saw the four men in the furnace?
 - 5.1. Nebuchadnezzar approached the opening of the furnace.
 - 5.1.1. The fire was still blazing hot (26), in contrast to what the Apocryphal addition [13.26¹⁹²] suggests and it would have been dangerous to approach too near.
 - 5.1.2. Why? Because his curiosity had been aroused, he had to find out how this strange thing had happened.
 - 5.2. He shouted to the three, commanding them to come out of the furnace.
 - 5.2.1. Because the fire was blazing it would have been accompanied by a roaring noise and would have drowned out normal (non-miraculous) speech, so he had to yell to the three to come out.
 - 5.2.2. His curiosity overcame his anger against the three men and he wanted them to come out so he could find out why they had not perished.
 - 5.2.3. His command for them to come out of the furnace was an admission that his punishing them in the furnace had not been right. If he had still believed his punishment of them had been right he would have commanded his men to bar the opening and add more fuel to the furnace.
 - 5.3. He honoured the three men.
 - 5.3.1. How did he honour them?
 - 5.3.1.1. He called them servants of the Most High God.
 - 5.3.2. How does this contrast with his previous attitude toward them?
 - 5.3.2.1. He had been furious with them (19).
 - 5.3.2.2. He had probably called them all kind of names including: rebels, traitors, ingrates, irreligious atheists, etc.
 - 5.3.3. Where did Nebuchadnezzar learn to refer to God as 'Most High God'?
 - 5.3.3.1. It is possible that he is not rising above his polytheistic paganism. The term 'Most High God' could be used to refer to Bel Marduk or generically Baal. 'Bel' or 'Baal' is a title and honorific meaning 'master' or 'lord' that was applied to various gods in the Western Levant. Philo of Byblos reports that in the ancient Semitic religions, the creator god was known as Elion (Biblical El Elyon = God most High), who was the father of the divinities.¹⁹³
 - 5.3.3.2. However, it is also possible (and probable) that he is acknowledging a God (the true God) who is above all the gods of his pantheon—Jehovah/Yahweh.
 - 5.3.3.2.1. He had taken Jews captive and had removed the vessels from the Temple (Dan 1.2) so likely had some conscious awareness of

¹⁹² Bible, King James Version, Apocrypha, *The Song of the Three Young Men*; etext.virginia.edu/kjv/browse.html

¹⁹³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Semitic_religion

Jehovah/Yahweh as God Most High.

5.3.3.2.2. He was, undoubtedly, aware of the God professed by Daniel and the three men in the furnace.

5.3.3.2.3. He may have been aware of the concept of the Most High God from the vestiges of the true religion throughout the Middle East. For example, Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. (Gen 14.18; also 19, 20, 22)

5.3.3.2.4. Daniel had made reference to God as being above the pagan god's when he had provided an interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the statue made of different materials (2). He had referred to God as the God in heaven (Dan 2.28) implying that God is above all other gods.

5.3.3.2.5. As Paul tells us (Rom 1.19-21), all men know that there is one true God.

5.3.3.2.6. This does not mean Nebuchadnezzar abandoned polytheism, but it is nevertheless striking that Nebuchadnezzar admitted that there could be a God more powerful than any of his deities.

5.3.3.3. The term 'Most High (Highest) God' or 'Most High' occurs 13 times in Daniel, more than in any other book except in the Psalms.

5.3.3.3.1. Six of these occurrences in Daniel (Dan 4.2, 17, 24-25, 32, 34) are spoken by Nebuchadnezzar.

5.4. The men came out of the furnace.

5.4.1. Notice that the text says that they came out from the 'fire'. Why does it not say from the 'furnace', as earlier in the same verse (26).

5.4.2. It may be that God is making a clear demonstration of his power. The fire was still burning as hot as ever. Anyone else who came too close would have been killed.

5.4.3. If the fire had been extinguished someone might have thought, or claimed, that they survived because the fire had died down. Rather God saved them out of the fire that should have killed them.

5.4.4. God displays his power, at times, in conspicuous ways to demonstrate the foolishness of paganism and the reality of his existence.

5.4.4.1. When God had the Israelites cross the Jordan River, it was at the time of peak-flood. He pushed back the waters and held them back, in effect saying to the Canaanites that their god of the storm was no match for him.

5.4.4.2. Elijah soaked the wood on the altar before he called down fire from heaven.

5.4.4.3. Elijah didn't go into Heaven by walking up a mountain trail and then climbing a ladder. Rather, God sent a fiery chariot to collect him.

5.4.4.4. Jesus took a few small fish and loaves of bread and fed thousands. Then the disciples collected twelve baskets of fragments. Jesus didn't just feed the people he created, out of little, an abundance of food.

5.4.4.5. Jesus didn't just turn a few skins of water into wine but rather turned the water in six large jars into the best wine the steward had ever tasted.

5.4.5. God used even their exit from the fire as a witness and reminder to Nebuchadnezzar that he (the king) wasn't dealing with a mere lackey, but rather with the Sovereign Lord of the Universe.

5.5. The administrators crowded around the three men and examined their bodies and clothing for damage.

5.5.1. How had the administrators changed?

5.5.1.1. Previously, these men had accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of being irreligious and insubordinate, and wanted them destroyed.

5.5.1.2. Suddenly the administrators became very interested in the well-being of the men they had hated just a few minutes before.

- 5.5.1.2.1. Crowds are fickle, for example, one day the crowd is praising Jesus with Hallelujah's; a few days later it is calling for his crucifixion.
- 5.5.1.2.2. In our day, the crowds that adore a president at his election quickly turn against him. Popular singers and actors can quickly become unpopular if they don't follow a politically correct agenda.
- 5.5.1.3. The change in their behaviour is almost a laughable irony. It reminds us that God will have the last laugh over all those who oppose his holiness (Ps 2.1-4; Ps 37.13; Ps 59.8).
- 5.5.2. What did the administrators discover?
 - 5.5.2.1. The men's bodies had not been harmed in any way by the fire.
 - 5.5.2.2. Their clothes were not singed and had no smell of smoke on them.
 - 5.5.2.3. We can imagine the administrators crowding around the three men, touching their clothing and beards and smelling their clothes. It would have been a comical sight.
 - 5.5.2.4. The irony in the actions of the administrators is evident.
 - 5.5.2.4.1. They had demanded that the three men take part in the irrational and meaningless worship of an idol, and then they were confronted with true spiritual realities in the existence and power of God.
 - 5.5.2.4.2. They had denied rationality in calling for worship of an idol and then turned to the use of rational, empirical means to examine the results of a true miracle.
 - 5.5.2.4.3. All men, without the true religion are equally rationally inconsistent—plunging into false and irrational beliefs (e.g., mysticism or materialism) and then attempting to use rational means to deny ultimate reality (e.g., the existence of a supernatural, infinite God).
- 5.5.3. Why are we told this information about the reaction and action of the administrators?
 - 5.5.3.1. The listing of three different tests—un-singed hair, unharmed cloaks, no smell of fire—provide three elements of circumstantial evidence. They stand as three witnesses (Dt 17.6; Dt 19.15) to validate the truth of these events.
 - 5.5.3.2. The presence of so many hostile eyewitnesses would validate the events as actually having happened.
 - 5.5.3.3. Video cameras were not available in those days so no one could claim that that special effects had been used—like shooting the walk of the three men with a green-screen background and superimposing their images on an image of a fiery furnace.
 - 5.5.3.4. We are presented with historical fact, not a vision or a myth. No one can honestly claim that the events described did not happen. They can only attribute them to magic or miracle.
 - 5.5.3.4.1. Anyone considering NT miracles has to face the same three choices: myth, magic, or miracle; either the account is a lie, it can be attributed to some devilish deception, or it is a true miracle from God.
 - 5.5.3.4.2. For example, some people dismiss the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a myth in spite of the reliable evidence including eyewitness accounts. Some might claim that it was some form of a magic trick or attribute the resurrection to the work of Satan (i.e., black magic). In reality, the resurrection is a miracle of God.
 - 5.5.3.4.3. All *claimed* supernatural occurrences, including those in the Bible (e.g., Jonah and the fish, feeding the 5,000, water into wine, etc.), must fall into one of these three categories: myth, magic, or miracle.
 - 5.5.3.5. God is given the glory through the recounting of this precise examination of the men and their clothing by their enemies. God alone could have protected the men in these, normally, life-destroying circumstances.

6. What are the main components of Nebuchadnezzar's speech in response to the miracle?
 - 6.1. *Acknowledgement* – He began by acknowledging that God is worthy of praise.
 - 6.1.1. Is this statement Nebuchadnezzar's profession (or confession) of saving faith? Can anyone praise God who is not a true believer?
 - 6.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar realized that no other god could have done what God did by sending his messenger (angel or Christ) to rescue the three men from the furnace. So he felt constrained to acknowledge God in some way. Without doubt, his acknowledgement is that God is truly unique.
 - 6.1.3. Does the fact that he used the word 'blessed' or 'praise' indicate that he has had a conversion experience? Does it indicate that he wants to honour God as the only true God?
 - 6.1.3.1. The word translated 'blessed'/'praised' can be used in the context of general honouring or greeting and not necessarily to mean true worship (1 Sam 15.13; 2 Ki 10.15; Zech 11.5).
 - 6.1.3.2. Since he referred to God as the 'God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego' and 'their own God' it appears that he still believes that God is merely a tribal god and just one of many gods—even though he is more powerful than the other gods.
 - 6.1.4. His profession that God is worthy of praise or honour is based on a general sense of awe at what he has seen rather than an adoration of the true God. His awe is similar to that which would be experienced by someone who stands at the edge of the Grand Canyon or beside Angel Falls¹⁹⁴ in Venezuela or Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe¹⁹⁵; or by someone in an Apollo spacecraft seeing the earth rise over the moon's horizon.
 - 6.1.5. Even seeing a miracle will not necessarily convert a person and turn awe into adoration (Lk 16.29-31; Jn 12.37).
 - 6.2. *Admiration* – He admired the conviction of the three men. Nebuchadnezzar was impressed not only with the fact that they had been rescued, but also with the conviction the men displayed.
 - 6.2.1. What three things caused his admiration?
 - 6.2.1.1. Their trust in God. Expressions of true trust in God are rare. People who display sincere trust in God that is followed by principled action, stand out from mere professors who are all talk and no action.
 - 6.2.1.2. Their defiance of the king's command. People who are willing to directly defy the command of a ruler based on a principle stand out from the rest of mankind who are mere pragmatists and follow or disobey commands not out of conviction but out of the perceived benefit (immediate or long term) derived from compliance or disobedience.
 - 6.2.1.3. Their willingness to give up their lives rather than worship any god, but the true God. A willingness to follow beliefs to the death is beyond understanding for most people who cling to life at the expense of truth, principle, or conviction.
 - 6.2.1.3.1. It is true that some adherents of false religions show a fanaticism that makes them willing to give up their lives for their beliefs. For example, Islamic jihadists will carry bombs strapped around their bodies into crowds and blow up themselves for what they perceive to be the advancement of Islam.
 - 6.2.1.3.2. Fanaticism and true conviction look similar. While the average, unprincipled person may claim that both are extreme and equivalent, they know (in their hearts/guts) that there is a difference between fanaticism or misplaced religious zeal and true conviction. What is the

¹⁹⁴ 2,648 ft / 807 m drop.

¹⁹⁵ 5,700 feet / 1,737 meters wide; 350 feet / 107 meters drop.

difference?

6.2.1.3.2.1. Fanaticism is an emotion of excessive, uncritical devotion for a religious or political cause and has no tolerance for contrary ideas or opinions.

6.2.1.3.2.2. Christian conviction is a balanced emotional response based on reasoned faith in Christ that does not use force or abuse to further its objective of glorifying God.

6.2.2. God lets the world know who his true people are in every generation. They stand out from the mass of humanity because of their explicit trust in him (Jn 13.34, 35; Jn 17.21).

6.2.2.1. Sadly, this often leads to their being persecuted for their faith since people do not like Christian convictions because it reminds them of their accountability to God.

6.3. *Announcement* – He made a decree protecting the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from slander.

6.3.1. What would have been the result?

6.3.1.1. True worship would have been protected, at least during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. This did not mean that Judaism [or more accurately ‘Yahwehism’] (the OT equivalent of Christianity) became the official religion of the state.

6.3.1.2. However, it is a form of religious toleration; with observance of the true religion accepted/permitted among many. It would be similar to Iraq today, in its constitution, officially declaring Christianity as a permitted or tolerated religion.

6.3.1.3. In theory, if not in practice (compare, Est 3.1-15), it should have made it more difficult for the antagonists of the Jews in captivity to stop their proto-synagogue¹⁹⁶ worship or to hinder them from Sabbath observance or from maintaining their dietary practices.

6.3.2. We cannot understand Nebuchadnezzar’s announcement as a normative example for all civil magistrates, as the account is recording historical events without making a comment on the propriety of the action.

6.3.2.1. We cannot conclude from this example that it is necessarily right for a civil government to pronounce toleration of Christianity *among* other permitted religions, because toleration of Christianity with many other religions is not proper. There is only one true religion and it is wrong for men to treat Christianity as one among equivalents or equals.

6.3.2.2. However, in a situation where there is persecution of Christians (e.g., in Orissa province in India, Iraq, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Indonesia, etc.) we should pray for (where possible, demand) the governments of those countries to permit and tolerate Christian worship and protect Christians from abuse.

6.3.2.3. Christianity moved from being a pariah in the Roman Empire, to being tolerated along with paganism, to becoming the official state religion of the empire. In Russia, during the latter part of the 20th century, Christianity moved from being outlawed to being accepted and then endorsed (at least the Orthodox wing). In China, we have seen Christianity move from being outlawed (if not explicitly, at least in practice) to being tolerated. However, we see the opposite happening throughout the West. We see toleration (and endorsement) of every form of false religion and increasing suppression of Christianity (e.g., removing the Ten Commandments from public display, prohibiting prayer in the name of Christ in government meetings and schools, outlawing distribution of Christian literature at public events attended by Muslims, etc.).

6.3.2.4. If a pagan king can place restraints on the abuse of God, the true religion and

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion of the synagogue form of worship at the time of the Captivity, see “Synagogue or Temple” in: James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

God's people, then it seems to be obvious that countries which have Christianity as part of their historical legacy, should also restrict such abuses.

6.3.2.5. In fact, we can go further—since it is wrong for people to participate in false worship, it is legitimate and proper for a State to enact legislation supporting true Christianity and even to outlaw the practice of false religions.

6.3.2.5.1. Does a person have a *right* to express a false religion (publicly)?

Examples:

6.3.2.5.1.1. Should a Muslim woman be allowed to refuse to uncover her face for a security photo, on the claim of 'religion'?

6.3.2.5.1.2. Should Sikhs be permitted on commercial airplanes with their ceremonial daggers?

6.3.2.5.1.3. Should religious sects be permitted to sacrifice animals?

6.3.2.5.1.4. Should NA aboriginals be permitted to smoke peyote in their pantheistic rituals?

6.3.2.5.1.5. Should polygamy in the name of Islam or some forms of Mormonism be permitted?

6.3.2.5.1.6. What should be done about female genital mutilation in the name of some forms of Islam?

6.3.2.5.1.7. Should Druidic or Aztec worship practices be stopped from performing human sacrifices?

The reality is that *somewhere* a line has to be drawn against false worship practices. The real question is, whose line?

6.3.2.5.2. What does the Bible say about false religious practices?

6.3.2.5.2.1. Christianity is the only true religion. All other religions are false, and impostors or imitators of the true religion (Jn 14.6; Acts 4.12; Phil 2.9-11).

6.3.2.5.2.2. Man does not have a right to proclaim atheism or any false religion, nor to endorse the existence of a plurality of religious views (Ex 20.4-6; Dt 8.19; Ps 53.1; Mt 4.10; Acts 17.22-31).

6.3.2.5.3. What do the Westminster standards say about the role of the civil magistrate with respect to false religious practices?

6.3.2.5.3.1. "The civil magistrate ... it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. ..." ¹⁹⁷

6.3.2.5.3.2. "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, ... anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion ..." ¹⁹⁸

6.3.2.5.3.3. "The duties required in the second commandment are, ... the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry." ¹⁹⁹

6.3.2.6. Most people do not realize that it is *impossible* to have religious tolerance, permitting different religious practices and expressions of morality to co-exist in a society. Why?

¹⁹⁷ "Of the Civil Magistrate," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 23, para. 3.

¹⁹⁸ *Larger Catechism*, Q109.

¹⁹⁹ *Larger Catechism*, Q108.

- 6.3.2.6.1. The question is not whether the Government legislates morality; the question is whose standard will it be? Will it be the standards of God from the Bible, Secular Humanism, or the ‘standard’ from another religion?
- 6.3.2.6.2. The idea that we can reject all religiously-based moral systems as a foundation for government is spurious. It is merely a form of institutionalized Secular Humanism—which is a religion.
- 6.3.2.6.3. It is naïve to think that opposites can co-exist in mutual respect. One view eventually has to prevail over the other and generally it is the majority’s (whether or not it is valid) view that will prevail. When reduced to its simplest form, the end is arrived at among human contenders when one man’s opinion becomes supreme—might makes right.
- 6.3.2.6.4. It is impossible for pluralism to work in practice or even in theory because there can be no objective means of adjudicating between the conflicting systems and priorities. It is impossible to be fair. The only means of deciding who is in the ‘right’ is to cater to those who scream the loudest (e.g., witness the homosexual activists’ reaction against Proposition 8 in California), have the most political influence, buy elections, or are the favourites of those who are in power.
- 6.3.2.6.5. Pluralism can last at most for only a short time and then it turns into intolerance against Christianity.
 - 6.3.2.6.5.1. Where falsehood is permitted, truth will be suppressed and driven out.
 - 6.3.2.6.5.2. False religions cannot co-exist with the true religion, Islam, etc. will drive out Christianity.
 - 6.3.2.6.5.3. Secular Humanism is a false religion and it will drive out Christianity. For a time, Secular Humanism and Islam can work together because they both hate Christianity.
- 6.3.2.7. However, given the tendency of sinful natures to abuse power, there are dangers in outlawing false religious practices:²⁰⁰ What are some of these dangers?
 - 6.3.2.7.1. How do you avoid the possibility of false professions of faith to gain office, power, or influence?
 - 6.3.2.7.2. Would tolerance allow the ‘right’ to private beliefs?
 - 6.3.2.7.3. What should be done with dissent?
 - 6.3.2.7.4. Where could people go if they didn’t agree?
 - 6.3.2.7.5. What should be done about the outward practice of falsehood (e.g., building of mosques and animal sacrifices)?
 - 6.3.2.7.6. How should people be treated who continue to practice false religions?
 - 6.3.2.7.7. How do we avoid an inquisition?
- 6.3.2.8. A truly Christian government²⁰¹ may not be possible in this sinful world, however we are to pray for it and do whatever is our power to bring about.
- 6.4. *Alert* – He gave an alert or warning to any who might think of disobeying, that punishment would follow a breach of his command. What would be the punishment?
 - 6.4.1. Dismemberment, death and destruction.
 - 6.4.2. Where have we seen this before? This is essentially the same punishment Nebuchadnezzar promised the wise men if they were unable to provide an interpretation of his dream (Dan 2.5).

²⁰⁰ This topic is addressed in more detail in “Appendix F – Relationship Between Church and State (Considerations)” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

²⁰¹ For a ‘picture’ of what a Christian state *might* look like consult: James R. Hughes, *Christian Libertarian Manifesto*; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 6.4.3. It must have been Nebuchadnezzar's favourite threat. Ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian kings were known for their barbarity. This barbarity continues today in the lands of the ME that have succumbed to Islam.
- 6.4.4. We noted when considering the previous occurrence of this threat, that:
 - 6.4.4.1. To cut a human body into pieces was considered about as degrading a curse as possible.
 - 6.4.4.1.1. The Babylonians believed that a soul of a body that was not buried properly would torment the living. They invested effort in preparing bodies with spices and perfumes to help it enter the netherworld of the dead.²⁰²
 - 6.4.4.1.2. When Babylonian and Assyrian kings wanted to curse someone they would speak of casting a body aside with no burial and the mutilation of a dead body was viewed as a terrible punishment.²⁰³
 - 6.4.4.1.3. Muslims continue the same practice: "Thousands of Iraqi Christians have found threats like this under their front doors or stoops, in stairwells or shoved through their courtyard gates: "Be informed that we will cut your heads and leave your dead bodies with no organs and no heads in your stores and houses. We know your houses and we know your family. We will kill you one after the other. Depart the Muslim areas."²⁰⁴
 - 6.4.4.2. To turn a house into a pile of rubble (ruins) was also considered to be a curse.
 - 6.4.4.2.1. The Aramaic word used here for rubble/ruins can also be translated as "ash heap" or "garbage-heap" or "public latrine".
- 6.5. *Affirmation* – He affirms the uniqueness of God.
 - 6.5.1. What is the focus of his observation about God?
 - 6.5.1.1. He focuses on the work God performed, the miracle of saving the men, rather than on the attributes of God—although some attributes of God are implied by the action God took (e.g., almighty power, compassion).
 - 6.5.1.2. Even in this, he cannot see the illogic of his position. He believes in gods that cannot perform miracles and yet is only willing to profess the true God who can perform miracles as a *better* god; not the ultimate and only God.
 - 6.5.2. In professing God as better/best, is his profession a saving profession?
 - 6.5.2.1. Professing that God is able to work miracles is not equivalent to saving faith.
 - 6.5.2.2. Miracles have two primary purposes in scripture: 1) to prepare minds and hearts for saving faith, 2) to confirm the one performing the miracle as God's messenger.
 - 6.5.2.3. But belief in miracles alone is not sufficient to save a person. Adherents of false religions can believe that miracles are performed by their fakirs, priests, monks, and 'holy' men but that is not the same as believing in God as saviour.
 - 6.5.2.4. Even belief in God as the only one who can perform miracles (or empower his agents to perform miracles) is not enough to save. Satan and the demons believe that God, Jesus as the God-man, and prophets or apostles can perform miracles. But that belief cannot save them (Lk 8.28; James 2.19).
 - 6.5.3. What would have been necessary for Nebuchadnezzar to have voiced a saving profession of faith?
 - 6.5.3.1. Give up his own national deities by acknowledging them to be nothing more than vain imaginations (Jonah 2.8; Ezk 6.6).
 - 6.5.3.2. Declare Jehovah/Yahweh to be the only God; not just one of many gods; not just

²⁰² Wil Durant, "Our Oriental Heritage," *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 240.

²⁰³ Morris Jastrow, "The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria," *Handbooks on the History of Religions*, Vol. 2, (Boston: The Athenæum Press, 1893), pp. 601, 602. www.gutenberg.org/etext/20758.

²⁰⁴ Mindy Beltz, "Stalked," *World*, November 29/December 6, 2008, p. 38.

the most powerful of many gods (1 Ki 18.39).

6.5.3.3. Confess Jehovah/Yahweh to be his personal God (Ex 15.2)

6.5.3.4. Repent of his sins, particularly in false worship, and seek to serve the true God obediently (Josh 24.15).

6.5.3.5. Look to God's Messiah as saviour (Job 19.25-27; Num 24.17).

7. Why did God work this miracle?

7.1. Advance his glory.

7.1.1. The hotter the furnace, the tighter the cords, and the stronger the soldiers throwing the men in, the harder it was for the observers to claim that the survival of the three men was natural or could be attributed to some remarkable fortuitous circumstances. Rather, the administrators would have been constrained to acknowledge that what they had seen was nothing other than a miracle.

7.1.2. The wicked intentions of the administrators were over-ruled by God. Those who had plotted in anger and hatred became, instead, consumed by curiosity.

7.2. Demonstrate his power.

7.2.1. We may not be the recipients of such visible and obvious a miracle as that which was provided for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and was shown to those who accused them of being irreligious and insubordinate, and wanted them destroyed.

7.2.2. And, we don't need to debate the question of whether God still performs miracles today. If we get into this debate, we lose sight of a greater reality.

7.2.2.1. Let us refresh our memories as to what is a miracle: "a miracle is a direct action of God which temporarily suspends the proximate means ('laws') by which God normally directs events in the natural realm."

7.2.3. All of our existence is miraculous.

7.2.3.1. We came into existence from nothing by the direct creative act of God at our conception. Creation of a human life is a miracle—it is an *immediate* or *direct* action of God which temporarily suspends the proximate means ('laws') by which God normally governs and administers events in the natural real. The natural order of matter is that it is not to be alive.

7.2.3.1.1. Contrary to what Evolutionists and materialists claim natural physical systems cannot generate life. For example, the PBS Nova program 'Life's Special Miracle'²⁰⁵ uses the word 'creation' with respect to life but attributes life to DNA replication. The program ignores the question of what life is and how it comes into existence. It also doesn't address the question of where the information in the DNA came from originally. It focuses rather on the *mechanics* of physical reproduction of genetic information.

7.2.3.1.2. Even intelligent, rational creatures cannot generate, build, or create life. Life is a phenomenon created only by God through a miracle.

7.2.3.2. Our daily existence is also miraculous. Because we are so used to being alive and moving about each day we do not stop to consider what is actually going on with our existence and miss the miraculous. The sustenance of life is a direct action of God which suspends the proximate means by which he normally governs and administers events in the natural realm.

7.2.3.2.1. The 'natural' order of matter is not life sustaining, even in a sinless universe. When God created matter (Gen 1.1, 2) matter was formless and lifeless. With the introduction of sin, matter/energy is subject to decay (Gen 3.17; Rom 8.21).

7.2.3.2.2. God literally holds the universe together moment by moment (Col

²⁰⁵ www.pbs.org/wqbh/nova/miracle/program.html

- 1.17; Acts 17.28). Athanasius said that if God were not holding the universe together, “we should consequently see not an ordered universe, but disorder, not arrangement but anarchy, not a system, but everything out of system, not proportion but disproportion.”²⁰⁶
- 7.2.3.3. The new birth is a miracle. It defies the natural order which is spiritual death.
- 7.2.3.3.1. Many in the Church today seek after sign-miracles and miss the greatest miracle of all—turning hearts of granite into living cells and wills of lead into joyful wonder.
- 7.2.3.3.2. Only God, in Jesus, can release mankind from the crippling grip of Satan (Ps 146.8).
- 7.2.3.3.3. It is also amazing, and a miracle, when God’s people are able to stand firm for truth, against sinful compliance to evil commands, as did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, than their being saved from the fiery furnace. It shows that God had saved his people by grace and is working his grace in them.
- 7.2.3.4. All believers in Jesus will experience another miracle. We will be taken into an everlasting existence.
- 7.2.3.4.1. Our current bodies were designed for this physical realm and, with the introduction of sin, have become subject to decay. We will be given new bodies (1 Cor 15.35-49) fit our new existence.
- 7.2.3.4.2. We will be given new homes in the new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3.13; Rev 21.1).
- 7.2.3.4.3. We will be sustained by God in an everlasting existence.
- 7.2.4. The God who created the human eye can certainly perform physical miracles today. But Jesus didn’t heal every blind eye in his day, and we are not to expect that kind of healing (or other types of miracles) today since the age of *sign*-miracles to validate the Messiah has ceased.
- 7.3. Frustrate the impious.
- 7.3.1. We may have the thoughts of Job (Job 21.7), Asaph (Ps 73.3), Jeremiah (Jer 12.1), or Habakkuk (Dan 1.2-4) and believe that the way of the wicked prospers. But this is not true.
- 7.3.1.1. God confounds the worldly-wise and frustrates their ambitions.
- 7.3.1.2. God brings to nothing human replacements for his glory and opposes those who despise his glory.
- 7.3.1.2.1. False religions self-destruct in mutually destructive internecine conflicts.
- 7.3.1.2.2. False philosophies wallow in their self-deluded inconsistencies.
- 7.3.1.2.3. False hopes lie in ruins—shattered in the collapsed walls of the stock market, the gutters of perversion, and the cracked pavements of broken relationships.
- 7.3.2. The Babylonians worshiped a god of fire, so God showed them, by despising and restraining the flames, that their god was inconsequential compared with his power. While Bel could not save his worshippers from being burned at the mouth of the furnace, God could save his people from the very midst of the furnace.
- 7.3.3. God removed all room for doubt and unbelief in him as the true God, by releasing his servants from the fire. God continues to provide men in every generation and geography with more than sufficient evidence of his existence and power in every dimension of their lives. Men are without excuse before God.
- 7.4. Encourage his people.
- 7.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar was in the process of taking the Jews into captivity. Their oppression

²⁰⁶ Athanasius, *Contra Gentes (Against the Heathen)*, Part III, Section 37, “The same subject continued,” www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.vi.ii.iii.iii.html

- would last 70 years as foretold by Jeremiah (Jer 25.11, 12; Jer 29.10; Dan 9.2). The salvation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the furnace on the plains of Dura would remind them that God was in control and he could bring them through the furnace of captivity as easily as he brought the three men through the brick-firing kiln.
- 7.4.2. The salvation (and promotion; 30) of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would provide some relief from hatred against the true religion.
- 7.4.2.1. The three men, along with Daniel, could be a positive influence for the preservation of the Jews and help to protect them from oppression. Another example of a force for good in the governments of the oppressive empire, during the time of the Jewish Captivity, was Mordecai.
- 7.4.2.2. Opponents of the true religion would be constrained somewhat from blasphemy and murderous hatred by the presence of these godly men in positions of power in the heart of the empire.
8. What was the outcome of this test of wills between the accusatory wise men and the accused servants of God?
- 8.1. The three were promoted in the province of Babylon.
- 8.1.1. They were promoted to positions that were higher than the ones they had been given previously (Dan 2.49).
- 8.1.2. They were likely promoted above (some of) those who had accused them of being irreligious and insubordinate. This must have really irked their enemies for the rest of their lives (compare the situation between Haman and Mordecai; Est 6.11-13).
- 8.2. Were they actually promoted?
- 8.2.1. Some suggest that they were only restored to their previous positions. Others suggest that we can understand the meaning as ‘caused to prosper’
- 8.2.2. We will accept the word of God at face value and conclude that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given (more) important positions in the province of Babylon.
- 8.3. Kings, presidents, governors, and prime ministers promote those who are reliable.
- 8.3.1. Generally, the most reliable people they will be able to find are Christians who do their jobs to the best of their abilities and live quiet lives of service (Prov 10.4; Prov 12.24; Prov 22.29).
- 8.3.2. The objective for obeying God should not be to gain promotion in this world. However, obedience to God often results in advancement and material prosperity—they are the blessings for obedience.
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 9.1. *Power* – God can do anything; but contradict his own nature. He is all-powerful.
- 9.1.1. Miracles are exceptional to us but not to God. We noted that God performs miracles in the physical, temporal realm moment by moment:
- 9.1.1.1. We came into existence from nothing by the direct creative act of God at our conception.
- 9.1.1.2. Our daily existence is also miraculous.
- 9.1.1.2.1. The ‘natural’ order of matter is not life sustaining, even in a sinless universe.
- 9.1.1.2.2. God literally holds the universe together moment by moment (Col 1.17; Acts 17.28).
- 9.1.2. We should not stumble over the miracle of saving the three men from the furnace. Preventing harm to them while they walked in the furnace is a, relatively, insignificant control of nature compared with creating the universe, creating life, or raising someone to life.
- 9.1.3. While we believe that miracles are possible today, we are not to expect them. The God who created the human eye can certainly perform physical miracles today. But, Jesus

didn't heal every blind eye in his day and we are not to expect that kind of healing (or other types of miracles) today since the age of sign-miracles to validate the Messiah has ceased.

9.2.*Praise* – Even pagans will praise God, in spite of their adherence to false religions.

9.2.1. Eventually every proud knee will be humbled and bow before Jesus (Phil 2.9, 10).

9.2.1.1. Those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus bow in love to him.

9.2.1.2. At the Judgement Day the remainder of mankind, even the proudest of the proud, will fall in awe and fear before the judge of all the earth.

9.2.1.3. Nebuchadnezzar, like Pharaoh (Ex 18.11), began the process of bowing in his mortal existence. His profession of God's greatness is a token of the future reality that awaits all men—they will acknowledge God as the only God even from the depths of everlasting Hell.

9.3.*Protection* – God protects his people and is especially caring of those who obey him under difficult, life threatening, situations.

9.3.1. It might appear at times that God deserts his people. When the three men were thrown into the furnace, they may have thought that God had forsaken them.

9.3.2. The miracle of their salvation from the fire and the presence of Christ with them in the fire, tells us that God is with his people in their infirmities, troubles, persecutions, trials and temptations.

9.3.2.1. George Whitefield, for example, appeals to these events for his own encouragement on his return from Georgia to England: "With a particular fear and trembling I think of going to London; but He who preserved Daniel in the den of lions, and the Three Children in the fiery furnace, will, I hope, preserve me from the fiery trial of popularity, and from the misguided zeal of those, who, without cause, are my enemies."²⁰⁷

9.3.3. This does not mean that every believer will be protected in every adverse circumstance in this life.

9.3.3.1. God's purposes are deeper and larger than we can ever understand or imagine at this time, with our finite understanding: 'In this era, God saves whom he wanted, so that the works of his magnificence would be revealed to the whole world. But those for whom he desired martyrdom, he crowned them and brought them to himself. If he removed the three young men from danger, it was so that the boasting of Nebuchadnezzar might appear as nothing, for God wanted to demonstrate that "what is impossible for man is possible for God" ... God proved that he is able to remove his servants from danger when he wants.'²⁰⁸

9.3.3.2. His purposes may include allowing us to be subjected to persecution and, an apparently, premature death.

9.3.3.3. However, the protection of the three is a promise to us that God will walk with us through whatever circumstances come our way.

9.3.3.4. God will never leave us or abandon us (Josh 1.5; Ps 37.25; Is 41.10; Jn 14.18; Heb 13.5).

9.3.3.5. He will be with us even through the valley of the shadow of death.

9.3.3.6. For the Christian, death is a shadow, and we must look beyond death and into an everlasting existence to see God's working out his great plan for our lives.

9.4.*Presence* – The men had the privileged of meeting with Christ in pre-incarnate form. That meeting with Christ was a blessing to their souls. We cannot meet, today, with Christ in bodily form. But, he is present in spirit with his people. Jesus is present with us now, walking in our midst as surely as he did in the furnace on the plains of Dura. We should praise God for the

²⁰⁷ George Whitefield, *Journals*, p. 179; quoted in: Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield – the Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, Vol 1, (London: Banner of Truth), p.212.

²⁰⁸ Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, II.35.8-9, quoted in: W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 97.

privilege we have of knowing Jesus and having him walking beside us.

9.5. *Prophecy* – The presence of Christ in the midst of the furnace was a prophecy of his planned incarnation.

9.5.1. He took bodily form not only to console the three men, but to proclaim his intention of coming to earth in a true human nature.

9.5.2. His incarnation had been proclaimed from the time of curse against sin in the Garden (Gen 3.15).

9.5.3. As history progressed and revelation became fuller, the coming of the Messiah as the God-man became more clearly defined.

9.5.4. We have the advantage of hind-sight and understand the nature of his incarnation as the suffering servant.

9.5.5. There is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. His presence in the furnace in bodily form, and subduing the flames of the furnace, reminds us that he is coming once again with fire to consume this world and to save his people forever from the flames of Hell's furnace. *Soli Deo Gloria*—to God alone the glory!

Destroyed Tree (Dan 4.1-37)

Salutation (Dan 4:1-3)

1. Who is primary speaker in this chapter?

1.1. The primary speaker is Nebuchadnezzar.

1.1.1. He recorded these events in the first person.

1.1.2. He also recorded Daniel's words, as spoken to him.

1.1.3. Only a portion of the chapter (verses 28-33) is not Nebuchadnezzar speaking, or a quotation of what Nebuchadnezzar heard from Daniel. This portion (28-33) may have been composed by Daniel and added to the account when the book of Daniel was written, or the words may have been included in Nebuchadnezzar's official record of the events.

1.2. What is missing from this proclamation that you might expect to be included in proclamation from a king in the ancient world?

1.2.1. It does not include the usual form of a salutation included in official proclamations by Nebuchadnezzar or other kings of his era.

1.2.2. It does not have the pomp or boasts of other proclamations. For example, it is not like the carved inscription of Nebuchadnezzar's great building projects that is in the British Museum and opens: "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, glorious Prince, worshipper of Marduk, adorer of the lofty one, glorifier of Nabu, the exalted, the possessor of intelligence, who the processions of their divinities hath increased; a worshipper of their Lordships, firm, not to be destroyed; who for the embellishment of Bit-Saggatu and Bit-Zida appointed days hath set apart, and the shrines of Babylon and of Borsippa hath steadily increased; exalted Chief, Lord of peace, embellisher of Bit-Saggatu and Bit-Zida, the valiant son of Nabopolassar King of Babylon am I."²⁰⁹

1.2.3. Rather, it provides a plain, direct account of who the speaker is and what happened to him.

1.3. Why is there this difference?

1.3.1. There is an element of humility, rather than pride, in this account.

1.3.2. It was written after the events of chapter 4 which truly did humble Nebuchadnezzar.

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar wish done with his account?

2.1. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar wished the account to be proclaimed throughout his entire kingdom (1-2).

2.1.1. Daniel was probably the court counsellor selected by Nebuchadnezzar to promulgate the

²⁰⁹ mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Assyria/Inscrib00.html

- proclamation throughout the kingdom.
- 2.2. Daniel, led by the Holy Spirit, includes in his semi-autobiographical account, this official proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2.2.1. The account would have been an encouragement to the Jews in captivity since the LORD was honoured and it would have placed their religious observance in a more favourable light.
- 2.2.2. God chose to have the account recorded in Scripture so that his work of humbling Nebuchadnezzar would be visible to all generations and to all kings.
- 2.3. Why has this proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar not been found in the extra-Biblical records?
- 2.3.1. Some commentators suggest that since this account, or proclamation, has not been found on any carved pillars or recorded on tablets, it is not real history. They say that since there is no record outside of the Bible it is a merely a Jewish fable.
- 2.3.2. We of course must not jump, with the sceptics, to the faulty logical argument, often called ‘argument from ignorance’ in which a person regards the lack of evidence for a particular thing (view/event) as constituting proof that an alternative must be true. A more memorable way of stating the counter to this form of faulty argument is: ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’. A good example of someone using this form of faulty argument is to say, “I can’t see germs, therefore germs do not exist.”
- 2.3.3. There is some circumstantial extra-Biblical evidence to support the truthfulness of this account.
- 2.3.3.1. A bronze door-step has been found bearing an inscription that indicates that it was presented by Nebuchadnezzar at the temple at Borsippa as an offering on account of his recovery from a terrible illness.²¹⁰ If this offering relates to his madness recorded in this chapter, then his votive offering at a pagan temple has a bearing on the degree of his conviction about the uniqueness of the LORD God (34-35).
- 2.3.3.2. Berosus²¹¹ a Hellenistic-era Babylonian priest apparently makes reference to an illness before the death of Nebuchadnezzar. E. J. Young points out that this illness must have been unique or significantly different to have been particularly noticed since many kings died of some illness.²¹²
- 2.3.3.3. There appears to be a gap in life of Nebuchadnezzar in which there were no inscriptions (suggested to be from 580-567 BC²¹³, however see the discussion below on a possible date for these events).
- 2.3.4. Regardless, we might also conclude that the government censors were at work.
- 2.3.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar wanted the proclamation broadcast, and it probably was while he was alive.
- 2.3.4.2. However, the counsellors of the regime and the priests of the prevailing religious practice would not have wanted it promulgated. The proponents, especially the entrenched establishment, of false religions do now want the knowledge of the true God disseminated. It was no different then, than it is today when organizations for HRCs or ACLU to public schools, and government bureaucracies go to lengths to shut down the public proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 2.3.4.3. The counsellors and priests probably thought that even though Nebuchadnezzar had recovered from his madness, he was still a bit dotty and they would not want his apparent conversion or ‘getting religion’ to be too widely publicised. So, they did not record the pronouncement in a lasting manner. No stele were carved and no tablets created in the official archives to perpetuate the memory of these

²¹⁰ net.bible.org/dictionary.php?dict=dictionaries&word=Nebuchadnezzar

²¹¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berosus

²¹² Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 111.

²¹³ net.bible.org/dictionary.php?dict=dictionaries&word=Nebuchadnezzar.

- events.
- 2.3.4.4. Their behaviour would have been similar and no different from what we see today.
 - 2.3.4.4.1. The mainstream media perpetuated the myths around J. F. Kennedy's 'Camelot' by suppressing potentially compromising behaviour in his life as president, and as much as they can, do not make reference to Obama's inconsistencies and lies.
 - 2.3.4.4.2. The mainstream media generally ignored positive news about G. W. Bush—such as his winning the Rick Warren International Medal of PEACE from the Global PEACE Coalition in recognition of his unprecedented contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases²¹⁴ or his calling for a national day of prayer.²¹⁵
 - 2.3.4.4.3. The 'scientific' establishment works hard to suppress any views (e.g., relating to Intelligent Design, supportive of a recent creation, or opposing anthropogenic global warming) which they deem inconsistent with their secular-humanistic religion.
 - 2.3.4.5. The old Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of this chapter does not include verses 1-3.
 - 2.3.4.5.1. The early Latin Vulgate follows the LXX.
 - 2.3.4.5.2. Some argue that this shows that the proclamation was not really from Nebuchadnezzar but rather a Jewish myth concocted in the 2nd century BC.
 - 2.3.4.5.3. Rather, it may show how effective the suppression of the proclamation was by the ACLU (Akkadian/Astrologers Court Liturgical Union). While the events were recorded in the common Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures, the majority of people (unless they could read Aramaic) did not know that this account was an official proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 2.3.5. We have a portion of scripture composed by an (apparent) unbeliever and by someone who was not appointed to the prophetic office by God.
 - 2.3.5.1. This is not inconsistent with the truth that Peter (2 Pt 1.21) communicates—that all of Scripture is from men carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2.3.5.2. The Holy Spirit superintended the creation of Scripture, incorporating into it exactly, and only, what we need to know for faith and life.
 - 2.3.5.3. There are other portions of scripture which are the proclamations of unbelievers (e.g., Balaam's prophecies in Numbers; Caiaphas' reference to Jesus' death, Jn 11.49-50) as well as the record of incidental words in conversation with unbelievers (Gen 3.1; Gen 4.8; Ex 5.2).
3. To whom did Nebuchadnezzar address his salutation and account?
- 3.1. To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world.
 - 3.2. The address includes all the people in his empire (Dan 3.4).
 - 3.3. However, it likely includes a broader audience. What might that be?
 - 3.3.1. Some understand "in all the world" to mean in the known world (i.e., from Spain and Gaul, to Scythia, and to India or China) or the world under his authority (i.e., specifically his empire).
 - 3.3.2. If he were addressing only the people in his empire then his salutation would likely not have included "in all the world".
 - 3.3.3. He may actually be addressing all people in the 'known world'. However, from his

²¹⁴ www.marketwatch.com/news/story/President-George-W-Bush-Receives/story.aspx?guid=%7B375C7988-1926-4726-8FF5-42F7E3F06DAA%7D.

²¹⁵ www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020426-2.html.

perspective, the ‘known world’ was the *entire* world—he and his contemporaries probably did not know of people living in Northern Europe, the Americas²¹⁶ or Australia, but they certainly knew about the peoples in southern, coastal, Europe; north and east-coastal Africa; and the east (India and China).

- 3.3.4. We noted earlier (in our considerations of Dan 2.37-38) that Nebuchadnezzar had been granted by God absolute authority over the entire world of men and beasts. That his armies did not extend his dominion during his lifetime does not mean that the nations of the entire earth were not subject to him, but rather that he had not taken control of all that had been given to him by God, and belonged to him. Nebuchadnezzar considered himself king of the *world*, not just a localized empire.
- 3.3.5. Nebuchadnezzar desired that all people on earth be made aware of the events that passed over him.
4. When did these events occur in the life of Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 4.1. Most interpreters believe that they occurred late in his life since they occurred after his building Babylon and reflecting on his accomplishments.
 - 4.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar had by this point taken Jehoiachin captive to Babylon, placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC), and had taken the people captive to Babylon because Zedekiah was unfaithful to God and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron 36.10-20)
 - 4.2. The Greek Septuagint (LXX) says (in verse 4) that these events occurred in the 18th year. This statement is not found in the Hebrew version of the OT or other ancient versions. It was probably added by a copyist who attempted to provide a helpful chronology for his readers and the reference got incorporated into a later copy of the text. The 18th year is probably too early for Nebuchadnezzar to have completed the extensive work on Babylon which it seems he is boasting about in this chapter.
 - 4.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years (605-562 BC). He would have been about 83 or 84 when he died.
 - 4.2.2. If his insanity lasted seven years (we will consider this question below) and he returned to the throne for a short time before he died, then the events may have occurred around 570 BC, about the 35th year of his reign.
 - 4.3. If these considerations are correct, there may be a gap of roughly 25 years between chapter 3 and chapter 4 in the book of Daniel. At the time of these events (at the end of the seven years), Daniel would be around the age of 55-60.
5. What prompted Nebuchadnezzar’s outburst of praise?
 - 5.1. It was in response to the miraculous signs and wonders that had been performed for him by the Most High God. What signs and wonders does he mean?
 - 5.1.1. To an extent, those we have read about in the previous two chapters; although they probably occurred over thirty years in the past:
 - 5.1.1.1. Revealing the content and meaning of his dream about the statue (Dan 2.47).
 - 5.1.1.2. The salvation of Daniel’s three friends from the brick furnace on the plains of Dura.
 - 5.1.2. Primarily the miracle of his becoming beast-like and, after a time, being restored to normalcy, as recorded in this chapter.
 - 5.2. The other factor promoting his praise was that Nebuchadnezzar realized that he had met someone who was more powerful than himself.

²¹⁶ There *may* be evidence that Mediterranean (Phoenician, Egyptian, Greek, etc.) sailors were aware of the lands that we now call North America. This knowledge *may* have had wider dissemination than we know about today; phoenicia.org/america.html; paranormal.about.com/library/weekly/aa080700a.htm. It is possible that North America was closer to Europe 2,500 years ago than it is today—if the continents have been drifting apart since after the Flood. See Plato's *Timaeus*, usually dated c360 BC, in which he describes a land (a continent, which he calls *Atlantis*) beyond the Pillars of Heracles, which *may* be a reference to what we now call North and South America classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html.

- 5.2.1. He had met more than his match in God and realized that God was far superior to himself.
- 5.2.2. He had true respect for the sovereign power and greatness of God.
- 5.2.3. Previously he had extolled the greatness of God (Dan 3.29) and then had gone on for twenty-five years living as a proud autonomous agent. He appears to have finally internalized the lessons God had been teaching him.
- 5.2.4. After a full life of ~80 years he had truly learned that God is not someone to be trifled with.
- 5.3. He had a true desire to inform others of the God that he had encountered.
 - 5.3.1. It gave him pleasure or joy to relate his own humbling experiences and to extol the greatness of the true God.
 - 5.3.2. He wanted to instruct others about the God who had performed these miracles.
 - 5.3.3. We will consider the question later of whether or not his convictions and feelings were the result of a sincere conversion experience. However, at minimum, we can liken his desire to that of someone who had discovered a reliable cure for cancer and wanted others to have the benefit of the cure.
- 6. Nebuchadnezzar refers to God's signs and wonders. In what way were these miracles signs?
 - 6.1. God uses miracles for more than their intrinsic results. If the primary merit of miracles is to be found in their results, then God would likely perform them more frequently and for more people.
 - 6.2. The primary purposes of miracles are to authenticate God's claims and his prophets and to vindicate his sovereignty.
 - 6.2.1. Miracles are not primarily intended to convert (Lk 16.31), although they are at times used as a proximate means of leading to conversion of unbelievers.
 - 6.2.2. Miracles, rather, demonstrate that God is at work, directly or through one of his messengers.
 - 6.2.3. Miracles also present evidence that holds accountable men who refuse to acknowledge God as sovereign.
 - 6.3. The events recorded here about Nebuchadnezzar were intended to instruct not only the king, but all mankind since then.
 - 6.3.1. God recorded these miracles as a perpetual witness to his own greatness.
 - 6.3.2. God requires all men who read this account to accept his sovereignty over all gods and kings and to worship him in Spirit and Truth.
 - 6.3.3. God will hold in contempt all those who scoff at or reject the account of this miracle.
- 7. How did Nebuchadnezzar praise God?
 - 7.1. He praised the reign of God by extolling three key attributes:
 - 7.1.1. *Evident* – It was manifested by great signs and mighty wonders.
 - 7.1.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar was familiar with pomp and ceremony. His reign probably exhibited more of this kind of display than any reign before (and possibly after).
 - 7.1.1.2. The city of Babylon, in his day, was as magnificent as any city ever built by men. [We considered the greatness of Babylon in our opening topics and will consider it again, briefly, when we look at 4.30.]
 - 7.1.1.3. In contrast, the Kingdom of the Rock does not appear in worldly pomp and ceremony (although some parts of the Church have fallen to this temptation) but through the power God, as he:
 - 7.1.1.3.1. Confirms his messengers (the Prophets, Christ, and the apostles) with sign-miracles.
 - 7.1.1.3.2. Changes hearts of stone into hearts of holiness and helpfulness.
 - 7.1.1.3.3. Compels the world to enter the Kingdom through preaching truth and prayer.

- 7.1.2. *Eternal* – It was everlasting, without beginning or end.
 - 7.1.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar, for all of his pretensions to deity, was growing old and knew that he would die soon.
 - 7.1.2.2. In contrast, he knew that the Kingdom of the Rock was perpetual and would last forever (Dan 2.44).
 - 7.1.2.3. He probably lived for about a year after the events recorded in this chapter.
 - 7.1.2.4. These words may have been his deathbed confession.
- 7.1.3. *Enduring* – It was unassailable from generation to generation and could not be overcome by another dynasty.
 - 7.1.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar knew from the prophecy of the image given to him in a dream (chapter 2) that his dynasty would not last. He may have even thought that it would end after his death (562 BC), and not persist for another 23 years, until the time of Cyrus (539-530 BC).
 - 7.1.3.2. He knew that no matter how great his own kingdom, it was mutable and subject to decay.
 - 7.1.3.3. In contrast, he knew that the Kingdom of the Rock was permanent and could never be destroyed. It is an indestructible Kingdom that could not decay and was in no danger of dissolution, succession or revolution (Dan 2.44).
- 7.2. Notice the similarity of Nebuchadnezzar's invocation to Psalm 145.13.
 - 7.2.1. How is it that Nebuchadnezzar came to use the same words as are in Psalm 145.13?
 - 7.2.2. We do not need to think that a 2nd century BC Jewish polemicist, or even Daniel, attributed these words to Nebuchadnezzar in an attempt to make the Jewish religion, and God of Israel, look good.
 - 7.2.3. This Psalm, attributed to David, was available to Daniel. It is possible, and likely, that he used the words of the Psalms to educate Nebuchadnezzar about the reality of God's sovereignty after Nebuchadnezzar's encounter with God in the events recorded in this chapter.
 - 7.2.4. Nebuchadnezzar would have been attentive to words that described the Kingdom of the Rock, in contrast to his own fading kingdom, and would have used what he had heard and learned in his exclamation of praise.
- 8. What was Nebuchadnezzar's desire for his audience? Why?
 - 8.1. "Peace be multiplied to you!" or 'may you have great peace' or 'may you prosper greatly'.
 - 8.1.1. The word used in the Aramaic (ܡܠܬܐ) is probably a cognate form of the Hebrew word for peace (שָׁלוֹם).
 - 8.1.2. The use of 'peace' in greetings was common throughout the ME. It continued into NT times (Jn 20.19; 1 Cor 1.3; Jude 2).
 - 8.2. While in many cases the greeting would be as perfunctory as someone saying today "How are you?" and not bothering to listen for the answer, in this case we can believe that Nebuchadnezzar was sincere in his greetings. What did he really wish for all those hearing his proclamation?
 - 8.2.1. True peace and prosperity.
 - 8.2.2. What he has to tell them is something of such great importance that it is life changing and of everlasting importance.
 - 8.2.3. He is displaying a magnanimous spirit; wanting his subject peoples to hear, understand, and believe the account he is going to relate. His purpose is to bring them good news.
 - 8.2.4. His desire that the world know of peace was similar to the desire of the angels who announced the birth of Christ (Lk 2.14).
 - 8.3. What kind of peace is he speaking of?
 - 8.3.1. Peace has different meanings in daily use, from 'a state of tranquillity or quiet' to not 'being at war or subject to civil disturbance' to 'prosperity' to 'calm reflection'.
 - 8.3.2. There are also different types of 'peace' in our relationship with God:

- 8.3.2.1. With God: restored relationship and friendship (Rom 5.1-2; Col 1.20)
 - 8.3.2.2. From God: salvation from sin (Is 53.5; Lk 7.50)
 - 8.3.2.3. In God: walking in righteousness (Is 32.17; Phil 4.7; Heb 12.14; James 3.17).
 - 8.3.3. With his limited knowledge of God and salvation he could not have made a clear distinction between the different types of peace that we can have from a proper understanding of God and his purposes. He probably was thinking in terms of a blended view: 'peace with God for a peaceful life'.
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 9.1. *Affirmation* – God will not be mocked by men. One way or another he will receive praise from all men, who will acknowledge him as the eternal king (Is 45.23; Phil 2.9-11).
 - 9.1.1. At Babel (Babel is the Hebrew equivalent of the Akkadian 'Babilu'; Greek 'Babylon'), the site of the events recorded in chapter 4, an earlier king, possibly Sargon, created a confederacy of subject lords which undertook a project to proclaim themselves gods, with the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11.1-9). God punished their hubris, shattered their empire, and scattered mankind across the globe. A number of centuries passed before empire building resumed.
 - 9.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon is viewed by the Prophets as the archetype of human endeavours to resist and challenge God (Is 13.1-22; Is 14.3-23; Rev 17.5). Babylon is the great representative of the evil of human aspirations in empire building.
 - 9.1.3. The kings of the earth are called to acknowledge Jesus as their sovereign (Ps 2.2, 10-12).
 - 9.1.4. God expects praise from even those in rebellion against him and can/will change the most unlikely of rebels into subjects who affirm his greatness. Even in Hell, all rebels will affirm that God is sovereign. They will do it grudgingly, but they will do it!
 - 9.2. *Adoration* – We should rejoice at what God is doing. The events of nations are under his hand. He is unfolding his great plan by raising up one king and putting down another; by ordaining praise even from stone-cold hearts.
 - 9.2.1. The more we see events unfolding, and how God is in control, the more we should rejoice and adore him (Ps 118.23; Ps 66:2).
 - 9.2.2. Men adore other men who have accomplished great things: war heroes, athletes, movie stars, inventors, successful business men ...
 - 9.2.3. How much more should the one who is all good, all gracious, all loving, and all mighty, be adored?
 - 9.2.4. God is in control, praise his great name!
 - 9.3. *Announcement* – Like Nebuchadnezzar, we should have a great desire to proclaim what God has done for us.
 - 9.3.1. We should want others to know what God has done in our own lives and for us.
 - 9.3.2. Christians, especially those who have been brought up in Christian homes and came to believe at an early age, seem to forget what they have been saved from and what an amazing thing God has done in their lives by saving them and providentially providing for them.
 - 9.3.3. Almost every issue of *Reader's Digest* contains an account of some amazing rescue or escape. We love to hear about such adventures. For example, as I was preparing these notes, a story was in the news about a snowboarder who went off the run and got lost and survived for a number of days.²¹⁷
 - 9.3.4. In comparison, testimonies of saved sinners (e.g., John Newton or the Masab Yousuf the son of a Hamas terrorist²¹⁸) should thrill us. But, so also, should our own personal testimony. God has done great things for us (Job 37.5; Ps 71.19; Ps 86.10).

²¹⁷ Kelly Siniski, "Missing for days, B.C. snowboarder tells survival tale" *National Post*, 2009-01-02; www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1132404.

²¹⁸ Aaron Klein, "Son of top Hamas leader converts to Christianity," *WorldNetDaily*, 2008-07-31; www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=71097

9.3.5. We should be overflowing with awe and a desire to announce what he has done.

Stump (Dan 4.4-18)

1. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar when he was resting in his bedroom?
 - 1.1. He had a terrifying dream.
 - 1.1.1. This is Nebuchadnezzar's second terrifying dream recorded in Daniel.
 - 1.1.1.1. This does not mean that he did not have other terrifying dreams in the ~35 years since the dream of the large image made of different materials (Dan 2.32-33).
 - 1.1.1.2. He probably had nightmares (possibly even recurring ones) like most other people.
 - 1.1.2. Why do these two dreams stand out from ordinary dreams or nightmares?
 - 1.1.2.1. Most dreams (or nightmares) are chaotic and filled with inconsistencies. For example, they include unconnected people interacting (e.g., from different periods in a person's life), spatial connections are not realistic (e.g., a person walks through a door in his home and ends up in a different country), temporal flow is not preserved (e.g., historical events and future possibilities are intertwined), and physical laws are not respected (e.g., people or inanimate objects can fly).
 - 1.1.2.2. The two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Daniel are different from 'normal' dreams (or nightmares):
 - 1.1.2.2.1. Their record of events can be relayed as a coherent and rational narrative. They tell a rational story; they are not an irrational jumble of disjoint events.
 - 1.1.2.2.2. Although, they include the suspension of physical laws (a stone cut out of a mountain without human hands), they present these in a way that it is clear that a miracle is the cause and not a figment of the dreamer's imagination.
 - 1.1.2.2.3. Nothing in the dreams themselves would necessarily frighten a king who had seen the worst of war, pillage, gruesome punishments, and human affliction (although the visage of the image in chapter 2 was scary!). They don't include normally scary events that some people have in their nightmares like falling, drowning, suffocating, being chewed by rats, seeing the walking-dead, etc.
 - 1.1.2.3. Nebuchadnezzar knew without question that the dreams he had had in these two instances were revelation from God (or, in his thinking, the gods).
 - 1.1.3. What made this dream terrifying?
 - 1.1.3.1. It was not the imagery in the dream *per se*. Seeing a tree cut down or a man behaving like an animal isn't necessarily frightening.
 - 1.1.3.2. What made him afraid was that he realized that this dream applied to him, and that whatever it meant it was communicating specific and disturbing information about his future.
 - 1.2. What does he say was his status in life at the time he had this dream?
 - 1.2.1. He was resting in his comfortable bedchamber, in his luxurious palace, in Babylon with the great rewards of his military conquests and administrative endeavours around him.
 - 1.2.2. At this point in his life:
 - 1.2.2.1. He had recently conquered Egypt and Tyre (Ezk 29.17). His wars had ended and he had been successful with many victories. The borders of his empire were secure, and he had no immediate threats as a 'balance of power' had been established in the Middle East among the Medes/Persians (east), Lydians (north-west), and Babylonians. Beyond these kingdoms, other kingdoms were in place or forming (e.g., in Carthage, Greece, India and China) but they were separated from his empire by great distances or by disorganized nomadic and agrarian

- tribal groups or rough and inhospitable terrain, and were of no immediate threat or concern to his claims to supremacy.
- 1.2.2.2. He had completed great construction projects in Babylon and throughout the other cities in his empire. Babylon was the boast of the entire world, the greatest city on earth (we will address this again when we consider his boast in verse 30).
 - 1.2.2.3. He had personal prosperity. There was no one in the entire world with access to more privileges of wealth (concubines, foods, clothing, gardens, zoos, transportation, entertainment, etc.).
 - 1.2.2.3.1. Note: the word translated as ‘prospering’ (ESV; NIV similar) can also be translated as ‘flourishing’. The word may have been chosen deliberately to align with the image of the flourishing tree in the dream.
 - 1.2.2.4. He had his health. He was probably about 75 years old (75 + 1 year after the dream + 7 years as a beast + 1 year to his death = 84) when he had the dream. He was not senile and appears to have had no physical complaints (he says he was at rest [נָח]; see Ps 30.6 for a cognate with the same idea) and prospering). He had reached the general limit of life set for mankind by God (Ps 90.10) and could enjoy his accomplishments.
 - 1.2.2.5. He was secure and not fearful for his life. He was generally a magnanimous and fair ruler and did not fear internal conspiracies and revolutions. He was also generally respected, not just feared, by his subordinates and subjects.
 - 1.2.3. He was powerful, praised, prosperous, pampered, and in pleasure. He had it all, the whole world, plus! From a natural human perspective there was not much else he could possibly want.
 - 1.3. What was the only problem he had?
 - 1.3.1. He was proud and despised God.
 - 1.3.2. He therefore had a BIG problem (Lk 12.15-21)!
 - 1.4. When (what time of the day) was he confronted with the truth about his circumstances?
 - 1.4.1. He was in his bed; it was night.
 - 1.4.2. God uses different particular circumstances to awaken people to reality. For some it is near disaster (e.g., lightening, auto accident, extreme illness) or events happening to others (e.g., a relative killed). However, for many God uses the solitary time of night to awaken them.
 - 1.4.3. It is at night when people are unable to sleep and feel entirely alone, that they often are unable to suppress the nagging reality of God’s presence. The TV is off, if someone else is in the same bed he/she is sleeping, everything in the building is silent, and the person cannot sleep. It is then that doubts, concerns, worries begin to arise: “What have I done with my life?” “Have I lived a good life?” “When will I die?” “How will I die?” “What will happen after I die?” This is one of the reasons that the Gideon’s program of placing Bibles in the drawers of hotel bedside tables is effective and reaches many with God’s truth.
 - 1.4.4. Men cannot hide from reality when they are all alone, because then they realize that they really are not entirely alone, since they are in the presence of God.
 - 1.4.5. God can use this situation to awaken even the most proud and pompous man to his infinite majesty and righteous demands.
 2. Did Nebuchadnezzar learn any lessons from the events surrounding his earlier dream (chapter 2) that changed his behaviour in response to the second dream?
 - 2.1. Yes, he didn’t try to get the wise men to tell him the content of the dream.
 - 2.1.1. He didn’t threaten them with death if they didn’t give the content of the dream and its meaning. Previously, he had come perilously close to wiping out his entire corps of advisors. He probably wasn’t as hot-headed as he had been when younger.
 - 2.1.2. He may have believed that he could always call in Daniel if it appeared that the wise men

- were trying to deceive him with false interpretations.
- 2.2. *No*, he continued to appeal to the pagan wise men for guidance through dream interpretation
 - 2.2.1. The wise men could not provide the interpretation of the previous dream any more than they could tell him what the contents of his dream was (Dan 2.10-12), so they could not interpret the current dream.
 - 2.2.1.1. Their religion, gods, and knowledge had not changed, so they had no more ability to provide an interpretation than they did ~35 years previously.
 - 2.2.1.2. Consulting them was clearly stupid. Albert Einstein apparently said: “The definition of stupidity (or insanity) is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”
 - 2.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar’s actions are an amazingly direct fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Is 47.12, 13) about the Babylonians clinging to their falsehoods, written more than 100 years prior to these events.
 - 2.3. What does Nebuchadnezzar tell us about the capabilities of the wise men in his account?
 - 2.3.1. He admits that his sending for them had been a useless exercise.
 - 2.3.2. He admits their inability.
 - 2.3.3. We have to ask, what does it take for men to see the stupidity of relying on human knowledge?
 - 2.3.4. Nebuchadnezzar was still clinging to Bel as his god (8).
 3. Did the wise men learn any lessons from the events surrounding his earlier dream (chapter 2) that changed their behaviour in response to the second dream?
 - 3.1. Although they had boasted, with great assurance (Dan 2.4, 7), that they could interpret the previous dream, they did not appear to make the boast this time.
 - 3.2. Even though Nebuchadnezzar gave them the content of the dream this time, they admitted that they could not do so, and did not pretend to give an interpretation.
 - 3.3. We should remember that since these events occur some ~35 years after the previous dream and the wise men at this time are likely mostly of a different generation
 - 3.3.1. The wise men in chapter 2 were likely from the generation of Nebuchadnezzar’s father.
 - 3.3.2. There had likely been a replacement of most of the wise men over the life of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3.3.3. Regardless, these wise men would have been aware of what had nearly happened to the previous generation of wise men when they could not provide an interpretation of the dream and how Daniel had saved the lives of wise men at that time. They also would, undoubtedly, have known that it would not be wise to try to pretend to be dream interpreters in Nebuchadnezzar’s presence.
 - 3.3.3.1. They knew what he could do if they failed to give a valid interpretation of the dream.
 - 3.3.3.2. They knew that Daniel was still around and that he could be called upon to validate their interpretation, if Nebuchadnezzar so desired.
 - 3.3.3.3. They were not foolish enough to make claims that could cost them their lives.
 4. What recourse does Nebuchadnezzar take to gain an interpretation of his dream?
 - 4.1. Apparently he called for Daniel *after* the wise men failed to give an interpretation of the dream.
 - 4.1.1. The ‘at last’ or ‘finally’ implies that some time had passed before Daniel came in before the king.
 - 4.2. Why hadn’t he called Daniel in at first?
 - 4.2.1. It is unlikely that he forgot what Daniel had done many years before
 - 4.2.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar would likely not have forgotten his trepidation at seeing the first vision and his need for Daniel to interpret it.
 - 4.2.1.2. He remembered to call Daniel when the wise men failed to give an interpretation.

- 4.2.1.3. Daniel was still around in Nebuchadnezzar's administration and Nebuchadnezzar could not forget about him.
 - 4.2.2. It is possible that Daniel had been called along with the others and it just took him time to arrive. The note 'at last' would then refer to the fact that he finally arrived, rather than that he was finally called.
 - 4.2.2.1. He could have been travelling on official business or governing in another locale.
 - 4.2.2.2. Alternatively, Daniel may have chosen to arrive late so that the wise men could, once again, demonstrate their inability to interpret dreams (this assumes that Nebuchadnezzar had announced in advance the reason for their being called; which it appears that he had, per verse 6).
 - 4.2.3. However, if Nebuchadnezzar didn't call for Daniel immediately, it is possible that he was continuing his rebellion against God.
 - 4.2.3.1. He attempted to live without acknowledging his need for God.
 - 4.2.3.2. Even though he was looking for help from men, he was still too proud to admit that he needed God's help.
 - 4.2.3.3. He probably suspected that the message in the dream was aimed at him and that it bore bad tidings and he didn't want to hear the true meaning.
 - 4.2.3.4. He did not want to give credit and glory to God until he was compelled to do so by the failure of human means.
 - 4.2.4. God was certainly superintending these events. In his eternal plan, Daniel's later arrival introduced a measure of dramatic impact—showing the foolishness of the wise men and the wisdom of his own man.
5. How did Nebuchadnezzar praise and honour Daniel?
- 5.1. He referred to the Babylonian name for Daniel which Nebuchadnezzar would have viewed as honouring Daniel since it was based on the name of the god Bel
 - 5.1.1. Belteshazzar is the name that the chief of the eunuchs had given to Daniel (Dan 1.7) while he was in training.
 - 5.1.1.1. 'Belteshazzar' means 'Lady, protect the king' or 'guard his life!' or, possibly, 'keeper of the hidden treasures'.
 - 5.1.1.2. We noted that the intention of renaming the captives was to make them subject to the king and submissive to the Babylonian religion.
 - 5.1.2. It must have bothered Daniel to be called Belteshazzar.
 - 5.1.2.1. It would be similar to a Christian today having a name like 'Adolf Hitler', 'Devil Jones', etc.
 - 5.1.2.2. However, since Daniel didn't believe in the power of the this false god, he just accepted the name as a label and reports his Babylonian name even when he is not quoting direct speech (Dan 2.26; Dan 10.1; vs. Dan 4.8, 9, 18, 19; Dan 5.12).
 - 5.1.2.3. How do we use names of pagan deities today, in the same way, without assuming that the names have any meaning beyond labels?
 - 5.1.2.3.1. All of days of the week, in English, are named for gods:
 - 5.1.2.3.1.1. Sunday (sun god's day)
 - 5.1.2.3.1.2. Monday (moon god's day)
 - 5.1.2.3.1.3. Tuesday (Tiu was the English/Germanic god of war and the sky; in Norse mythology he was called Tyr)
 - 5.1.2.3.1.4. Wednesday (Woden's/Odin's day)
 - 5.1.2.3.1.5. Thursday (Thor's day)
 - 5.1.2.3.1.6. Friday (Frey's day; Frey gave his sword to a mortal [Skirnir] who lost the sword and then Frey was not to fight in the battle in Ragnarok [the last battle among the gods]; or possibly Frigg's day; Frigg was Odin's wife and the

- queen of the heavens and the goddess of love)
- 5.1.2.3.1.7. Saturday (Saturn's day).
- 5.1.2.3.2. Similarly the first six months were (and are) named after Roman gods or ceremonies:
 - 5.1.2.3.2.1. Janus god of gates and doors
 - 5.1.2.3.2.2. Februa the Roman festival of purification
 - 5.1.2.3.2.3. Mars god of war
 - 5.1.2.3.2.4. Aphrodite goddess of love and beauty
 - 5.1.2.3.2.5. Maia goddess of spring or Maesta goddess of honour
 - 5.1.2.3.2.6. Juno wife of Jupiter.
- 5.2. He said that the spirit of the holy gods was in Daniel.
 - 5.2.1. The king thought that Daniel was endowed with a divine spirit (Dan 4.9, 18; Dan 5.11, 14) and that he had the ability to communicate directly with the gods.
 - 5.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar had, many years before, called Jehovah/Yahweh the God of gods (Dan 2.47; Dan 3.28-29).
 - 5.2.2.1. He appears, in this instance, to view Jehovah/Yahweh as just one of many gods.
 - 5.2.2.2. He was still a polytheist even though he had acknowledged Jehovah/Yahweh to be the supreme God.
 - 5.2.2.3. The existence of the supreme God was known to all the nations (Gen 14.18), but they still created inferior deities.
 - 5.2.3. The expression 'holy gods' is likely used in the sense of 'sacred' or 'set-apart' rather than being a reference to 'moral purity'.
- 5.3. He called Daniel the chief of the magicians.
 - 5.3.1. What did he mean by this expression?
 - 5.3.1.1. He was the leader of the order of astrologers or magicians. This is unlikely since Daniel would not have served in such an office or capacity.
 - 5.3.1.2. He had authority over the astrologers or magicians. This is possible. Daniel may have had a broad authority over the entire civil service, since he had a high position in Nebuchadnezzar's administration.
 - 5.3.1.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have been saying that Daniel was wiser than the astrologers or magicians because of his ability to interpret dreams. He may have been unable to distinguish one type of advisor from another and therefore classed Daniel with all the rest. This would be similar to someone making a generalization about religious beliefs (e.g., making people more moral, being the cause of terror, or all leading to God) without distinguishing between true religion and false religion. To the average self-professed agnostic or anti-religious person all religions appear to be the same.
 - 5.3.2. Daniel was likely unimpressed by the title and would rather have been disassociated from the other wise men, and particularly those who were the leaders of pagan rituals or participated in soothsaying and fortune-telling.
- 5.4. He proclaimed that no mystery was too difficult for Daniel to solve.
 - 5.4.1. It is possible that Daniel had interpreted other dreams for Nebuchadnezzar since the dream ~35 years before, recorded in chapter 2.
 - 5.4.2. However, it is also possible that the only dream-interpretation that Daniel had done was explaining the meaning of the large statue.
 - 5.4.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have been exaggerating and attempting to flatter Daniel.
 - 5.4.4. Was it true that no mystery was too difficult for Daniel to solve?
 - 5.4.4.1. *No.* Daniel, of himself had no ability to provide answers to the hidden things of God.
 - 5.4.4.2. *Yes.* God could use faithful Daniel to reveal hidden truths that he had not provided to any other person. In fact, much of the latter portions of the book reveal the future (from Daniel's perspective) in a detail that is astounding and

- unprecedented.
- 5.5. He begged for help from Daniel. The king honoured Daniel by begging him to interpret his dream.
- 5.5.1. We see Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by his having to appeal to a servant, and actually a slave or hostage, for help.
- 5.5.2. Nebuchadnezzar knew that he could not command, bribe, or threaten Daniel to provide an interpretation of his dream. Daniel could not be forced to do something that he did not agree with or that was contrary to God's will. So it was necessary for Nebuchadnezzar to ask for help.
- 5.5.3. Nebuchadnezzar, for all of his pride and overbearing insolence, could do nothing else than humbly beg for help. This is the state in which all men should be found before the true God. And all men who do not know God should be humbly imploring God's messengers to provide them with guidance toward everlasting salvation.
- 5.6. What is missing from Nebuchadnezzar's commendation of Daniel?
- 5.6.1. He doesn't give credit to the only true God.
- 5.6.2. He doesn't credit Daniel with being a faithful servant of the true God, but instead views Daniel as being equivalent to a god or divine.
- 5.6.3. Nebuchadnezzar credits Daniel with attributes or gifts that were useful to him in order to find an answer to his perplexing dream. However, he doesn't speak of the attributes of Christian character that Daniel exhibited and which made Daniel a truly useful member of his administrative staff. What might some of those attributes be?
- 5.6.3.1. Truthfulness – Daniel would not have deceived or misled Nebuchadnezzar in any of the advice he had provided over many years.
- 5.6.3.2. Honesty – Daniel would never have stolen from Nebuchadnezzar or embezzled funds from the government treasury.
- 5.6.3.3. Principled – Daniel would not have compromised truth for convenience, personal recognition or reward.
- 5.6.3.4. Faithfulness – Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar during his entire reign and continued to serve through all of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty and also into the next empire. Rarely will such a faithful advisor be found in history.
- 5.6.4. This is the type of person all rulers want in their governments. Even the most tyrannical or unprincipled ruler wants those who serve him to be like Daniel—truthful, honest, principled, and faithful.
6. What are the specific elements of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
- 6.1. We will not focus on the *interpretation* of the dream at this time, rather on the key components and their obvious implications. We will consider the interpretation of the dream when we study verses 24-25.
- 6.2. A tree. The key element in the vision is a large tree.
- 6.2.1. What kind of tree *might* it have been?
- 6.2.1.1. The largest trees in that part of the world were the coniferous evergreen Cedars of Lebanon that can grow to 40 m (130 ft) tall with a diameter of about 3 m (by comparison: the tallest Coast Redwood is 116 m [379 ft]; Douglas-fir reach 75 m [250 feet]). They are found in the cold high mountains.
- 6.2.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar had been in Lebanon (probably more than once—first in his conquest of Assyria and second when he besieged Tyre [585-572 BC]). During his travels he had seen the famed cedars and claims to have participated in felling the trees.²¹⁹ He carried cedar timber from Lebanon to Babylon for his construction projects.²²⁰
- 6.2.1.3. The Cedar of Lebanon was renowned in the ancient world:

²¹⁹ www.flowersinIsrael.com/Cedruslibani_page.htm

²²⁰ www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=154&letter=N

- 6.2.1.3.1. The trees produce a wood of beautiful color and hardness with an exquisite fragrance that is resistant to insects and humidity.
- 6.2.1.3.2. Arabs venerated the trees, believing that they have a vegetative power which enabled them to live forever.
- 6.2.1.3.3. It was claimed that the trees were ‘wise’, understanding changes in the seasons.
- 6.2.1.3.4. Egyptians used the resin to mummify the dead and thus called it the “life of death”.
- 6.2.1.3.5. Sawdust from the trees has been found in the tombs of the Pharaohs.
- 6.2.1.3.6. Cedar oil was used as the base for paints used by the Sumerians.
- 6.2.1.3.7. The wood was burned in various pagan ceremonies.
- 6.2.1.3.8. The Phoenicians built their trading and military ships from the wood.
- 6.2.1.3.9. The Egyptians, about the time of Abraham (c 2000 BC), when Khufu (Cheops) was king in Egypt, are known to have used the wood to build ships.²²¹
- 6.2.1.3.10. The wood was used in temples, palaces, and houses of the rich (e.g., David's and Solomon's palaces) throughout the Mediterranean.
- 6.2.1.4. The cedar groves were largely clear-cut (without replanting) during the Islamic dominance of the ME through the time of the Ottomans. The remaining cedar groves are found in difficult-to-reach areas.
- 6.2.1.5. For centuries the Cedar of Lebanon has been the national emblem of Lebanon and appears on the nation's flag.
- 6.2.1.6. Writers throughout history, have been impressed with the majesty of these trees. They are mentioned in many writings including:
 - 6.2.1.6.1. Gilgamesh Epic²²²
 - 6.2.1.6.2. Bible: the cedars of Lebanon mentioned in at least 13 OT books and cedars about 70 times.
- 6.2.1.7. Note, however, that all the attributes of the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream are not fully matched by the Cedars of Lebanon (see the section below regarding the tree providing food). It is possible that the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a generic tree, a mythologized tree of his legends as a vestige of the Garden of Eden account, or some ‘mythical’ tree such as the golden tree that was the subject of legends in the subsequent Persian Empire. What tree God used in the vision is not stated.
- 6.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar would probably have understood that the tree represented himself or his kingdom. What attributes of his kingdom would he probably have seen in the tree (in the dream)?
 - 6.2.2.1. Placed in the middle of the earth. The Babylonians (and rulers of other empires in the ME such as Sargon, Sennacherib, and Cyrus) believed that their empire was at the centre of the four quarters of the earth. We considered this belief when we studied chapter 2 (verses 37-38).
 - 6.2.2.2. Very high. His kingdom was preeminent above all other known (and unknown) kingdoms on earth. Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the greatest kingdom on earth.
 - 6.2.2.3. Very large and strong. Nebuchadnezzar, by this point in his life, had conquered all his enemies. No nation had been able to stand against him. His kingdom was the strongest on earth with the largest fighting force and the most fearsome warriors.
 - 6.2.2.4. Reaching to heaven (the sky). He would have viewed the tree's top extending

²²¹ John Ashton and David Down, *Unwrapping the Pharaohs – How Egyptian Archaeology Confirms the Biblical Timeline* (Green Forest, AR; Master Books, 2006), p. 46.

²²² www.skanhistory.com/GILGAMESH.pdf

into the heavens as a sign that he had obtained divine stature and was worthy of divine honour.

- 6.2.2.4.1. The first Babylonian Empire had aspirations of ‘reaching to heaven’ when its leaders and citizens united to build a tower to heaven to challenge God (Gen 11.4).
- 6.2.2.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar the king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire also had aspirations of ‘reaching to heaven’ with his temple ziggurats. The largest was probably the Etemenanki (‘house of the foundation of heaven on earth’), estimated to have been 91m high (2X the height of the cedars), with a temple of Marduk on top
- 6.2.2.4.3. While the Babylonian kingdoms try to reach to the heavens, God and his messengers come down from Heaven (Gen 11.5; Dan 4.13) to confound the hubris of the Babylonian kings.
- 6.2.2.5. Visible throughout the world. Powerful people are generally very proud and they like to have their names known by men.
 - 6.2.2.5.1. If challenged you can hear them saying something like, “Do you know who I am?” This is a rhetorical question that implies that they expect to be recognized by others.
 - 6.2.2.5.2. Kings, like Nebuchadnezzar, took pride in knowing that the kings of distant lands looked to their nation and throne as the one to be emulated.
 - 6.2.2.5.2.1. We read of the fame of Solomon’s kingdom about 500 years prior to the time of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 6.2.2.5.3. Nebuchadnezzar’s fame and name would have extended from:
 - 6.2.2.5.3.1. Spain and Carthage, possibly to the kingdoms of the Celts and Scythians,
 - 6.2.2.5.3.2. to the Greek States, Lydia and Egypt,
 - 6.2.2.5.3.3. to the Medes to the east,
 - 6.2.2.5.3.4. to the Indian states consisting of the sixteen Mahajanapadas (‘Great Kingdoms’ from Maha, ‘great’, and Janapada ‘foothold of a tribe’, ‘country’),
 - 6.2.2.5.3.5. and probably even to the Zhou Dynasty (~1000 - 221 BC) in China.
- 6.2.2.6. Producing beautiful leaves and abundant fruit. The great wealth of Babylonian Empire was known throughout the ancient world. Nebuchadnezzar controlled the primary southern trade routes from east to west and all the means of production within his empire. The city of Babylon was renowned for its spectacular walls, canals, avenues, buildings, and gardens (we noted some aspects of Babylon when we considered 1.1-2, and will consider other aspects when we look at verse 30 of this chapter).
- 6.2.2.7. Providing food.
 - 6.2.2.7.1. Cedars of Lebanon are not known for their fruit. Although their berries may be edible, the amount of fruit a tree produces is not particularly abundant. This could mitigate against the tree in the vision being a Cedar of Lebanon, and rather being a generic or ‘mythical’ tree.
 - 6.2.2.7.2. Some interpret the verse to mean that the tree provided food for the entire earth. Others only that the food was provided for all who lived under the tree’s protection.
 - 6.2.2.7.3. Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was prosperous. The irrigation systems in the ‘fertile crescent’ and distribution channels throughout the empire allowed the kingdom to ensure that food production and diet were adequate.

- 6.2.2.7.3.1. I could not find any reference to a famine during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, all the literature about Nebuchadnezzar seems to indicate that the period of his reign was one of great prosperity.
- 6.2.2.7.3.2. Even if one area in his empire experienced a famine, the total territory of the empire was large enough that Nebuchadnezzar could have provided food from other areas.
- 6.2.2.7.4. Food production was probably semi-nationalized. Nebuchadnezzar likely had an early form of socialism with the state owning agricultural production.
- 6.2.2.7.5. We can probably understand this part of the vision as indicating that the reign of Nebuchadnezzar was a time of prosperity.
- 6.2.2.8. Providing shade.
 - 6.2.2.8.1. Nebuchadnezzar was a builder. During his reign, and under his direction the main city of his Empire, Babylon, underwent a total remodelling. He also undertook construction projects in his regional cities throughout the empire. For example:
 - 6.2.2.8.1.1. “Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest monarch that Babylon, or perhaps the East generally, ever produced. He must have possessed an enormous command of human labour, nine-tenths of Babylon itself, and nineteen-twentieths of all the other ruins that in almost countless profusion cover the land, are composed of bricks stamped with his name. He appears to have built or restored almost every city and temple in the whole country.”²²³
 - 6.2.2.8.1.2. “I have examined,” says Sir H. Rawlinson, “the bricks belonging perhaps to a hundred different towns and cities in the neighborhood of Baghdad, and I never found any other legend than that of Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.” Nine-tenths of all the bricks amid the ruins of Babylon are stamped with his name.²²⁴
 - 6.2.2.8.2. When we first looked at Nebuchadnezzar (in chapter 1) we saw that his name means ‘Nabu protect the boundary’. He is appropriately named for someone who is considered to provide protection for all who come under his shade.
 - 6.2.2.8.3. The land and housing throughout his empire were also probably mostly state owned—again in a form of socialism.
- 6.2.3. Nebuchadnezzar would have been justified in assuming that the large tree spoke of his kingdom even before hearing the interpretation of the vision supplied by Daniel.
 - 6.2.3.1. Ezekiel 31.1-18 was probably written about 587 BC, seventeen years before Nebuchadnezzar had this vision. In this allegorical prophecy Assyria (Ezk 31.3) is likened to a great Cedar of Lebanon. Certainly, Babylon that conquered and absorbed Assyria, could be considered an even greater cedar tree.
 - 6.2.3.2. The kings of the ancient world may have viewed resplendent trees as symbols of their ‘benevolent’ rule. Although an example from the Persian Empire would be later than Nebuchadnezzar’s time, it may indicate a general view prevalent in the Middle East in his day also: “[In] Persia, where the king of kings [Shah] sat

²²³ George Rawlinson, *Historical illustrations of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Henry and Summer, 1880), pp. 172-173;

²²⁴ H. B. Hackett, ed., *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* (NY: Herd and Houghton, 1873), vol 3, p. 2,087; quoted from Communications on the Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon, pages 76-77.

enthroned under golden trees filled with golden birds who could be made to sing, flanked by lions that roared.”²²⁵ It is possible that this imagery is a vestigial memory of the Tree of Life from the Garden of Eden.

6.2.4. The first part of the vision would have pleased Nebuchadnezzar, as he would have realized that it was a symbol for his kingdom.

6.2.4.1. Nothing in the vision of the tree would have alarmed him.

6.2.4.2. Rather, it would have produced pride as he saw himself displayed in such grandeur.

6.3.A Watcher.

6.3.1. Who/what was the watcher?

6.3.1.1. The meaning of the Aramaic word (ܩܝܪ) is given as ‘a vigilant/wakeful one’ or a ‘guardian’ or ‘sentinel’.

6.3.1.2. The NIV translates this as ‘messenger’ (and so he was, 14), following the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Aramaic as ‘angel’ (messenger). This word only occurs in this chapter (13, 17, 23), and is not used in a Hebrew form in the Bible (the Hebrew word for angel is מַלְאָךְ); this makes it difficult to interpret exactly what the meaning is.

6.3.1.3. It has been suggested that the watcher was a class of supernatural beings with similar functions as angels, but also distinct from angels.²²⁶ It isn’t clear why those who propose such a distinction could not accept this watcher to be an angel or from a class of angels?

6.3.1.4. Nebuchadnezzar, would have been somewhat ignorant of the Biblical concept of angels and would have used terms and concepts that he understood from his religious/cultural context to communicate what he had seen.

6.3.1.5. Zoroaster/Zarathushtra (c 630-553 BC) who founded the Persian religion during the lifetime of Nebuchadnezzar introduced the concept of angels as watchers (although the Amesha Spentas are viewed as emanations of Ahura Mazda—“wise lord” or god), so the idea may have been prevalent throughout the Middle East. It was likely a concept that evolved from their perverted understanding of God’s dealings with the patriarchs through angels and theophanies (Gen 16.7, etc.) and also from ideas that seeped out of the Jewish Bible, of which other nations would have had some awareness.

6.3.2. The watcher is called a ‘holy one’ who came down from heaven.

6.3.2.1. Since this vision comes from God, we are probably to understand the watcher to be an angel.

6.4.A proclamation.

6.4.1. We will consider the content of the proclamation as a separate topic.

6.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar heard the proclamation in his vision and remembered clearly. He repeated it verbatim twice:

6.4.2.1. Immediately after the vision when he asked Daniel to provide an interpretation

6.4.2.2. Eight to nine years later, when he recorded the proclamation and the subsequent events:

6.4.2.2.1. 1 year from proclamation to its fulfillment

6.4.2.2.2. + seven years (assuming the ‘times’ are years) as a beast

6.4.2.2.3. + some time after his recovery, to their recording.

6.4.3. What is the identified attribute of the proclamation?

6.4.3.1. It was loud.

6.4.3.2. Angels in Revelation speak with loud voices (Rev 5.2; Rev 7.2; Rev 8.13; Rev 14.9, 15, 18; Rev 16.1, 17). Other angels are recorded as making loud sounds

²²⁵ Judith Herrin, *Byzantium* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 29.

²²⁶ J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLA 10541). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. 1997.

- (Ezk 1.24; Mt 24.31).
- 6.4.3.3. Why was it proclaimed with a loud voice?
 - 6.4.3.3.1. So that the message could be heard everywhere (Dt 5.22, 23; 1 Ki 8.55; Lk 23.46), throughout the entire empire or world.
 - 6.4.3.3.2. A loud voice indicates serious judgement (Dt 27.14; Ezra 10.12; Neh 9.4; Mk 15.34).
 - 6.4.3.3.3. A loud voice also implies urgency (Acts 7.60; Acts 16.28).
 - 6.4.4. In what grammatical form is the proclamation given?
 - 6.4.4.1. It is in the imperative, a command.
 - 6.4.4.2. It is not a suggestion, but an absolute. It is not a possibility, but a certainty. It dealt with the future as fixed on earth, from a disposition determined in Heaven.
 - 6.4.4.3. It was an edict or decree. It was not a proclamation of news, but rather declaration of a sentence of judgement.
 - 6.4.5. Who made the proclamation?
 - 6.4.5.1. The watcher in the vision command that the tree be cut down.
 - 6.4.5.2. The command came through an angel.
 - 6.4.5.3. The command ultimately originated with God (25-26).
 - 6.4.6. To whom did the watcher make the proclamation?
 - 6.4.6.1. We are not told who was commanded to cut down the tree.
 - 6.4.6.2. It could be a general announcement without a specific command to persons who were to execute the command. He himself may have executed the particulars of the command.
 - 6.4.6.3. Alternatively, it could have been directed to other angels who assisted in carrying out the command.
 - 6.4.7. Does the fact that the watcher gave the command mean that he had authority to judge men?
 - 6.4.7.1. Angels are not given authority to judge mankind. God alone is the judge of men. He does not delegate this authority to angels.
 - 6.4.7.2. However, they are given commands by God which they are to carry out.
 - 6.4.7.3. The angel repeated the command he was given by God.
7. What are the key elements of the proclamation? (14-16)
- 7.1. Cutting down the tree.
 - 7.1.1. How was the tree to be treated?
 - 7.1.1.1. It was to be felled and all its 'treeness' (branches, leaves, fruit) removed.
 - 7.1.1.2. The shade and food it provided were no longer to be left available.
 - 7.1.1.3. It became a dead log and was no longer a living tree.
 - 7.1.2. How would Nebuchadnezzar have understood the imagery?
 - 7.1.2.1. Believing that the tree probably represented his kingdom, he would have expected that the cutting down of the tree symbolized his demise or the destruction of his kingdom.
 - 7.2. Dispersal of the animals.
 - 7.2.1. Since the tree provided food and shelter for the animals they would be scattered when the tree was no longer able to provide these things.
 - 7.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar would have probably understood this imagery as additional evidence of the pending destruction of his kingdom.
 - 7.3. A stump bound with a band of iron and bronze.
 - 7.3.1. A stump was to be left.
 - 7.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar would probably have been perplexed by this part of the proclamation in the dream. Without Daniel's interpretation, he and his wise men may have understood it to mean that a much reduced kingdom would be left instead of the original glorious kingdom. In 26 we see find a somewhat different meaning—that the reduction of the

- kingdom would be for a time.
- 7.3.3. The specific purpose of the iron and bronze bindings is unclear. Daniel does not provide an explanation later.
- 7.3.3.1. Some interpreters dig too deep, in my opinion, when they suggest that it was a symbol of mental illness (a binding or darkening of the king's spirit), or a chain to hold a mad man.
- 7.3.3.2. They may mean that the stump was to be preserved (held together) in order that it might grow again.
- 7.3.3.3. There is a hint of some form of favour since the tree isn't torn up by the roots and something of it is left.
- 7.4. 'His' living as a wild beast (15-16).
- 7.4.1. The tree is referred to as 'him'/'his' and not 'its'. This shows that the tree represents a man and not the kingdom as a whole. Nebuchadnezzar would have heard the 'him'/'his' and realized that the proclamation referred to him.
- 7.4.2. He would have grasped for meaning and only guessed that something terrifying was decreed for him—if he had applied the tree to himself.
- 7.4.3. We know, from the later account, that Nebuchadnezzar lost his sanity. However, when he first saw the dream he would likely not have been able to understand the meaning.
- 7.4.4. He might have thought that he was going to be *exiled* and have to live like an animal in faraway fields, forests, and hills.
- 7.5. The seven periods.
- 7.5.1. What are the seven 'times' or 'periods of time'? Whatever they are, they were to pass over (or by) for the person who would live like an animal. The Septuagint (LXX) says 'seven times' so does not help in providing an interpretation.
- 7.5.2. Some have suggested seven days, months, seasons, or years; a definite or complete period; or an indefinite long time.
- 7.5.3. We are not told the exact length of time.
- 7.5.4. However, we can probably infer that it is a reference to seven *years* because seven days or months would not have provided an adequate time for Nebuchadnezzar's hair and nails to grow long (33).
- 7.5.5. Most interpreters believe that the period was seven years.
- 7.5.6. However it is interpreted, it does show that whatever is to happen to Nebuchadnezzar is for a period of time, and not for ever—it is time-bound.
8. What is the nature of the message God communicated verbally to Nebuchadnezzar to accompany the vision? (17)
- 8.1. *Discipline* – The events prophesied were a sentence of punishment. They were a direct response to his previous actions. The punishment corresponded to the crime. Whereas the tree was at one time lifted up proudly, it was to be humbled and brought low.
- 8.2. *Decreed* – The events prophesied were decreed, and were therefore certain and confirmed.
- 8.2.1. They were determined by the eternal counsel of God and could not be revoked.
- 8.2.2. As a righteous Judge, God had declared and signed the unchangeable edict.
- 8.2.3. The watchers (angels) proclaimed God's decree. They did not make the decree themselves.
- 8.2.3.1. The NIV translation is helpful here since it has "decision is announced by messengers" and is clearer than the ESV translation "by the decree of the watchers".
- 8.2.3.2. God acted sovereignly behind the messengers who made the proclamation.
- 8.2.3.3. This is similar to the angel making an appearance to Mary (Lk 1.26-33). It was not his own decree, but the decree of God, brought by the angel.
- 8.2.3.4. Angels are the heralds (a voice) of God, not the source of the decree.
- 8.2.3.5. Why does the verse refer to multiple watchers (angels)?

- 8.2.3.5.1. Their unity attests to the agreement in Heaven's council
- 8.2.3.5.2. Their heralding the message collectively is similar to the multitude of angels who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds (Lk 2.13, 14).
- 8.3. *Declared* – The execution of the discipline was to have a broad declaration. Its execution was not to be made known only to the recipient but to a wider constituency.
 - 8.3.1. It was to be declared to 'the living'.
 - 8.3.2. All mankind (at least to the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion) was to be made aware that Nebuchadnezzar was being punished.
 - 8.3.3. The declaration was to be a witness and warning to the unthinking and unbelieving world.
- 8.4. *Dominion* – What was the ultimate purpose of the discipline?
 - 8.4.1. To declare God's dominion or sovereignty over the kings and nations of the earth.
 - 8.4.2. The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar would demonstrate that all kings are subject to God's laws and accountable for obeying them.
 - 8.4.3. Kings (all leaders from presidents to dictators) are subject to God. No human ruler is his own master.
 - 8.4.4. All rulers rule and leaders govern, ultimately, by the will of God. God gives dominion to whom he wishes.
 - 8.4.5. God establishes as rulers anyone he wishes, not necessarily from a royal house of a dynasty. He will raise up a steward, soldier, servant or slave (the lowliest) and give him authority to rule. History shows us many (from a Roman emperor, to 20th century dictators, and to recent presidents) who came from humble backgrounds to become rulers of leading nations.
 - 8.4.5.1. Daniel was an example of a hostage/slave who was given great authority to rule. He ruled the province of Babylon.
 - 8.4.6. These four conditions—rulers are under God's law, they are to administer their dominions under God's authority, they are set up and removed at his will, and birth is not a factor in determining who God will empower—are intended to humble rulers and remind them that there is nothing special in them that gives them authority to rule.
 - 8.4.7. This verse focuses on a key theme of the book of Daniel—the sovereignty of God.
- 9. How does Nebuchadnezzar complete the recitation of his dream? (18)
 - 9.1. He makes a second (recorded) request of Daniel to interpret a dream. The previous one was ~35 years before.
 - 9.2. He humbles himself by requesting help from God's man. Although his statement is in the imperative form, it appears to be more of a request than a command.
 - 9.3. He confesses, for a second time, the inability of the Babylonian wise men to interpret dreams.
 - 9.3.1. Another generation of 'wise' men would have paraded and puffed with claimed superiority, yet they are dismissed as incompetent frauds.
 - 9.3.2. They were not endowed with a divine spirit, as was Daniel.
 - 9.4. He acknowledges the real source of power or ability to interpret dreams—Daniel's God.
 - 9.4.1. Daniel is in a class separate from the pagan wise men.
 - 9.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar realizes that the Spirit of God is in Daniel; although, he uses his own terminology—spirit of the holy gods—because he does not fully understand the nature of the true God.
- 10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 10.1. *Subjection* – God is the only sovereign. All men from pauper to potentate are subject to the one true sovereign.
 - 10.1.1. God gives warnings to proud men to be humble before him.
 - 10.1.2. He gave Nebuchadnezzar witnesses such as his earlier dream, the protection of Daniel's three friends in the furnace, and Daniel's guidance for a generation.

Nebuchadnezzar, however, chose to ignore the teaching that he was subject to God and the implied warning of the consequences of ignoring the majesty of the great King.

- 10.1.3. Men today also know that God rules over the nations and that they must be subject to him. God's sword hangs over every society and individuals with a honed edge of punishment. But men are generally too proud to acknowledge that God is Creator and Lord. They would rather believe a lie than acknowledge truth. They would rather ride the rocket of pride into Hell than be ferried across the river of death into Heaven.
- 10.1.4. True *humility* is a great need of our generation, and of every generation.
- 10.2. *Sentence* – If the greatest king of the greatest dominion that has been raised up among men was subject to the punishment of God, then all men are subject to the same punishment.
 - 10.2.1. All men, who have not humbled themselves under God's sovereign hand are facing the sentence of everlasting death.
 - 10.2.2. All the power and riches of this world cannot prevent the execution of the sentence.
 - 10.2.3. Men can be stripped of their worldly powers within minutes (Job 1.13-19; Dan 5.30; Lk 12.20).
 - 10.2.4. *Repentance* is a great need of our generation, and of every generation.
- 10.3. *Satisfaction* – Since we see the consequences of pride and what comes upon those who refuse to be humble before God, we need to avoid being envious of the prosperity and ways of the wicked.
 - 10.3.1. Worldly prosperity is very uncertain and cannot be depended upon (Mt 6.19-24).
 - 10.3.2. Instead of placing our hope in material things and worrying about them, we are to seek God and to be submissively dependent on him.
 - 10.3.3. A proper understanding of the nature and source of worldly prosperity leads us to acknowledge the gracious hand of God in our lives and to humbly thank him for providing for us.
 - 10.3.4. We need to learn to be satisfied and thankful in whatever situations and circumstances God places us (Eph 5.20; Col 3.17; Phil 4.11-13; 1 Thess 5.18).
 - 10.3.5. *Thankfulness* is a great need of our generation, and of every generation.

Sin (Dan 4.19-27)

- 1. What was Daniel's reaction on being told the dream? (19)
 - 1.1. *Confusion* – He was dismayed (ESV) or perplexed (NIV). The word used here (חֲמָשׁ) appears to a bit difficult to translate since almost all translations use different words, including confused (NJB), dumbfounded (ASV, NEB), astonished (NKJV), and appalled (NASB). The Septuagint (LXX) translates it with a word that can mean 'amazed', 'astonished', or 'surprised' It appears to come from a Semitic root that means 'bewildered' or even 'frightened'.
 - 1.1.1. Daniel's reaction needs to be put in the context of the next phrase ("his thoughts alarmed him").
 - 1.1.2. Daniel's concern was shown by a reaction his face. The LXX adds the idea that Daniel shook his head.
 - 1.1.3. The king saw this and told Daniel not to be alarmed. He was waiting for an interpretation of the meaning of the dream regardless of its meaning—as if holding his breath.
 - 1.1.3.1. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know the truth.
 - 1.1.3.2. Even though he had no interest in the truth about God and had set up his own gods and worship (chapter 3), when it came to the matter of his destiny, he wanted to be told the truth.
 - 1.1.3.3. Most men do not want to hear the truth about God, judgement, or of an everlasting existence. Yet, if they were given an opportunity to see into their own particular future they would be most eager to have it revealed to them—for example, through palm readings, crystal balls, or some form of divination. The irony is that their ultimate destiny is clear—Heaven or Hell—depending on their

reception of Christ, but they do not want to hear of that clear truth, and instead seek for messages in dark and mystical paths.

1.2. *Considered* – He thought about the matter for a time.

1.2.1. He was appalled at what the dream foretold and did not want to have to be the bearer of the bad news for the king. It was not because he was afraid *of* the king, but afraid *for* the king (as we will consider below).

1.2.2. He thought about how to answer the king for a time (the Aramaic here has, literal: ‘a time’ and means an indefinite but brief period). His consideration of the dream, and how to respond, was not instantaneous. It was likely careful and deliberate. However, it was also not dragged out as that could have angered the king. It may have been for about an hour (Septuagint (LXX): ‘one time’ or ‘one hour’).

1.3. *Courteous* – Daniel is respectful of the king and does not take delight in what was foretold for the king.

1.3.1. Daniel did not rejoice that the king was finally going to get what he deserved.

1.3.2. Rather he was disturbed for the king and showed due respect in his delay and eventual answer.

1.3.3. He viewed Nebuchadnezzar as his earthly king (‘my lord’) and showed him the respect his office deserved (1 Pt 2.17).

1.4. *Concerned* – Daniel did not wish calamity to befall the king.

1.4.1. He loved his enemies (Mt 5.44).

1.4.1.1. Although Nebuchadnezzar was a tyrant who had destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed God’s people, Daniel did not wish for evil to fall upon Nebuchadnezzar.

1.4.1.2. Although Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater he was, at present, Daniel’s king; therefore Daniel did not wish ill upon him.

1.4.2. He prayed for the king’s wellbeing.

1.4.2.1. Although Nebuchadnezzar deserved what was coming to him, Daniel understood that he was to have respect for the ruler who was appointed by God.

1.4.2.2. It is not proper for citizens to indulge in hatred against their magistrates or to invoke God’s wrath upon them. Instead they should pray for peace and prosperity under their rulers (1 Tim 2.1, 2).

1.4.3. He did not want calamity to befall the king, out of concern for his own people.

1.4.3.1. Jeremiah had told the captives to pray for the prosperity of Babylon while they were dwelling there (Jer 29.7).

1.4.4. He wished the horrible punishment turned away from the king and onto his enemies.

1.4.4.1. Daniel means this as an imprecation on Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies.

1.4.4.2. We are not to understand Daniel to be an insincere court flatterer.

1.4.5. This example of Daniel speaks to those in the US who are displeased with the current presidency of Obama.

1.4.5.1. Even though Obama is disrespectful of God and his laws, and therefore an idolater; and effectively a tyrant through his beliefs about ‘big government’, socialism, and judicial activism; it is not proper for Christians to hate Obama or to pray for him to mess up during his term of office.

1.4.5.2. We should be praying for him (as Paul instructs us) and that God would lead him to do what is right (Rom 13.3-5).

1.4.5.3. It is far better for Christians that there be any government and a rule of law (even if imperfect) and therefore peace, rather than chaos. It is better to live in the US, even under Obama’s extreme liberalism, than in a country like Somalia where all order has disintegrated. Even a tyranny is better than chaos.

2. What was the tree in the dream? (20-22)

2.1. We are now told explicitly that the tree in the dream is Nebuchadnezzar.

- 2.1.1. Previously we noted that Nebuchadnezzar might have inferred that the tree stood for himself or the Babylonian Empire.
- 2.1.2. The direct address, “It is you ... *who is the tree*” or “You are the tree” is reminiscent of the direct address of Nathan the Prophet to David (2 Sam 12.7).
- 2.1.3. The tree was a metaphor or symbol for Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2.2. Why did Daniel recount Nebuchadnezzar’s dream almost word-for-word? (compare, 11-12 with 20-21.)
 - 2.2.1. He was not buying time trying to figure out the meaning of the dream.
 - 2.2.2. Nor was he drawing out the interpretation to ‘play’ with the king and keep him in suspense.
 - 2.2.3. His recapitulation is intended to show Nebuchadnezzar that he had heard what the king had said, had a full comprehension of the dream, understood it completely, and fully grasped the seriousness of its implications.
- 2.3. What attributes of Nebuchadnezzar as king, and of his kingdom, does Daniel say are symbolized by the tree?
 - 2.3.1. The strength of a massive tree; his undiluted power.
 - 2.3.2. The height of his greatness, reaching to heaven; his unrivalled renown.
 - 2.3.3. The breadth of his dominion, extending to the ends of the earth; his controlling authority over all his subjects.
- 2.4. Why did God use the symbol of a tree to teach Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 2.4.1. God often used parables and dreams to stir the interest and emotions of those to whom he spoke.
 - 2.4.2. Besides stirring interest and emotion, parables and dreams were more memorable.
 - 2.4.2.1. Few people in the ancient world (except among the Jews) were able to read.
 - 2.4.2.2. Parables and imagery in dreams are easier to remember than abstract propositional prose. Think for example, how much easier it is to remember the account of Daniel in the lions’ den or Jonah and the large fish compared with Romans 5.1-21 or the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.
 - 2.4.3. God also used parables and dreams to hide (to a degree) the meaning of his message (Mt 13.13; Mk 4.33, 34) so that his messengers (e.g., the prophets and Jesus) could drive home the interpretation as personal application. See for example, the application of a parable to the Pharisees in Mark 12.1-12.
- 3. What was to happen to Nebuchadnezzar? (23-25)
 - 3.1. *Deposed* – He was to be deposed and to have all authority and rule removed from him. However, he was not to be executed.
 - 3.1.1. The chopped down and destroyed tree (23) does not mean death or annihilation since the stump with bands around implies that something would remain.
 - 3.1.2. How would Nebuchadnezzar have felt about this?
 - 3.1.2.1. Nothing could have been more disastrous for him.
 - 3.1.2.2. It would have been better, from his perspective, to have died than to have lived seeing others ruling his kingdom and making a mess of it.
 - 3.1.2.3. We see this kind of attitude in people who want to (or do) commit suicide, they would rather avoid embarrassment, punishment, or suffering. Death appears to them to be an easy escape. They of course are ignoring the reality that there are everlasting embarrassments, punishment, and suffering on the other side of death for those who do not repent of their sins.
 - 3.2. *Dispossession and Diaspora* – He would be turned out of the palace and driven away from his people (24, 25).
 - 3.2.1. It would have appeared to Nebuchadnezzar, based on the dream’s interpretation, that he was to be sent into exile.
 - 3.2.2. He would be relieved of all his wealth and sent out with the scattered people in the

distant parts of his empire or even beyond the bounds of his empire.

3.2.3. This also would have been a very painful portend for him to consider. To go from the luxury and comfort of the greatest kingdom on earth to being a pauper would have been a harrowing thought.

3.2.4. We can sympathize with Nebuchadnezzar to an extent.

3.2.4.1. Thinking about being unemployed, losing a house, and having to live on UIC or welfare can be worrisome for some.

3.2.4.2. Even though we claim that we trust God and we say we believe Jesus when he says, in the *Sermon on the Mount*, that we are not to worry about the future and how we will be given material provisions, we still find it difficult to trust him.

3.2.4.3. For Nebuchadnezzar, the worry would have been great. His entire hope was placed in material things and temporal power. His gods were useless, and he knew it in his heart, and he had no hope for the future but what he could forge with his will and cunning.

3.3. *Dieter* – He would eat grass like cattle (25).

3.3.1. Even though Daniel is explicit that Nebuchadnezzar was going to change his diet, it would have been hard for either of them to understand exactly what this meant.

3.3.2. By nature, men cannot eat raw grass and survive. We can absorb the small amount of sugars in grass, but we don't have the right stomach acids and enzymes to digest the cellulose and make use of the bulk of the grass' substance. Grass eating animals (e.g., cows, rabbits) have a system of multiple stomachs that ferments grass in bacteria that break down the complex cellulose into sugars.

3.3.3. The Aramaic word used here for grass (ܐܬܪܐ) could possibly mean, more broadly vegetation that is not trees.

3.3.3.1. However, the only place it is used in the Bible is in this chapter: 15, 25, 32, 33) so it is not easy to find contextual help for how to translate the word.

3.3.3.2. The NIV translates the word as 'plants' in verse 15; but 'grass' in the other occurrences. The ESV translates it as 'grass' in all four occurrences.

3.3.3.3. Also, there is a different word (ܐܬܪܐ) used in this chapter for grass in verses 15 and 23.

3.3.3.4. The Septuagint (LXX) uses the word 'grass' (χόρτος) which is usually hay but can be used for wheat (Mt 13.26; Mk 6.39) and could be used to cover any plant sprout.

3.3.3.5. So, it is possible, that Nebuchadnezzar (and even Daniel) would have thought that what was meant by the dream was that Nebuchadnezzar would have to resort to foraging off the land—eating roots, nuts, fruits, berries, stalks, and wild grains.

3.3.4. However, this verse (and 33) seem to imply that Nebuchadnezzar literally ate grass—just as cattle do. If this is the case, then God performed a miracle, making it possible for Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass that is normally indigestible by the human digestive system.

3.4. *Degraded* – Nebuchadnezzar would live like the beasts or wild animals.

3.4.1. He would live in the fields and wood, sleeping on the ground without proper shelter.

3.4.2. The animals would actually have better living conditions as God has designed them for living outdoors.

3.4.3. Do you see any ironies in what is decreed for Nebuchadnezzar?

3.4.3.1. Men make the claim that man is merely the result of a process of evolution and not essentially different from an animal.

3.4.3.1.1. Men want the 'freedoms' that they believe animals have (e.g., no moral restraints) and they want to live like animals (eating, sleeping, playing, copulating, etc.). For example, they say that there are homosexual behaviours among some primates or other mammals and alpha males have multiple mates, and therefore these practices are normal for man.

- 3.4.3.1.2. What are some of the logical fallacies in these two conclusions about man's nature relative to animal nature?
- 3.4.3.1.3. Men make the logical mistake which is called the *fallacy of composition*.
 - 3.4.3.1.3.1. Just because man has an animal-like body this does not mean that he is an animal.
 - 3.4.3.1.3.2. The fact that God re-used designs for man's body that he had used in the design of animals does not prove that man is an animal any more than the use of wheels in an automobile proves that it is a tricycle. Man's body is designed to live in a physical world of animals (e.g., to digest proteins).
 - 3.4.3.1.3.3. Man has an animal body and an angelic spirit. He is more than the parts that make him up. He is not animal and not angel. He is *man*, and is greater than both of the constituent parts that make him up. Man is the pinnacle of God's creation.
- 3.4.3.1.4. Men make a series of logical mistakes which are: *fallacy of analogy*, and *equivocation* (changing the definition of a term).
 - 3.4.3.1.4.1. Animal 'freedoms' are in fact not true freedoms, since animals are not rational creatures. They are merely carrying out their ingrained instincts.
 - 3.4.3.1.4.2. Man cannot claim to be free rational beings, and at the same time claim that we are subject to pre-disposed genetic inclinations.
- 3.4.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest human monarch ever to rule. He had achieved the goal of absolute rule over other humans that all tyrants, dictators, and despots wish to achieve. He exercised man's misplaced and sinful zeal for wanting to rule over other men. Yet he ended up not being able to exercise the true form of dominion with which he was endowed—to exercise dominion over the rest of material creation (animals, plants, and inanimate nature). He became subject to the very part of creation that he was supposed to have a delegated authority over.
- 3.4.3.2.1. When men are actually reduced to living like animals, it is clearly a degradation of man's state. We know this instinctively (Rom 1.18). What men wish for (being without the constraints that are suited to their created nature), once fulfilled, becomes man's curse.
- 3.5. *Defined* – A time limit was established for the completion of Nebuchadnezzar's degradation.
 - 3.5.1. What indicates that there was to be a time limit?
 - 3.5.1.1. The command to leave the stump in place (23) and not to root it out, indicates that there is an expectation of restoration.
 - 3.5.1.2. A defined period (we concluded, above, that this was probably seven years) was allocated for the period of the degradation (23, 25).
 - 3.5.2. What does the fact of the degradation having a defined limit tell us?
 - 3.5.2.1. It would seem (of course we know this from the rest of the account) that the king would eventually be restored to the throne and his rule, or at least his temporary situation would be relieved in some way.
 - 3.5.2.2. In the midst of the curse on Nebuchadnezzar, there is a hint (and promise) of restoration. There is hope presented to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3.5.2.2.1. Often God presents hope in the midst of a curse (Gen 3.15; Is 3.10; Is 5.16-17; Hab 3.17-19)
 - 3.5.2.2.2. God clearly had other plans for Nebuchadnezzar, than to destroy him through this punishment.
 - 3.5.2.2.3. At minimum, what did that plan include? Nebuchadnezzar's praise of

God's sovereign glory, as recorded in this chapter. More fully, God's plan may have been to humble Nebuchadnezzar, to lead him to true repentance and belief in the infinite Creator.

- 3.5.2.3. While there was a specific hope for Nebuchadnezzar there is also a promise of hope for mankind. God would not have worked on, and through, Nebuchadnezzar to chastise him and record the events recounted here, including Nebuchadnezzar's praise, if God did not have a greater purpose in mind.
 - 3.5.2.3.1. God's greater purpose is to call lost men to himself through Christ and so to bring glory to his love.
 - 3.5.2.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar is a symbol of God's grace.
 - 3.5.2.3.3. God has great plans to pour out great grace on mankind, saving many from the degradation of sin that besets us.

3.6. *Determined* – The events foretold in the dream were determined.

3.6.1. What shows that the events were determined and certain to happen as prophesied?

- 3.6.1.1. The 'because' (23) is a particle that is often not translated (e.g., NIV). It is basically a marker in an account that is intended to focus attention on the content to follow: In a way it is similar to our putting an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence. It highlights purpose, causation, or logical connection in the text.
 - 3.6.1.1.1. The implication here, is that there is a logical connection. What does the 'because' connect?
 - 3.6.1.1.2. It connects the watcher in the dream with the events that follow. The sentence of judgement (14, 17) was given by the watcher and had to be carried out.
- 3.6.1.2. Daniel indicates (24) that the interpretation is accurate because the dream is a decree of the Most High (God).
- 3.6.1.3. These two statements indicate that the events prophesied by the dream were certain to transpire. They were determined by the eternal God from before the creation of the universe.

4. What was to bring about the end of Nebuchadnezzar/s temporal punishment? (25)

- 4.1. Some interpret this verse as teaching that his punishment was to end once he acknowledged God as sovereign.
- 4.2. In fact, the 'trigger' for ending his punishment was not that he made a confession and then was restored.
- 4.3. Rather, the 'trigger' was to be the end of the appointed time. During the seven times (years) he was insane and could not have thought rationally about his situation.
- 4.4. After his sanity was restored then he would acknowledge God as sovereign. Verse 34 reinforces this interpretation: at the end of the time ... he stopped acting like a beast, and he praised God.
- 4.5. The sequence of events is:
 - 4.5.1. God decrees the punishment and the duration of it.
 - 4.5.2. God punishes.
 - 4.5.3. God lifts the punishment at the end of the set time.
 - 4.5.4. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God as Lord and that his sovereign dispositions of the kingdoms of men is in accordance with his omniscient will.
- 4.6. What does this sequence of events teach?
 - 4.6.1. It is an analogue, or type, for the sequence of events in salvation.
 - 4.6.2. God's decrees are ultimate. All events and times are in his hands.
 - 4.6.3. Men who are dead in sin (insane, out of their minds) are not able to acknowledge God as Lord.
 - 4.6.4. God changes their hearts, men stop acting like brute-beasts, they lift up their heads in dignity as image bearers of God, and they praise him.

- 4.6.5. Salvation is a gracious gift from God. There is nothing in us that enables us to save ourselves any more than Nebuchadnezzar could have overcome his insanity on his own.
5. What was to happen after the period (seven years) of punishment? (26)
- 5.1. Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to his kingdom and rule.
- 5.2. Why was God going to restore Nebuchadnezzar? To demonstrate his:
- 5.2.1. *Providence* – God showed through these events that he is the almighty, powerful sovereign, over time, matter, and rational wills—i.e., over all of creation.
- 5.2.1.1. God tells Nebuchadnezzar beforehand precisely what he is going to do and when, to demonstrate that he is the creator of time and that events unfold in exact accordance with his plans.
- 5.2.1.2. God demonstrates that it is not just the time-space and material universe that is subject to him, but also the rational creation (holy angels, fallen angels/demons, and man).
- 5.2.2. *Praise* – God is the only truly (morally) good being (or person) and the only source of good. As such, he is worthy to receive praise and glory from his created subjects.
- 5.2.2.1. Sometimes people suggest that it is selfish for God to desire that his creatures worship him (Ps 29.2; Ps 96.8; Mt 4.10). Such a suggestion is blasphemous. However, this suggestion can be countered as follows:
- 5.2.2.1.1. Men think it is right to praise certain kinds of men—e.g., philanthropists, benefactors, or heroes who rescue children; or great achievers in war, business, sports, or statecraft. We have a tendency to create saints of those who are ‘good’ and ‘just’ in our own eyes.
- 5.2.2.1.2. Yet God is the ultimate good (*summum bonum*) and as such is worthy of all praise (Rev 4.11). Since there can be nothing more good than God, he must expect the good to be praised; and we are to praise it.
- 5.2.2.2. One of the objectives in restoring Nebuchadnezzar was to bring him to the point that he would cease from taking the honour to himself and give it to God. Nebuchadnezzar was going to have his proud and hard heart softened and turn to thank and praise God.
- 5.2.2.3. What was Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge?
- 5.2.2.3.1. That Heaven rules.
- 5.2.2.3.2. Heaven is not God. Heaven is a created entity. How is this to be understood?
- 5.2.2.3.3. ‘Heaven’ is a figure of speech, a synecdoche,²²⁷ for God and his reign (Dan 4.37). God has established his throne in Heaven (Ps 103.19).
- 5.2.3. *Patience* – God is patient with mankind, beyond our ability to comprehend his patience. He could have justly wiped out Nebuchadnezzar for his pride (of his conquests and construction activities) and false worship (e.g., on the plain of Dura) But instead, to show his mercy, God chose to chastise Nebuchadnezzar to lead him to acknowledge God’s sovereignty.
- 5.2.3.1. From this, we must *not* conclude that God gives all people opportunities to understand, repent and believe. There are some rebels whom God brings to immediate destruction; others he leaves to compound their sin until the time of their death when they will have to give an account of their lives. He deals with each person as an individual and in accord with his predetermined plans and omniscient wisdom.
- 5.2.3.2. However, God does display his patience with selected rebels against his sovereignty and their chastisement as a means of demonstrating his longsuffering mercy.

²²⁷ A figure of speech in which a part represents the whole (daily bread for food; a set of wheels) or a material object for its creator or a concept (e.g., the flag for the nation; an arm of the law).

- 5.2.3.3. It was his plan that men who heard about Nebuchadnezzar's circumstances would not take lightly their responsibilities before God but rather repent of their sins, believe in God's saving work, and thank and praise him.
6. What was the reason for Nebuchadnezzar's punishment? (27)
- 6.1. Daniel refers to the Nebuchadnezzar's sins and wickedness (iniquities).
- 6.2. With which particular sins does Daniel charge Nebuchadnezzar?
- 6.2.1. Unrighteousness – Nebuchadnezzar had not exercised equity in dealing with his subjects. Another aspect of his unrighteousness may have been his idolatry.
- 6.2.2. Oppression – Nebuchadnezzar had been cruel to the poor in general and in particular to a class of poor subjects, the Jews who were God's people.
- 6.3. Both classes of sin arise from pride.
- 6.3.1. Unrighteousness as injustice comes from a vain leader's belief that he is above the law.
- 6.3.2. Unrighteousness as idolatry comes from man's belief that he can define God and define how God is to be worshiped.
- 6.3.3. Oppression arises when people think that their own will is superior to that of others and their objectives are more important than that of others.
- 6.4. Unrighteousness and oppression are the sins common to all leaders who do not rule in the fear of God. What are examples of unrighteousness and oppression perpetrated by civil authorities today?
- 6.4.1. Examples of unrighteousness includes: nepotism, suppression of religious truth [Rom 1.18] (i.e., Christianity) and endorsement of false religions (e.g., Islam, statism, secular humanism, Darwinianism), endorsement of evil such as homosexual practices and abortion, suspending capital punishment.
- 6.4.2. Examples of oppression includes: currency inflation, excessive taxation, usurpation of the rights of the family and individuals in various areas including health (e.g., prohibiting individuals to allocate personal expenditures to health provision), education (e.g., outlawing home schooling, or treating home-schooled children as victims of abuse), welfare (undermining personal responsibility, and forced income redistribution), and land expropriation.
7. How did Daniel counsel Nebuchadnezzar?
- 7.1. He used Nebuchadnezzar's moment of crisis politely and boldly to proclaim truth.
- 7.1.1. He respectfully asked the king to listen to his counsel.
- 7.1.1.1. In modern terms, it would be something like, "I hope I am not of place, but may I offer a suggestion?"
- 7.1.1.2. He offers advice that he had not been asked for. He goes beyond the interpretation of the dream to deal with its everlasting significance and to provide spiritual counsel to the king.
- 7.1.1.3. He anticipated Peter's instruction that we are to honour Christ by being always ready to give a defence of our faith to anyone who asks for the reason of our hope or even if they don't ask (as in this case), with gentleness and respect (1 Pt 3.15).
- 7.1.2. We are probably all presented with opportunities in the lives of those around us to use crises as means of focusing their attention on everlasting realities. What are examples?
- 7.1.2.1. Deaths and funerals are the most obvious examples.
- 7.1.2.2. Divorces, unexpected pregnancies, severe accidents, serious illnesses, stressful financial difficulties, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, unjust lawsuits, etc. provide other opportunities.
- 7.1.3. We are however usually reluctant, for various reasons, to seize the opportunities when presented to us. What are some of the reasons for not capitalizing on the opportunities?
- 7.1.3.1. Shyness, embarrassment

- 7.1.3.2. Ignorance of how to present spiritual truth
- 7.1.3.3. A lack of belief that God really can change sinners' hearts.
- 7.1.4. Or we misuse the opportunities.
 - 7.1.4.1. Examples might include: condescension, coldness, not listening, talking too much, expressing platitudes, gloating that the calamity that has befallen another has not befallen us, believing that the person deserved what he got.
 - 7.1.4.2. A classic example, in literature, of misusing an opportunity in a crisis to present truth is found in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*²²⁸ in the letter of condolence from Mr. Collins, a clergyman, to Mr. Bennet after it became public that Lydia had run away with Mr. Wickham. The tone is so sickening it can almost make one despise all English clergymen. However, Jane Austen, the daughter of a clergyman, presents a somewhat different portrait of a clergyman (Edmond) in her next novel, *Mansfield Park*.
- 7.1.5. It is sometimes difficult to know what to say and to be wise in our approach to those confronted with a crisis. What are some possible guidelines?
 - 7.1.5.1. Put aside pride and be truly humble. If it were not for God's general and saving grace we could be in similar circumstances.
 - 7.1.5.2. Listen with true compassion and empathy.
 - 7.1.5.3. Don't attribute guilt where direct consequences are not obvious. For example, it is inappropriate to suggest that a person who has lost his house in a fire is being punished for a particular sin.
 - 7.1.5.4. Speak gently and politely.
 - 7.1.5.5. Speak at the right time.
 - 7.1.5.6. Speak truth without prevaricating (for example, not suggesting that a child of unbelieving parents, who has just died, is now in heaven—we don't know that that is a fact and should not suggest it to be truth; rather we can remind the person that God will do only what is right, and we will leave it in his hands).
 - 7.1.5.7. Express a strong conviction and faith in God's goodness and justice.
 - 7.1.5.8. Use the opportunity to call for repentance, faith, and obedience as appropriate.
- 7.2. He advised the king to repent of his sin, repudiate sin, and reform his life.
 - 7.2.1. Daniel does not provide a physical or mental health program for Nebuchadnezzar but a *spiritual* program.
 - 7.2.1.1.1. This is what is primarily needed in almost every case, in every unbeliever's life.
 - 7.2.1.1.2. There is no doubt that people dying of famine or sick of malaria need physical aid, but once that emergency aid is administered the ultimate problem that people have is a problem of the heart.
 - 7.2.1.1.3. In many social programs (all run by the government, all run by non-Christian charities, and in many run by Christian charities and churches) there is an emphasis on administering to the mental and physical needs of individuals when the real problem is often and usually a heart steeped in sin.
 - 7.2.1.1.4. There is a commercial I hear on CFRB in Toronto for the Harvey Brooker weight loss clinic.²²⁹ In this commercial Mr. Brooker asks men to come to his program on Sunday morning's at 10:00am, and then ask something like, "Are you doing anything more important at that time?" My response, sometimes voiced, is "Yes, attending church, and so should you!" His tagline is, "Remember: You alone can do it. But you cannot do it alone." There is a religious element in his program. It is presented as saving a person from himself through a shared

²²⁸ www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/ppv3n48.html.

²²⁹ www.harveybrooker.com.

‘experience’.

7.2.1.2. We are not to create an artificial divide between helping temporally and spiritually. However all temporal help is to be provided with the explicit and overt aim of directing people to Christ. For example,

7.2.1.2.1. Pregnancy counselling is to help the woman deal with her crisis and save the life of the unborn, and through these actions direct the woman to spiritual comfort in Christ.

7.2.1.2.2. Performing cataract surgery in sub-Sahara Africa will help people resume life’s duties and help them provide for their subsistence. But giving a life of subsistence is aimless if it isn’t directed toward eternal life.

7.2.1.3. However, we need to take more seriously presentation of the truth that men are destined for damnation if they don’t have the weight of their sin lifted from their backs.

7.2.1.4. Ultimately, there is no value for the person who is helped if he/she is provided with material or physical assistance and then goes on to live his/her life in rebellion against God and ends up in the pit of Hell.

7.2.2. The Aramaic word (פָּרַק) that is translated as “break off” or “renounce” contains the idea of ‘redeem’ or ‘atone’ for sin. Daniel advised him to make an end of sin by redeeming or atoning for it and by having nothing more to do with it.

7.2.2.1. True redemption from sin involves both confession and resolve. A confession of past sins and resolve, in the power of God, to desist from sin.

7.2.2.2. Daniel was not presenting in these few words a fully defined theology of repentance (although, he may have said more to the king than is recorded).

7.2.2.3. We know, however, that OT revelation of repentance and redemption was sufficiently developed by the time of Daniel that he is not speaking of general remorse over sin and a paying of homage to some pagan God, but rather is calling for Nebuchadnezzar to confess that he had broken God’s Law.

7.2.3. Daniel called for redemption and reformation.

7.2.3.1. Renouncing sin was to be accompanied by a change of life and a new type of action.

7.2.3.1.1. Making an end to sin involves pursuing a new course and direction.

7.2.3.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar was to renounce cruelty, violence, tyranny, and pretention and replace them with kindness, gentleness, fairness, and humility.

7.2.3.2. Daniel tells him to practice righteousness or ‘to do right’. Is he suggesting a form of works righteousness?

7.2.3.2.1. Daniel is not suggesting that Nebuchadnezzar could *earn* salvation through works. In fact the most he suggests is a possible lifting of temporal punishment and an extension of life.

7.2.3.2.2. Daniel is speaking of a civil morality that consists of right moral behaviour through justice and mercy (or clemency).

8. What principles underlie Daniel’s counsel?

8.1. God hates sin, wherever it is found—from slaves to kings, poor to rich, simpleton or educated.

8.2. God expects all men to obey his laws. All men are required by God to do right. The requirement to do right is not an option for any man, nor is doing right only incumbent on those who acknowledge God.

8.3. God will (may) graciously lift judgement from those who repent of their sins.

8.3.1. Daniel believed, that the sinner who repents of wickedness will live (Ezk 18.21).

8.3.2. Daniel also believed that God would lift judgement even after it was announced if there was true repentance (Jer 18.8; Joel 2.13; Jonah 3.10).

9. What reason for repenting did Daniel give to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 9.1. So that he might, perhaps, receive a lengthening or continuance of his prosperity.
 - 9.2. Is the hope of receiving temporal blessings a sufficient and valid reason for repenting of sin?
 - 9.3. Our initial reaction may be to conclude that it is a very inadequate reason. However, we can analyze this further.
 - 9.4. What is the ultimate reason we should repent of our sin and ask God to reform our lives?
 - 9.4.1. Ultimately to glorify God; to give him the honour that he is due as Lawgiver and to show that we understand our place as creatures before his authority. Repentance is, first, to the praise of God.
 - 9.5. What are other reasons that we should repent of our sin and ask God to reform our lives?
 - 9.5.1. The penultimate reason is to receive everlasting blessing from God—in an everlasting existence in total happiness in union with Christ, without punishment and the ongoing consequences of sin (Rev 7.15-17; Rev 21.3, 4). Repentance is, second, to gain blessing.
 - 9.5.2. Associated with the desire to receive everlasting blessing is a desire to avoid the consequences of the curse—i.e., fleeing and clinging to Christ to avoid Hell. We should be attracted to Christ and to Heaven for their own sakes, but it is also not improper to turn toward them to obtain relief from the Devil and Hell. Repentance, is third, to avoid punishment and curses.
 - 9.5.3. Since it is proper to desire to receive everlasting blessings, which include resurrected bodies in a new heavens and earth, it logically follows that it is not wrong to repent to receive blessings that apply to our physical beings in this life.
 - 9.5.3.1. God is gracious to his Church in this life. He pours out blessings. Where Christianity is evident, public morality is stronger, societies are better, cities are safer, economies work better, prosperity rises.
 - 9.5.3.2. We want people to repent and to be saved, not only to save them from the world but also to provide a better life for them during their tenure in this space-time realm.
 - 9.5.3.3. God says that those who are truly repentant and live to serve him will experience temporal blessings (Dt 28.1-5; Ps 32.10; Ps 128.1-2).
 - 9.5.3.4. We must be careful, however, in how we apply this general principle.
 - 9.5.3.4.1. We must never make the receipt of temporal blessings our ultimate or penultimate reason for repenting. We are not to repent and immediately stick out our hand and say, “Okay, now where is my Mercedes, mansion, and million-dollar retirement fund?”
 - 9.5.3.4.2. We must not conclude that every single person who repents of sin will receive all forms of temporal blessings. God has different plans for each person. Some may be called to suffer persecution and temporal want, others may face great difficulties, others may still suffer the consequences of their sinful actions (e.g., dying of AIDS).
 - 9.6. A long life in prosperity is a symbol of God’s blessing:
 - 9.6.1. When a faithful man of God (after the post-Flood patriarchs) was considered blessed, the length of his life is recorded (Dt 34.7; Josh 24.29) to reinforce the fact that he was blessed.
 - 9.6.2. A blessing of a temporal long life is a symbol of being right with God (Job 5.26).
 - 9.6.3. A blessing of a temporal long life is a symbol of eternal life (Is 65.20).
 10. What is significant about Daniel’s counsel to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 10.1. Daniel spoke to a pagan king about God’s laws and expected him to conform his life to God’s moral standards.
 - 10.2. Daniel was not a pluralist! He didn’t believe that Babylonian law was a substitute for God’s Law.

- 10.2.1. He didn't accept the view that an antique document (e.g., the Code of Hammurabi; 1790–1750 BC) from the foundations of Babylonian society was to be the standard for Babylonian society in his day. He wouldn't have believed that the US or Canadian constitutions are the standard against which our behaviour is to be held accountable.
- 10.2.2. He didn't believe that the king was the ultimate source of law. He wouldn't have accepted the view that Congress or Parliament should exist to create and define law.
- 10.2.3. He didn't give any credence to the decisions and rulings of the wise men around him. He would not have accepted the view, prevalent in our day, that law is what judges decide.
- 10.2.4. He didn't agree with the prevailing view of his day, and our day, that law is fluid and what may be right or wrong in one generation is not necessarily the same in other generations.
- 10.2.5. Daniel held the view, as should all Christians, that God's Law is the ultimate, absolute, and final authority for all human behaviour. He believed that God's Law applies to all men, in all nations, through all time (Mt 5.17-19; Rom 2.15; Rom 8.4; 1 Cor 7.19; 1 Tim 1.8-11; 1 Jn 3.4).
 - 10.2.5.1. Moral standards are defined by God and are absolute.
 - 10.2.5.2. Moral standards are not relative and do not evolve, and are not defined by the will of the people or an intellectual or educated elite such as supreme court justices (Ps 96.10; Acts 17.24-31; Rom 1.18-32).
 - 10.2.5.3. The 'laws' (probably better 'situational applications' of God's Law) that Congress or Parliament make are to be:
 - 10.2.5.3.1. *Derivative*: It must be possible to demonstrate that the specific human law is a direct application of one, or more, of the Ten Commandments and follows the example of the case laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (e.g., making restitution in tort cases consistent with the three- or four-fold repayment [Ex 22.1]).
 - 10.2.5.3.2. *Consistent*: No human law may be contrary or contradictory to God's Law (e.g., taking people's property without just cause and just compensation, which is a form of theft; or inflating currency which is another form of theft and the creation of an unjust 'measure' [Dt 25.13-16]).
 - 10.2.5.3.3. *Subordinate*: No human law can be of greater importance than God's law (e.g., making Christian campus organizations accept atheists or homosexuals into their membership or executive if they want to be recognized).
- 10.3. Daniel was not afraid to call to account a magistrate who was breaking God's Law.
 - 10.3.1. Examples of others in the Bible who acted in the same way include: Nathan rebuking David (2 Sam 12.7); Elijah (1 Ki 18.18), Jonah (Jonah 3.4, 5), and John the Baptist (Mt 14.4).
 - 10.3.2. Examples of others in nonbiblical history include:
 - 10.3.2.1. Anselm confronting William II Rufus for his injustices and attempts to make church appointments.
 - 10.3.2.2. Thomas Becket (1118-1170), Archbishop of Canterbury, who was assassinated for engaging in conflict with Henry II of England over the rights and privileges of the Church.
 - 10.3.2.3. Thomas More²³⁰ who was beheaded in 1535 when he refused to sign the *Act of Supremacy* that declared Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church

²³⁰ A Renaissance humanist, and although a Roman Catholic saint, may not have been a Christian.

of England.

10.3.2.4. Knox accusing Mary of idolatry in the Mass.

10.3.2.5. Andrew Melville informing James VI (Scotland), I (England): “Sirrah, ye are God's silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is king James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member.”

11. Had Nebuchadnezzar repented of his sin and changed his behaviour, would he have averted his chastisement?

11.1. In principle, yes. If God threatens direct punishment for sins unless people repent, and then they repent he will lift the punishment (Ezk 18.21-24; Jonah 3.4, 5).

11.2. However, God decrees both the proximate means and ultimate means. Since God's ultimate purpose was to bring Nebuchadnezzar to confession and praise (as recorded in this chapter), Nebuchadnezzar could not have repented, and did not *want* to repent.

11.3. We must be very careful not to second-guess God's decretive will. It is Not God's decree that was responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's unwillingness or inability to repent but his own pride. His pride constrained him from heeding Daniel's advice and persisting in his resistance to God.

12. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel's advice?

12.1. We are not told.

12.2. However, we can surmise from the account, that;

12.2.1. He did not destroy Daniel for his 'impertinence' in giving unsolicited advice to the king, and for even rebuking the king for his sin. This shows a respect for Daniel that was rarely accorded advisors in the ancient world.

12.2.2. He heard what Daniel said because he recounted it a number (8-13) of years later, after the events foretold in the dream became a reality.

12.2.3. He ignored and rejected the advice. His pride constrained him from taking seriously what he heard.

13. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (19-27)

13.1. *Deference* – We learn from Daniel's example how Christians should behave before unbelieving civil magistrates.

13.1.1. Daniel did not wish to see Nebuchadnezzar destroyed but sincerely wished blessing on him and desired that he would repent of his sins and acknowledge God as sovereign.

13.1.2. Daniel was courteous and respectful of the king, and obedient to the extent he could be without breaking God's Law.

13.1.3. Daniel prayed for the king's deliverance, not his destruction. As we noted, and as Paul teaches, it is our duty as Christians to pray for kings and those in authority over us.

13.2. *Desire* – Our desire must be that all men would turn from their sin, repent, and be saved.

13.2.1. In general, this example teaches us to pray for blessings on our enemies and those who curse us, our beliefs, and our Lord (Mt 5.44).

13.2.2. We must not harbour hatred against any man, as an image bearer of God. We can, may, and should hate their sin. But we should wish them to be converted rather than condemned.

13.2.3. We should have pity on those around us who are perishing without the knowledge of God and without belief in Christ. They are heading toward an everlasting existence in Hell.

13.2.3.1. We would rescue a dog trapped on floating ice in a river, a horse from a

- fire in a stable, or a cat stranded in a tree.
- 13.2.3.2. We would rescue, if able, a drowning man, give blood to save a baby undergoing surgery, and pull a driver from a burning car.
 - 13.2.3.3. We should have even more affection and concern for our fellow humans when it comes to their everlasting salvation and pity the punishment and wrath that they are about to face.
 - 13.2.3.4. If we had any real understanding of the seriousness of Hell and everlasting separation from God, and were much less selfish than we are, we would be praying insistently and continually for God to save our unbelieving friends and neighbours.
- 13.3. *Denouncement* – We must not be afraid to denounce sin when we see it and have appropriate opportunity; especially among leaders and those with influence.
- 13.3.1. We are not to deceive our neighbours and leaders into a miserable delusion by destroying them with flattery or false hopes.
 - 13.3.2. Daniel’s approach to Nebuchadnezzar was polite, pointed, and private.
 - 13.3.3. A proper challenge against the sin of our leaders, by Christians will not be shrill, disrespectful, or condescending.
 - 13.3.3.1. For example, someone like Rick Warren can pointedly and politely challenge President Obama about his views on abortion, whereas our standing in the audience at one of his public appearance and holding a sign calling him a murderer or sending a flaming e-mail equating him with the Beast in Revelation would be an inappropriate response.
 - 13.3.3.2. We are not excused from our responsibility, however, by saying that we don’t know the President or Prime Minister so we don’t have a responsibility to denounce sin. Our responsibility may fall at a different level—for example speaking with a School Board Trustee or a Ward Alderman, or to a businessman who we know who is breaking God’s Law.
 - 13.3.3.3. Calvin said, in commenting on this passage, “Some are always fulminating through a pretence of zeal, and forget themselves to be but men: they show no sign of benevolence, but indulge in mere bitterness.”
 - 13.3.3.4. The denouncement of sin is the responsibility of the entire Church, not just those who are prominent Pastors in mega-churches.
 - 13.3.4. Even if men don’t want to hear and won’t listen to the message from God (as Nebuchadnezzar did at first) we are to speak the truth in love (Eph 4.15).
 - 13.3.5. We should thank God for the evidence we have seen through the example of Daniel and through others in history, that Christians who are given public positions (or access to those with public positions) can have an influence on individuals and even on national policy.
- 13.4. *Duty* – This passage teaches that all civil magistrates are accountable to God and are required to obey his Law and to practice his righteousness (Ps 2.1-12; Rom 13.1-5).
- 13.4.1. We must not fall for the modern view that God’s laws cannot be the standard for society because we live in a pluralistic society.
 - 13.4.1.1. There are not many systems of law—only one, God’s.
 - 13.4.1.2. All nations are subject to God’s law.
 - 13.4.2. There is no room for pluralism in God’s world. Truth and error cannot co-exist. Ultimately men have to have a standard for law, and it must be God’s law.
 - 13.4.3. If the Church would start with this premise, rather than the wispy view that Christianity is just one of many routes to God and truth, it would have a stronger voice in society.
 - 13.4.4. We need to believe, pray, and act on this principle, knowing that:
 - 13.4.4.1. All civil magistrates are subject to God.
 - 13.4.4.2. God is remarkably patient with non-Christian rulers. He does not wipe

- them out immediately but gives them time to repent, or compound their guilt by rejecting him.
- 13.4.4.3. God humbles them through crises in which he gives them opportunity to repent and turn to him.
- 13.4.4.4. God will eventually depose and punish the sin of all unjust rulers.
- 13.4.5. It is our duty to present these truths, and the duty of rulers to repent of their stubbornness, and to repent before the threatened punishment becomes a temporal or everlasting reality.

Shamed Sovereign (Dan 4.28-33)

1. What was Nebuchadnezzar doing when the prophecy in his dream was fulfilled?
 - 1.1. He was looking out from a high point (the roof of his palace) over the city of Babylon and boasting about what he had built.
 - 1.1.1. Roofs were flat in that part of the world, and were used for many purposes (e.g., drying fruit, weaving, storage, gardens, etc.
 - 1.2. What were the words of his boast?
 - 1.2.1. He boasted of the greatness of the city of Babylon that he had built by his power and for his own glory.
 - 1.2.2. Extra-Biblical inscriptions support Nebuchadnezzar's boast to be a builder.
 - 1.2.2.1. The East India House Inscription (a stone block found in the ruins of Babylon in the late 18th century, and now in the British Museum), has a carved cuneiform inscription that records Nebuchadnezzar's desire to honour Marduk through his construction projects in Babylon and Borsippa (a city about 18kms south-west of Babylon).²³¹
 - 1.2.2.2. The text on this block contains many boasts, including: "[A]bove Babylon and Borsippa I have not added a city in the realm of Babylonia as a city of my lofty foundation. A great temple, a house of admiration for men, a vast construction, a lofty pile, a palace of My Royalty for the land of Babylon, in the midst of the city of Babylon from Imgur Bel to Libit-higal the ford of the Sun-rise, from the bank of the Euphrates as far as Aibur-sabu which Nabopolassar King of Babylon the father who begat me made in brick and raised up in its midst, but whose foundation was damaged by waters and floods at Bit-Imli near Babylon, and the gates of that palace were thrown down, of this the structure with brickwork I repaired with its foundation and boundary wall, and a depth of waters I collected: then opposite the waters I laid its foundation and with cement and brick I skilfully surrounded it; tall cedars for its porticos I fitted; ikki and cedar woods with layers of copper, on domes and arches and with bronze work, I strongly overlaid its gates with silver, gold, precious stones, whatsoever they call them, in heaps ..." ²³²
- 1.3. Did Nebuchadnezzar actually build Babylon to the extent he boasted?
 - 1.3.1. Babylon was already in existence when Nebuchadnezzar became king. It had been a significant city for centuries before he was born, having been the seat of power under Sargon the Great (thought to have reigned c 2270 to 2215), for the first Babylonian dynasty. It was also the capital of Hammurabi's empire (c 1810-1750). It was re-established as the capital of the Neo-Babylonian Empire by Nebuchadnezzar's father after 626 BC.
 - 1.3.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar, however, added greatly to its fortifications and grandeur during his prosperous reign.
 - 1.3.1.2. His boast is similar to that of Augustus Caesar who is reported to have said of

²³¹ www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/t/east_india_house_inscription.aspx.

²³² Column 7, line 32 to Column 8, line 13; www.bible-history.com/texts/nebuchadnezzar_2_inscription.html.

Rome, “I found it brick, but I left it marble.”²³³

1.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar was a builder, more so than he was a warrior.

1.3.2.1. Abydenus²³⁴: “[T]hat Belus caused this state of things to cease, and appointed to each its proper place: and he surrounded Babylon with a wall: but in process of time this wall disappeared: and Nabuchodonosor walled it in again, and it remained so with its brazen gates until the time of the Macedonian conquest. And after other things he says: Nabuchodonosor having succeeded to the kingdom, built the walls of Babylon in a triple circuit in fifteen days; and he turned the river Armacale, a branch of the Euphrates, and the Acracanus: and above the city of Sippara he dug a receptacle for the waters, whose perimeter was forty parasangs, and whose depth was twenty cubits; and he placed gates at the entrance thereof, by opening which they irrigated the plains, and these they call Echetognomones (sluices): and he constructed dykes against the irruptions of the Erythræan sea, and built the city of Teredon to check the incursions of the Arabs; and he adorned the palaces with trees, calling them hanging gardens.”²³⁵

1.3.2.2. Josephus: “[H]aving settled the affairs of Egypt, and the other countries, as also those that concerned the captive Jews, and Phoenicians, and Syrians, and those of the Egyptian nations; and having committed the conveyance of them to Babylon to certain of his friends, together with the gross of his army, and the rest of their ammunition and provisions, he went himself hastily, accompanied with a few others, over the desert, and came to Babylon. So he took upon him the management of public affairs, and of the kingdom which had been kept for him by one that was the principal of the Chaldeans, and he received the entire dominions of his father, and appointed, that when the captives came, they should be placed as colonies, in the most proper places of Babylonia; but then he adorned the temple of Belus, and the rest of the temples, in a magnificent manner, with the spoils he had taken in the war. He also added another city to that which was there of old, and rebuilt it, that such as would besiege it hereafter might no more turn the course of the river, and thereby attack the city itself. He therefore built three walls round about the inner city, and three others about that which was the outer, and this he did with burnt brick. And after he had, after a becoming manner, walled the city, and adorned its gates gloriously, he built another palace before his father's palace, but so that they joined to it; to describe whose vast height and immense riches it would perhaps be too much for me to attempt; yet as large and lofty as they were, they were completed in fifteen days. He also erected elevated places for walking, of stone, and made it resemble mountains, and built it so that it might be planted with all sorts of trees. He also erected what was called a pensile paradise, because his wife was desirous to have things like her own country, she having been bred up in the palaces of Media.”²³⁶

1.3.3. The conclusion of historians is that because Nebuchadnezzar controlled an enormous quantity of human labour he did in fact build, or re-build, most of the city. One historian has noted:

1.3.3.1. “[N]ine-tenths of Babylon itself, and nineteen-twentieths of all the other ruins that in almost countless profusion cover the land, are composed of bricks

²³³ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Lives Of The Twelve Caesars*, “Octavius Caesar Augustus”, para. 29; www.globus2.com/ebooks/TwelveCaesars/00000013.htm.

²³⁴ “Abydenus was a Greek historian, and the author of a History of the Chaldeans and Assyrians, of which some fragments are preserved by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, and by Cyril of Alexandria ... He probably wrote around 200 BC and, as Cyril states, in the Ionic dialect.” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abydenus

²³⁵ Megasthenes from Abydenus, quoted in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*. lib. 10; www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af06.htm

²³⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 10; chapter 11, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-10.htm

stamped with his name.”²³⁷ Millions of bricks have been found stamped with Nebuchadnezzar’s name.²³⁸

1.3.3.2. “I have examined the bricks belonging perhaps to a hundred different towns and cities in the neighbourhood of Baghdad, and I never found any other legend than that of Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.”²³⁹

1.3.4. His boast recorded in Daniel is a statement of fact.

1.3.4.1. No city has impressed foreigners the way Babylon did.

1.3.4.2. This work was done in a generation, not across lifetimes (like Paris, London, NY).

1.3.4.3. An equivalent today might be Shanghai or Dubai.

1.3.4.3.1. Shanghai: After 1976 and again in 1991 when economic reforms were put in place the city exploded. Its infrastructure such as subways (largest network in the world), highways, rail terminus, and docks and vast tracts of industrial parks, housing and shopping malls have been constructed in about 30 years. It has grown into an economic powerhouse with over 20 million inhabitants.

1.3.4.3.2. Dubai: Where there was only a desert coastal town of fewer than 50,000 people in the late 1960s, today stands a city with about 1.5M people. The city includes spectacular construction projects, such as: The Palm Islands, The World Islands, and Burj Al Arab (sail-shaped hotel, third tallest in world), Burj Dubai (tallest building in the world [in 2009]), Hydropolis (underwater hotel), Dubai Mall (world’s largest [in 2009], with 1,200 stores), and Ski Dubai (22,500m² [equivalent to 3 football fields] of snow all year round, 85 meters high [approximately 25 stories] and 80 meters wide, 5 different runs of varying difficulty and length, longest run of 400 meters).

1.3.4.4. Nebuchadnezzar built a city of superlatives in under 40 years.

1.4. To whom was he speaking?

1.4.1. Probably to himself, although there may have been advisors or servants present with him.

1.4.2. Possibly to foreign dignitaries or provincial governors to whom he was showing the wonders of his capital.

1.5. What was the problem with his boast?

1.5.1. Is pride in one’s work or ‘boasting’ of one’s work always wrong? In some ways his boast isn’t wrong. He was admiring his work.

1.5.1.1. God admired his work when he had completed creation.

1.5.1.2. We, as beings created in God’s image, also admire our ‘creative’ work. For example, if we have built a deck, shed, garage, or house we can step back and admire it. Or, if we have painted a portrait or completed an intricate quilt we can hang it with justified pleasure. Or, if we just finished playing flawlessly a complex piece of piano music by Franz Liszt we can enjoy the feeling of accomplishment and the applause. Or, we can watch happily as the large screen in the arena shows a replay of our well executed play as we skated from behind the blue line, around the forwards at the red line, through the defence at the blue line and launched the puck into the five-hole.

²³⁷ Sir H. Rawlinson quoted in: Edwards A. Park and George E. Day. eds., *Bibliotheca Sacra Vol XXXI*, “George H. Whittmore, Article VII, Historical Illustrations,” (New Haven, Andover, 1874) , p 172;

www.archive.org/stream/illustrationssc00unkngoog/illustrationssc00unkngoog_djvu.txt

²³⁸ *Illustrations of Scripture history, from the monuments of Egypt, Chaldaea, Assyria, & Babylonia* (London, Lothian, 1866) , p 41; www.archive.org/stream/illustrationssc00unkngoog/illustrationssc00unkngoog_djvu.txt.

²³⁹ G.F. MacLear, *A Class Book of Old Testament History* (London, MacMillan, 1868) , p 462;

books.google.ca/books?id=icM2AAAAAAAJ&pg=PA462&lpg=PA462&dq=examined+the+bricks+belonging+perhaps+to+a+hundred+different+towns+and+cities+in+the+neighbourhood+of+Baghdad&source=bl&ots=tCSLEI9dt3&sig=YEkRE8EWX2ik4bg4fXS-rWs6os&hl=en&ei=VL3jSfsEn7Ix1-zZiAk&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4.

- 1.5.2. When does pride in one's work become wrong? When it is based on an evil pride—a pride that fills the hearts of all unbelievers and always taints the legitimate gratifications of Christians. It is a pride which takes the glory to self and gives no credit to God.
 - 1.5.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar's boasting consisted of only this form of evil pride. He did not know, in a personal, saving way, the Most High God.
 - 1.5.2.1.1. He gave himself all the credit and honour: "I have built by my mighty power ... and for the *glory* of my majesty".
 - 1.5.2.1.2. He claimed for himself supreme power, as if he were a god.
 - 1.5.2.1.3. He ignored the reality that he had been placed on the throne by the ultimate decree of God, obtained the kingdom through inheritance from his father, subjugated provinces through the support of his generals and armies, and had been blessed by God with health, rational capacities, good weather, productive harvests, and the wealth of the conquered peoples.
 - 1.5.2.1.4. Very little of his efforts in Babylon could be directly attributed to his own abilities. Rather circumstances as orchestrated by God, through his general grace, were the origin of Nebuchadnezzar's success.
 - 1.5.2.2. The problem was that Nebuchadnezzar took the glory to himself and did not praise God for giving him good things. He failed to acknowledge that none of his accomplishments would have been possible except by God's sovereign will and providential grace (Dt 8.17, 18).
 - 1.5.2.3. God resists the proud (Ps 18.27; James 4.6; 1 Pt 5.5).
 - 1.5.3. He ignored the warning of the dream and of Daniel.
 - 1.5.3.1. He ought to have been frightened by the Daniel's warning. But instead ignored the warning and went on living (for about a year) in rebellious pride.
 - 1.5.3.2. It is not too surprising, since Pharaoh did not repent after 10 plagues destroyed his country. Mankind, in general will never heed God's warnings, even when inflicted with disasters (Rev 9.20, 21).
 - 1.5.3.3. Man's natural state since the Fall is to suppress the knowledge of God, ignore his laws, and reject his son, and to persist in stubborn, open rebellion against God.
2. How quick was God to bring judgement on Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 2.1. God had been very patient with Nebuchadnezzar. God gave Nebuchadnezzar three lessons on his [God's] greatness and warnings to repent over the course of his life and during the ~40 years of his reign (605-562 BC):
 - 2.1.1. The first lesson (early in his reign) taught about God's *omniscience* (among other things) as shown through the interpretation of the dream of the great image (chapter 2). The warning from this lesson was that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, and all world-dominating kingdoms would come to an end (Dan 2.39-44).
 - 2.1.2. The second lesson (in the middle of his reign) taught about God's *omnipresence* (among other things) when he made his presence known in the midst of the hot fire of a brick kiln (Dan 3.25). The warning from this lesson was that God alone is to be worshiped (Dan 3.18).
 - 2.1.3. The third lesson (near the end of his reign) taught about God's *omnipotence* (among other things) as shown by his sovereignty over the nations and kings of the earth (Dan 4.3, 35). The warning from this lesson was that sinners are to repent of breaking God's laws (Dan 4.27).
 - 2.1.4. God is, in general, patient with men and gives them many warnings and plenty of time to repent. (2 Pt 3.9). No man can accuse God of being unfair!
 - 2.2. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar's pride to continue for another twelve months after the third warning.
 - 2.2.1. Daniel's instruction was explicit.

- 2.2.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar knew where he stood and what he needed to do.
 - 2.2.1.2. He had the knowledge of truth and reality but chose to ignore them. He continued to suppress truth because he did not want to be ‘confused by the facts’.
 - 2.2.1.3. His problem, as it is with all sinful mankind, was not a lack of knowledge (the heavens declare God, all men know there is a God and of his righteous demands [Ps 19.1; Rom 1.18-32]) but a lack of will—he did not *want* to believe and repent.
 - 2.2.2. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a period of grace, but eventually his patience expired.
 - 2.2.2.1. God’s patience eventually expires with all men—death comes upon all and after this we all have to face everlasting judgement (Heb 9.27).
- 3. How was the message of judgement communicated to Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 3.1. How had God communicated to Nebuchadnezzar in the past?
 - 3.1.1. Through visions in dreams.
 - 3.1.2. Through the dream interpretations and exhortations of the Prophet Daniel.
 - 3.2. This time God communicated directly with a voice from Heaven.
 - 3.2.1. There are a number of instances in Scripture where God communicated *directly* in this way, for example:
 - 3.2.1.1. To Adam (Gen 3.9)
 - 3.2.1.2. To Noah (Gen 6.13)
 - 3.2.1.3. To Hagar (Gen 21.17).
 - 3.2.1.4. To Moses (Ex 20.1; etc.)
 - 3.2.1.5. About Jesus (Mt 3.17)
 - 3.2.1.6. To John (Rev 10.8).
 - 3.2.2. This direct communication to Nebuchadnezzar from Heaven is one of the few instances where God speaks *directly* to a person to whom he isn’t showing favour. This action on God’s part is a further indication that Nebuchadnezzar held a unique position among men—as we noted, when we studied the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (chapter 2), he was the greatest king ever to have been given earthly power by God.
 - 3.3. How did God address Nebuchadnezzar? Why?
 - 3.3.1. God called him a king and referred to him by his personal name.
 - 3.3.1.1. We must not miss the significance of this. The myths that recount the exploits of the gods of the Babylonian pantheon show the gods as being concerned for their own domains and with little interest in humans. Babylonian (based on earlier Sumerian) mythology says that the gods created humans as servants for themselves but eventually freed them when they became too much to handle. It is possible that a god might have shown an interest in a person as important as Nebuchadnezzar, but in general the gods treated men as not much more than slaves.
 - 3.3.1.2. In contrast, the Most High God, the Creator, calls to Nebuchadnezzar by name. He has a personal interest in Nebuchadnezzar’s aspect, attitudes, and actions.
 - 3.3.2. In the use of the title ‘king’ God is not necessarily honouring Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3.3.2.1. Rather he is pointing out that even as king, and the greatest of earthly kings, he is subject to a greater king—King Jesus. He is saying, in effect, “You are a king, but I am King of kings.”
 - 3.3.2.2. God is using a form of irony—“You may be called a king, but because of your rebellion you will be made equivalent to a brute-beast.”
- 4. Was the voice from Heaven sudden?
 - 4.1. It came immediately upon his boasting, and in this way it was sudden.
 - 4.2. However, it was not sudden in that the dream from God, and Daniel’s counsel, had warned Nebuchadnezzar of pending judgement.

- 4.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar had much more warning than Herod Agrippa I was given (Acts 12.20-23).
 - 4.2.1.1. Luke tells us that he received praise from men, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” Then “Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.”
 - 4.2.1.2. Josephus tells us that in the midst of receiving this praise, he saw an owl perched on a rope over his head. He interpreted as a bad omen. He was struck with violent pains, told off his friends for flattering him, and accepted imminent death as sent by Providence. He experienced severe pains in his abdomen and died after five days.²⁴⁰
- 4.2.2. God used Nebuchadnezzar as a voice to warn all kings of the earth. The record (here in Daniel) of his being humbled by God is a warning to all kings. Herod, living in Judea and among the Jews, would undoubtedly have heard of Daniel’s account, but had chosen to ignore it.
- 4.3. The voice of judgement now came true.
 - 4.3.1. This vindicated God’s word.
 - 4.3.2. Only the true God could communicate judgement of this kind and bring it to fulfillment.
- 5. What was the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s judgement?
 - 5.1. *Solitary* – He was driven from the society of men and cut off from contact with other men. When God created man he determined that man should not be alone and created woman to be with man. Man was created as a social being—to have communion with God and with other people. To be deprived of human society is a curse. People who are marooned alone or kept in solitary confinement often go mad for lack of rational interaction with other people.
 - 5.2. *Stripped* – He was deprived of all of his honours and possessions. He lost his office as king and access to his dwellings and comforts. He may also have been without clothes and stripped naked (any clothes he had likely did not last through the seven years of his insanity). With regard to Nebuchadnezzar, we can say, “*ichabod*”, the glory has departed.
 - 5.3. *Subhuman* – He became like an animal, living in the open fields and forests and eating animal food. He had the form of a man, but the appearance of a wild animal. He had been more than a man (a ‘great’ man, the man of all men), so God made less than a man by consigning him a place with the beasts.
 - 5.4. *Senseless* – Although we are not explicitly told, here, that he lost his senses, verse 34 indicates that he did. He became irrational (insane) and could not care for his bodily needs; thus he ate grass like oxen and did not care for his body—his hair grew long like feathers of a large bird of prey and his nails grew long like birds’ claws. It is also likely that he was unable to speak with a human voice and made only bestial sounds.
 - 5.4.1. Will Durant claims that Nebuchadnezzar was illiterate.²⁴¹ However, he provides no reference to support his claim. Without contemporary verification, we may conclude, to the contrary, that Nebuchadnezzar probably was not illiterate, but rather educated and cultured, per the definitions of his day.
 - 5.4.2. It is unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar was illiterate. He had to be sufficiently knowledgeable and educated to conduct the civil service exams (Dan 1.19, 20). Also, he appears to have encouraged intellectual pursuits.
 - 5.4.2.1. During his reign the study of mathematics, astronomy²⁴², engineering disciplines, and literature were encouraged.
 - 5.4.2.2. He organized advanced educational programs for the civil service academy—the university of his day—that taught all the language, literature, and wisdom of the Babylonians (Dan 1.4, 17).

²⁴⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 19; chapter 8, paragraph 2; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-19.htm

²⁴¹ Wil Durant, “Our Oriental Heritage,” *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 223.

²⁴² Wil Durant, “Our Oriental Heritage,” *The Story of Civilization, Part 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 257.

- 5.4.2.3. Also, just as he brought the Temple articles (Dan 1.2) to Babylon, he undoubtedly brought the ‘best’ (people, ideas, gods, techniques, etc.) from each city and culture he conquered.
- 5.4.3. Nebuchadnezzar may have had aspirations to be a second-Solomon (1 Ki 4.29-34), who preceded him by about 350 years.
- 5.4.4. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar was humbled in his mind (rather than in some other way, such as destroying the city with an earthquake or striking his body with sores) because he had particular pride in his intellectual accomplishments and engineering prowess which were displayed through the physical infrastructure of his great capital city.
- 5.5. *Subdued* – He was humbled completely, he had to endure this punishment for seven years. The seven years was a literal period, but it was also symbolic of completeness.
- 5.6. Was Nebuchadnezzar’s judgement a form of zoanthropy or boanthropy?
- 5.6.1. Some commentators make the claim that he suffered from a specific form of zoanthropy (‘animal-man’) or boanthropy (‘ox-man’).²⁴³ They refer to this as a mental illness in which the person *thinks* that he has become an animal. They suggest that Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment was the delusion that is sometimes seen in modern times.²⁴⁴
- 5.6.2. What is the problem with this assertion? The problem is that Daniel (and Nebuchadnezzar) says that he lived like a beast for a long period of time (seven years—long enough to grow long hair and nails), even eating grass like an ox. We noted that men cannot digest the cellulose in grass, and certainly could not, normally, live for seven years on a diet of grass.
- 5.6.3. The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar was not just that he *thought* he was an ox, but that he actually became, and lived, like one. The explanation for what happened cannot be found in a mental illness that may afflict other people.
- 5.6.4. People who suggest that Nebuchadnezzar’s judgement was a form of zoanthropy, may think that they are helping by relating the circumstances to a present observable phenomena. However, by suggesting that Nebuchadnezzar’s affliction is something that occurs naturally (although abnormal) they undermine the supernatural intervention of God and his sovereign work. They may not realize they are doing this, and may claim to believe in miracles, yet they are implicitly denying a miracle in this instance.
- 5.6.5. Nebuchadnezzar’s judgement was not zoanthropy (even though the appearances may be similar) any more than demon possession recounted in the Bible was epilepsy.
- 5.6.6. What Nebuchadnezzar suffered for seven years was a miraculous change in which his body was sustained on animal food and preserved through the seasons while living outdoors. God supernaturally preserved Nebuchadnezzar throughout the duration of his affliction.
- 5.7. Some writers question the historicity of this account and suggest that if it had really happened there should be a record of it outside the Bible. They do not want to accept the account as Nebuchadnezzar has given it, as recorded in the Bible. They deny the truth that the great king asked a prophet of God to record his humbling lesson.
- 5.7.1. They claim that the account is mythic and based upon ubiquitous ancient Middle-Eastern traditions and tales such as the Epic of Gilgamesh’s description of the wild man Enkidu.²⁴⁵
- 5.7.2. Nevertheless, Berossus²⁴⁶ a Hellenistic-era Babylonian priest, astrologer and historian

²⁴³ Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary*. Rev. ed. of: New Bible Companion. 1990.; Includes index. The Tyndale reference library (316). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²⁴⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinical_lycanthropy

²⁴⁵ M. Henze, *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar: The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel ch. 4*. (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

²⁴⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berossus; <http://www.knight.org/cathen/02514a.htm>

makes reference to an illness before the death of Nebuchadnezzar.²⁴⁷ E. J. Young points out that this illness must have been unique or significantly different to have been particularly noticed since many kings died of some illness.²⁴⁸ Therefore, there likely *is* an extra-Biblical record of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had a major affliction some years before the end of his life.

6. Why did Nebuchadnezzar *not* lose his kingdom?

6.1. Why did the territories and their governors not revolt?

6.2. *Protection* – God was protecting Nebuchadnezzar. The stump with the metal bands in his vision (15) was a symbolic promise that God was going to hold together his life and his kingdom. Also, God had told Nebuchadnezzar through the vision that his affliction would last seven times (years). The implication was that when the affliction ended, Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to rule his kingdom—although the implication may only be discernible through hindsight.

6.3. *Providence* – God’s providence superintends the unfolding of all history. God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 27.7) that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would last until at least his grandson. God was showing that he was sovereign over the nations, even the great Babylon.

6.4. *Protectorate* – There were probably a number of governors and administrators, who were loyal to Nebuchadnezzar, who continued to govern on his behalf.

6.4.1. Daniel may have stepped in as the interim regent since he was governor of the primary province since he may have acted as the deputy emperor/king at times in the past. He may have had such power and influence that he kept Nebuchadnezzar’s problems quiet so that there would be no problems in the provinces.

6.4.2. Some ancient historians (Berossus²⁴⁹, and possibly others) *apparently* identify a queen to whom are ascribed works from around this time, which by others are declared to be Nebuchadnezzar’s. This queen *may* have been one of Nebuchadnezzar’s wives (his favourite?). She may have acted as a regent overseeing the affairs of the kingdom during her husband’s affliction.²⁵⁰

6.4.3. It is possible that because of his royal position, Daniel and other senior administrators kept Nebuchadnezzar hidden (for example in a royal park) so his insane condition would not be known and would be kept from the lesser administrators and the general populace. Daniel would have been able to tell anyone who knew of Nebuchadnezzar’s condition the exact duration of the insanity.

6.4.3.1. An example of how this kind of illness could have been kept secret may be seen in the case of Queen Elizabeth’s cousins, Katherine and Nerissa Bowes-Lyon. The sisters were mentally impaired (as adults they had the mental age of a six-year-old and could hardly speak). It seems that they were confined to a mental institution in Surrey in 1941 (they were about 22 and 15 years old at the time), and declared dead in 1940 and 1961. The elder (Nerissa) apparently died in 1986, but as late as 2007 the younger (Katherine) was still apparently confined to an institution in Surrey.²⁵¹

6.4.3.2. Examples in literature of keeping someone’s situation a secret include Louis XIV keeping his twin brother confined, in Alexander Dumas’ *The Man in the Iron Mask*; and Sir Percival and Fosco (one of the most evil characters in literature) confining Percival’s wife Laura to an asylum as ‘Anne Catherick’, and

²⁴⁷ Berossus as quoted by Josephus, *Of the Chaldaean Kings after Nebuchadnezzar*; www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af05.htm

²⁴⁸ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 111.

²⁴⁹ I was unable to find, in the fragments of Berossus, any reference to a queen acting on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar near the end of his life.

²⁵⁰ Reference to Rawlinson’s *Historical Illustrations*; net.bible.org/dictionary.php?dict=dictionaries&word=Nebuchadnezzar

²⁵¹ newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Alt/alt.talk.royalty/2005-11/msg01534.html; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerissa_Bowes-Lyon; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine_Bowes-Lyon

- taking possession of her fortune, in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*.
- 6.4.3.3. It would have been more difficult to keep the insanity of a prominent King secret, but there would have been fewer paparazzi and investigative reporters in Daniel's day and the threat of immediate execution if there was an information leak.
- 6.4.4. Daniel may have also played a key role in preventing anyone from assassinating the king while he was residing in the wild.
- 6.5. Exactly how the preservation of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was accomplished is unknown. Daniel doesn't tell us, and accurate records from that period have been lost. We know, however, that the kingdom was preserved and was restored to him and that his dynasty lasted for another ~20 years after his death.
7. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 7.1. *Swiftness of punishment* – God is not slow in fulfilling his promise (2 Pt 3.9) that he will punish wickedness.
- 7.1.1. He is patient, giving time for repentance. But, when the right time for the execution of punishment, he brings it about swiftly.
- 7.1.2. Nebuchadnezzar probably scoffed and forgot the dream as a year went by. He said, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pt 3.4) and was surprised by the hand of God striking him faster than a fly-swatter hits a bug.
- 7.1.3. Young people and even older people often scoff at death, thinking that somehow that they are invincible. Every day they think they will live to see another day. In the deepest parts of their minds they know that they will die 'one day' but they rarely expect that day to be when death comes to them.
- 7.1.4. Similarly, all unbelievers scoff at the return of Christ and the pending everlasting judgement. However, it is as certain as the punishment that felled Nebuchadnezzar and will come swiftly.
- 7.1.5. Other examples of swift retribution in the Bible include the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10.1, 2), Uzzah (2 Sam 6.7), the captain and his fifty soldiers (2 Ki 1.10), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.5, 10). These examples warn us that the Day of Judgement may be no further away than the next instant.
- 7.2. *Stupidity of people* – Even when men see judgement coming they still do not repent.
- 7.2.1. Rebellion against God is madness. However, to persist in rebellion when God has spoken clearly against the specific rebellion is madness compounded to the n^{th} degree.
- 7.2.2. Men see the general effects of God's judgement in mental illnesses (Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, etc.) and try to find cures for them. Yet they also see the results of a greater mental illness—rejection of God and persistent rejection of his holy laws—and they do nothing to appropriate the cure that is available for the receiving, through faith and repentance.
- 7.2.3. Hell will be the fulfillment of all irrationality. We have probably all heard the definition of stupidity attributed to Albert Einstein, "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Men will know the truth about God and his sovereignty with absolute certainty, yet in spite of their knowledge they will persist in their insane belief that they are autonomous agents with no accountability before God. So, God will leave them to wallow in their lonely self-delusion in an everlasting existence.
- 7.3. *Signs for the powerful* – This episode in the life of Nebuchadnezzar provides a particular warning for all kings of the earth, and everyone of high position who places his pride in the things he has accomplished or acquired.
- 7.3.1. The worldly-wise should not glory in their mental capacities, the rich in the abundance of their possessions, or the powerful in their strength and positions.
- 7.3.2. Rather, all men, rich or poor, powerful or weak, intelligent or imbecile, should be humble before the only God who provides all intellectual, physical, and material blessing

in this life (James 1.17).

7.3.3. God opposes the proud and brings them low (Is 2.12; Prov 3.34; James 4.6; Ps 138.6).

7.3.4. Matthew Henry has a fitting comment on the state of this once great king: “Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness. Is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What this despicable animal that is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious on the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now has not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back?”²⁵²

Submission (Dan 4.34-37)

1. What happened at the end of *the days*?

1.1. The seven year period of his being consigned to the life of a beast came to an end.

1.2. He raised his eyes to heaven and his reason (or sanity) was restored.

1.3. Is there a causal relationship here?

1.3.1. His upward look coincided with the return of his reason. The two events are presented as logically connected, not chronologically connected. We can translate the ‘and’ as ‘that is’ or ‘while’ or ‘as’ *rather* than as ‘and then’.

1.3.2. It is not that he decided to look to God and then his reason was restored. That would make no sense, as an irrational person cannot act rationally by his own power or abilities.

1.3.2.1. It is incorrect to interpret this, as some do by saying that it is only as man looks to God that he can be *fully* rational.

1.3.2.2. This is similar to a faulty view of repentance, which holds that man makes an initial grasp for God and God then acts to draw the person. Man is dead in sins and cannot act rationally until God brings the conscience to life through conversion.

1.3.2.3. In the same way Nebuchadnezzar was irrational and could not have acted rationally (i.e., to look to God in heaven) unless God first restored his reason. He was so beast-like that he was insensible to his condition. Oxen and other beasts of the field do not think about their condition before God; they just act to satisfy their basic needs.

1.3.2.4. Even men who have not been afflicted with punishment of Nebuchadnezzar are not willing, under their own volition, to look to God. Man is by nature irrational and suppresses the truth, because of sin, and only God can change the heart and mind of a man to look to him.

1.3.3. The causal relationship is the opposite of what people suggest. It was only when God restored his reason so that he was able to realize his condition (he would have seen his long hair, long nails, nakedness or ragged apparel, and his emaciation) that he looked to God.

1.3.4. The Aramaic word (חזב) that is translated as ‘returned’ in the ESV, is translated as ‘restored’ in the NIV. This is a good (possibly better) translation as it emphasizes that Nebuchadnezzar was passive in the change of his situation. God restored his rationality.

2. What brought to an end the judgement on Nebuchadnezzar (compare verse 34 with verses 25 and 33)?

2.1. The ‘trigger’ that ended the punishment was not that he came to know or to acknowledge that God was sovereign. He was in an irrational, insane state and could not have come to that conclusion on his own.

2.2. The ‘trigger’ was the end of the appointed time of punishment.

2.3. It was after his sanity was restored and he realized how God had humbled him that he acknowledged God as sovereign.

²⁵² Mathew Henry, *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Dan 4.33). (Peabody: Hendrickson. 1996, c1991).

- 2.4. The sequence of events was:
 - 2.4.1. God decreed the punishment and the duration of it.
 - 2.4.2. God punished.
 - 2.4.3. God lifted the punishment at the end of the set time.
 - 2.4.4. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God as Lord and that his sovereign disposition of the kingdoms of men is in accordance with his omniscient will.
- 2.5. What is the key *cause* underlying Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledging God as Lord?
 - 2.5.1. Nebuchadnezzar's change from insanity to sanity and from denial to confession was the result of God's gracious action in providence.
- 2.6. Of what is this temporal sequence, a good analogy?
 - 2.6.1. When we considered verse 25 we noted that this sequence of events provides an analogue for the process of salvation.
 - 2.6.2. This sequence is:
 - 2.6.2.1. God's decrees are ultimate. All events and times are in his hands.
 - 2.6.2.2. Men who are dead in sin (i.e., insane, out of their minds, irrational) are not able to acknowledge God as Lord and Saviour.
 - 2.6.2.3. God changes their hearts.
 - 2.6.2.4. Men stop acting like brute-beasts, they lift up their heads in dignity as image bearers of God, and they praise him.
 - 2.6.3. Salvation is a gracious gift from God. There is nothing in us that enables us to save ourselves any more than Nebuchadnezzar could have overcome his insanity on his own.
- 3. What did Nebuchadnezzar do upon having his sanity restored? (34, 37)
 - 3.1. He worshipped God.
 - 3.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar not only gave thanks to God, but also confessed his sins and praised/worshipped God.
 - 3.1.2. Three synonyms are used for worship in verse 33: blessed/praised, praised/honoured and honoured/glorified (ESV/NIV). Three synonyms for worship are also used in verse 37: praise, extol (exalt) and honour (glorify).
 - 3.2. Was it true worship?
 - 3.2.1. True worship can only come from a converted heart. For example, actions that involve petition of God are not true prayer if they do not come from a believing heart (Is 1.11-17; Prov 15.29; Prov 28.9; Jn 4.23).
 - 3.2.2. The fact that the three synonyms are used seems to emphasize the nature of this worship as being something that did truly honour God—the three-fold repetition emphasizes completeness. The usage of the synonyms may hint at a converted heart. We will consider the question of whether or not Nebuchadnezzar was converted, below.
- 4. What attributes of God's greatness does Nebuchadnezzar extol? (34, 35, 37)
 - 4.1. God is the Most High.
 - 4.1.1. We first saw this expression used for God in Daniel 3.26. At that point Nebuchadnezzar was probably referring to God as only the supreme god in a pantheon of gods—a god in the same species as the other gods, if more powerful—and not as the Creator God—the God in a unique genus or class, totally different from the gods of the pantheon.
 - 4.1.2. We noted when considering that reference to God that the term 'Most High (Highest) God' or 'Most High' occurs 13 times in Daniel, more than in any other book except in the Psalms; and that six of the occurrences in Daniel (Dan 4.2, 17, 24-25, 32, 34) are spoken by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 4.1.3. It is possible that he now uses the term 'Most High God' in an absolute sense—as the Creator God—as he is recounting his encounter with God.
 - 4.2. God is Eternal.
 - 4.2.1. What is the irony in this statement? Nebuchadnezzar had been flattered throughout his

- reign with expressions like, “O king live forever,” (Dan 2.4; Dan 3.9). Now, as Nebuchadnezzar is approaching the end of his life and has realized his mortality, he has come face-to-face with the only person who is eternal—God.
- 4.2.2. Humans, as created beings, have a beginning but no end so they have an everlasting future (even those who are consigned to Hell). Humans are contingent beings, so their everlasting future is made possible only through God’s sustaining power. In contrast, God is the only truly eternal being. He had no beginning, has no end, is self-sustaining, and exists beyond/above time.
 - 4.2.3. The gods of the pagan pantheons all had a beginning of one kind or another (materialized or were born).
 - 4.2.3.1. It is hard for us finite creatures to get our minds around the concepts that are necessary to properly define God.
 - 4.2.3.2. The unique attributes of the Creator God include, beside eternality (God has no beginning or ending) and self-existence (he just *is*), include:
 - 4.2.3.2.1. Necessary existence – God cannot not be
 - 4.2.3.2.2. Simplicity – God is indivisible he does not have parts; the Trinity does not divide God into parts, each of the persons of the Trinity is fully and completely God
 - 4.2.3.2.3. Incorporeality – without innate physical or bodily expression; God is spirit (Jn 4.24)
 - 4.2.3.2.4. Morality/truthfulness – unable to do wrong of any kind; not just containing a derived good (as in angels or glorified men)
 - 4.2.3.2.5. Infinitude, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience.
 - 4.2.3.3. Eternality is the representative attribute that Nebuchadnezzar uses to sum up all the other attributes. Nebuchadnezzar, by declaring God as eternal, was confessing that God was different from all the god’s of the Babylonian pantheon. None of these invented gods had any of the essential attributes of God.
 - 4.2.3.4. None of the gods of the pagan pantheons had the true attributes of the Creator God. the pagan gods were essentially portrayed as super-men.
 - 4.3. God is the Universal and Eternal King
 - 4.3.1. The king confessed that since God is eternal, so is his dominion. There is no revolution, no decay, and no succession in his kingdom. As he continues to live, so his reign is perpetual. Of his government there is no end (Is 9.7).
 - 4.3.2. The extent of God’s kingdom is universal—through all time, in all places, and over all creation, so Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God’s authority over everything and everyone (all men “the inhabitants (or peoples) of the earth”).
 - 4.3.3. God regards the nations and the kings of the earth as inconsequential in their pride and hubris.
 - 4.3.3.1. This does not mean that God does not care for, or concern himself with, his creation.
 - 4.3.3.2. Rather, it means that men and nations have no authority over God and that God does not need them to exist or to be complete.
 - 4.3.3.3. Any authority that men have is delegated from God (Gen 1.26).
 - 4.3.4. To what does God’s rule extend, in addition to being over the peoples of the earth?
 - 4.3.4.1. The hosts (powers) of heaven, since he is ‘King of Heaven’.
 - 4.3.4.2. The expression ‘king of heaven’ is used only here in the entire Bible. What may it mean?
 - 4.3.4.3. This may refer to the solar system and galaxy. Nebuchadnezzar, connected the sun, moon, stars and planets with gods. He may have been saying that the rule of God included the dominion of the gods.
 - 4.3.4.4. It could also be that Nebuchadnezzar had a vestigial understanding of the existence of angels.

- 4.3.4.4.1. We noted, when we considered the identity of the fourth person in the furnace (Dan 3.25), that Nebuchadnezzar used the term ‘son of the gods’ by which he may have meant an angel.
- 4.3.4.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar may have been aware of the account of Job, and knew that even Satan had to ask permission of God to afflict Job.
- 4.3.4.4.3. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, may be speaking of the angelic realm (including demons who are fallen angels) in his reference to the extent of God’s dominion.
- 4.3.4.5. With our fuller revelation, we know that God’s reign does include all the rational creation (Ps 103.20-21; Mt 6.10; Mt 8.16; Rom 8.38; Eph 1.21; 1 Pt 3.22).
- 4.3.4.5.1. The demons try to resist God, but even they are compelled to obey him by compulsion (Lk 8.32).
- 4.3.4.6. The title ‘King of Heaven’ likely also means the same thing as ‘God Most High’.
- 4.3.4.6.1. God is the supreme God, the only true God.
- 4.4. God is Sovereign
 - 4.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that God’s will and power are irresistible and his sovereignty incontestable. No one can stop him from acting, and no one can question why he acts as he does (Job 36.23; Job 40.6-9; Is 29.16; Is 43.13; Is 45.9; Rom 9.20-21).
 - 4.4.2. While God is a law to himself, this does not mean that he is capricious and wildly erratic or impulsive. Rather he acts consistently in accord with his personal will that is based on perfect wisdom and justice.
 - 4.4.3. Nebuchadnezzar, in acknowledging that God is sovereign, is professing that nothing happens by chance, but that every event unfolds in accordance with God’s absolute will through his providential governance of the universe.
 - 4.4.3.1. The universe is not the product of chance cosmological, geological, or biological events. Nor is the universe the product of capricious actions on the part of demigods who create the universe as their toy and mankind as their slaves. Rather the universe and mankind have an absolute teleology. God’s hand is evident in the design of the universe and man’s purpose—to glorify God—is clearly manifested in his innate being.
 - 4.4.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar dismisses the powers of the gods of the Babylonian pantheon to influence men or to control nature as mere fantasy.
 - 4.4.3.3. Nebuchadnezzar denies that objects or forces in the natural realm (e.g., sun, moon, stars, and planets) could have any *causal* influence over men (this of course does not deny the proximate nature of physical forces such as gravity that can create tides, or solar flares that can influence earth’s temperature).
 - 4.4.3.4. Nebuchadnezzar deprives the Chaldeans (astrologers/wise men) of Babylon and the self-proclaimed guardians of ‘truth’ today—scientists and professors in the academies—of their power to advise and control the minds of their intellectual pawns.
- 4.5. God is Righteous.
 - 4.5.1. All that God does, is done well. God’s righteousness includes:
 - 4.5.1.1. Acts of love and mercy
 - 4.5.1.2. Providential governance over the affairs of men and history
 - 4.5.1.3. Issuing laws governing behaviour of his creatures
 - 4.5.1.4. Dispensing or withholding temporal blessings
 - 4.5.1.5. Decreeing who will be among the elect and who will be among the reprobate
 - 4.5.1.6. Judging the actions of men and angels/demons
 - 4.5.1.7. Rewarding those who believe in Christ, and
 - 4.5.1.8. Punishing everlastingly the rebellious.
 - 4.5.2. Most people are content to let God’s righteous judgements be executed against extreme examples of wickedness in other people. However, many people (including many

- Christians) question his judgements on those who they think to be ‘good’, or on themselves. You will hear them say something like, “Why me? I don’t deserve this! What have I done wrong?”
- 4.5.3. Being a righteous God, he cannot countenance pride that challenges his position, authority and glory. He therefore must humble the proud.
- 4.5.3.1. Until this point, Nebuchadnezzar likely had the same attitude toward God as all sinners do (i.e., they say, “What right does God have to challenge me?”). He would have been happy to accept victories and accolades but would have been upset if his plans failed to materialize or he became ill. After confronting severe judgement from God for seven years he was humbled enough to acknowledge that *all* that God does—even sending difficult times or inflicting punishment—is righteous.
- 4.5.3.2. However, now, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that it was for his own sin of pride that he received the chastisement. Nebuchadnezzar did not consider humbling of the proud to be a sign that God is unrighteous, but rather that he is righteous.
- 4.5.4. There are some professed atheists today (e.g., Dawkins) who accuse God of injustice, cruelty, and vain pride. They need to hear what Nebuchadnezzar says. God is righteous and humbles the proud.
- 4.5.4.1. It is a very dangerous and precarious thing for a creature to question his creator and to suggest that he does anything that is less than good and holy.
- 4.6. God is worthy of Worship.
- 4.6.1. Understanding the true attributes of God, Nebuchadnezzar was constrained to worship God.
- 4.6.2. Why did Nebuchadnezzar use three words to ‘praise’, ‘extol’ (‘exalt’), and ‘honor’ (‘glorify’) to express his actions in worship?
- 4.6.2.1. He may be using these terms to give the sense of completeness.
- 4.6.2.2. He wanted us to understand that his worship of God was sincere, not a mere formality.
- 4.6.3. When men come to truly understand who God is, there can be only two possible reactions:
- 4.6.3.1. *Abject fear* – Trembling with loathing and hatred. These creatures know that God is who he says he is, but they do not want to honour him as creator, lawgiver, sovereign governor, and saviour.
- 4.6.3.2. *Adoring fealty* – Love for who God is and what he has done, which overflows into praise. If we truly know God in a saving way, we cannot do anything less than pour out our hearts in thanksgiving and wonder (Rev 4.11).
5. What did God give Nebuchadnezzar? (36)
- 5.1. Essentially, a second chance.
- 5.2. He gave him back his sanity and his kingdom:
- 5.2.1. He was restored to health and mental capacity.
- 5.2.2. He was restored to his throne.
- 5.2.3. His majesty and splendour were restored.
- 5.2.4. His counsellors/advisors and his nobles returned to him.
- 5.2.5. God gave him more honour than he had before.
- 5.3. Why did God give Nebuchadnezzar a second chance?
- 5.3.1. God was teaching Nebuchadnezzar a lesson, not destroying him.
- 5.3.2. God is supremely patient, not wishing that any should perish (2 Pt 3.9).
- 5.3.3. God intended that Nebuchadnezzar would give his report, as recorded in Daniel 4.1-37.
- 5.3.3.1. God wished to have all mankind hear of the humbling of the greatest king in history.

- 5.3.3.2. God willed to have the account come from the king himself.
- 5.3.3.3. God wanted to show that his reign is over all the kings of the earth.
- 5.3.4. It is possible, and likely, that Nebuchadnezzar truly repented of his sins (pride, idolatry, and rebellion) and that God used the humbling experience to bring him to the point of repentance. We will consider this more fully below.
- 6. What do we discover about Nebuchadnezzar's response to God's dealings with him?
 - 6.1. What are the episodes in Daniel that show God dealing with Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 6.1.1. In chapter 1 Nebuchadnezzar takes articles from the Temple in Jerusalem as plunder and takes Hebrews as captives. In his first encounter with the Jews he likely found them to be weak, unprincipled, and essentially no different from the other nations he had subjected.
 - 6.1.2. At the end of the chapter, ~603BC, he discovers that some of these captive people (Jer 27.20) had religious principles and refuse to compromise their relationship with their God by becoming involved in the pagan practices of eating food sacrificed to idols. He discovered one of them in particular, Daniel, was a capable man of principle—not the hick from the backwater province of Judea that he expected.
 - 6.1.3. By the end of his first major encounter with God (end of chapter 2), in 603 BC, Nebuchadnezzar had discovered that the God of the Jews is able to reveal mysteries. He had come to realize that the God of the Jews is unique and powerful in comparison to the gods of the Babylonian pantheon.
 - 6.1.4. By the end of chapter 3 (between 603 and 562 BC; likely in 587 BC, the year before the fall of Jerusalem), Nebuchadnezzar had learned that God can perform miracles to save his faithful servants from the hottest fire his servants can kindle.
 - 6.1.5. By the end of chapter 4 (probably around 564-563 BC; Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC), Nebuchadnezzar had learned that God is sovereign over all kingdoms. He had finally, at the end of his life, come to believe in the prophecy that was revealed to him in the vision of the image which was destroyed by the rock—i.e., in the coming Messiah.
 - 6.1.6. God used progressive revelation to present truth to Nebuchadnezzar over his long reign (43 years). It is likely that Daniel, as one of Nebuchadnezzar's trusted advisors, used other opportunities to guide the king in the way of right behaviour and to present to him God's righteous requirements.
 - 6.2. How does Nebuchadnezzar respond to these events?
 - 6.2.1. At the end of chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar confesses, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries ..." (Dan 2.47). By the end of this first major encounter with God, he has come to realize that the God of the Jews is unique and powerful in comparison to the gods of the Babylonian pantheon.
 - 6.2.2. At the end of chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar confesses, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." (Dan 3.28). He declares the worship of Jehovah/Yahweh to be protected, but still as just one among the many gods in his pantheon.
 - 6.2.3. At the end of chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar confesses, "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; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Dan 4.34-35). It appears that at this point he is now ready to acknowledging that God has absolute authority over all of creation, and even, probably, that God is the only true God.
 - 6.3. It took three dramatic miracles to bring Nebuchadnezzar to his knees before God: revealing his inner thoughts, protecting three men in a fiery furnace, and turning the king out to live as a

- beast.
- 6.3.1. All of these miracles were performed directly under the observation of Nebuchadnezzar himself.
 - 6.3.2. Two of them touched him personally, both had a bearing on his mind, and one affected his body.
 - 6.4. God used these miracles with the greatest king the systems of men has ever produced, the head of gold, as a lesson to all other kings. That lesson is that God reigns as sovereign.
 - 6.5. As Daniel said (Dan 2.21) God “changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.” This is the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar, and all kings (and every ruler), must learn.
7. Was Nebuchadnezzar’s worship real, or true? And, was his confession a saving confession?
- 7.1. We saw that Nebuchadnezzar twice (34 and 37) used two sets of three synonyms for worship.
 - 7.1.1. This repetition of words appears to be the result of a real change of heart and true affection and reverence for God.
 - 7.1.2. The form of these verbs indicates continued action, suggesting that Nebuchadnezzar performed them continually.
 - 7.1.3. In parallel with this outpouring of praise, he humbles himself and confesses his sin. There is nothing left of his self-praise that we found earlier in the account.
 - 7.1.4. God cannot be worshiped correctly unless men are truly humble.
 - 7.2. Unless God tells us directly, we cannot know whether Nebuchadnezzar’s confession was based on true and genuine repentance, we have to leave the final disposition in God’s hands. We will find out when we enter an everlasting existence. However, there are appear to be a number of reasons to believe that his confession was a saving confession of faith. What might the reasons be?
 - 7.2.1. The fact that Daniel records this edict/pronouncement seems to show that the message must be heard—the king was humbled and truly repented—by all nations on earth.
 - 7.2.2. It is difficult to believe that Nebuchadnezzar could make this confession about God’s attributes, publish his praise of God, and ask Daniel to record it in this account, if his intentions were only to deceive. Daniel would likely have been able to judge if the king was being deceptive.
 - 7.2.3. Nebuchadnezzar wished to have all people in his kingdom, and beyond, pay attention to his announcement and to be subject to the true God—the God of Israel, the Most High God.
 - 7.2.4. We see growth and progression in Nebuchadnezzar’s knowledge about God (Dan 2.47; Dan 3.28; Dan 4.34, 35).
 - 7.2.5. Nebuchadnezzar is contrasted with his grandson Belshazzar (Dan 5.22).
 - 7.2.6. Nebuchadnezzar confessed that what God had done with him was just (37). It is hard to believe that the proud king would admit this unless his heart had been changed.
 - 7.2.7. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God’s sovereignty and sincerely credits other attributes to him.
 - 7.2.8. He worships God as the King of Heaven.
 - 7.2.9. The account ends with a positive note. There is no return to rebellion.
 - 7.3. We can conclude, therefore, that a proud, unworthy, idolatrous, blasphemous, persecutor did in fact probably find mercy.
 - 7.3.1. He was not the first or the last.
 - 7.3.2. The first was Adam—he was a king over the earth (Gen 1.26), his pride led him to rebel against his creator; he was not worthy of salvation; he was idolatrous, placing his self over God; he was blasphemous, questioning God’s purposes and calling God a liar; and he was a persecutor, bringing death upon himself and all his descendants.
 - 7.3.3. Examples of pagans, from Biblical history, who were included under God’s mercy and brought to salvation: Abraham (Gen 12.1ff), Naaman the Syrian (2 Ki 5.1-14), Cornelius

- the Roman centurion (Acts 10.31).
- 7.3.4. Nebuchadnezzar stands as proof of God's supremacy and as a trophy of his grace.
- 7.3.5. Nebuchadnezzar also provides a warning to all who think that in their prosperity and accomplishments, they can go forward into an everlasting existence with their hearts hardened against God.
- 7.4. Was his knowledge perfect? Was he depending on Christ?
- 7.4.1. Calvin, dealing with faith and speaking of Naaman and others, says: "I ... confess that their faith was in some part implicit, not only with respect to the person of Christ, but also with respect to the power and office enjoined upon him by the Father. In the meantime, it is certain that they were instructed in principles such as might give them some taste, however small, of Christ."²⁵³
- 7.4.2. Nebuchadnezzar's knowledge could have been more complete than we realize. His understanding of the coming Messiah may have been richer than Adam's, Abel's or Noah's, and possibly even than Abraham's (Jn 8.56).
- 7.4.3. In the last year of his life, after his being humbled as a wild beast, he may have turned to Daniel and asked him to enlighten him about the true God, righteousness, judgement and salvation.
- 7.4.4. He would not have known many specifics about Christ. But neither would Daniel (or the Jews as a whole) have had some specific information at that time. More would be revealed to Daniel later in his life (Daniel 7-12).
- 7.4.4.1. There was a general knowledge in the AME of the coming of a Jewish Messiah.
- 7.4.4.1.1. For example the Persian Magi were aware of Baalam's prophecy (Num 24.17; Mt 2.1, 7, 16).
- 7.4.4.2. Daniel could have made known to Nebuchadnezzar the essence of the Gospel message from the Scriptures that were available at that point (e.g., Isaiah).
- 7.4.4.3. Daniel could have told Nebuchadnezzar of man's need for substitutionary atonement as displayed through animal sacrifices, and would have told him that the expected Messiah was going to come (Gen 3.15; Is 9.1-7; Jer 23.5, 6).
- 7.4.4.4. His vision of the statue (chapter 2) showed him that a king from God was to come who would be over the kingdoms of this world.
8. Why did God reveal to Nebuchadnezzar what he was going to do, and then carry it out?
- 8.1. God wished Nebuchadnezzar to know that he is the only true God and that all kings and their dominions are subject to him (Dan 2.21).
- 8.2. God wanted there to be no doubt left in Nebuchadnezzar's mind about God's true nature. By revealing explicitly what was going to happen, Nebuchadnezzar could not claim that events were the result of mere chance or fortune.
- 8.3. God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to come to saving faith so that God could be glorified in his sovereignty and salvation.
- 8.4. God planned to use the once proud king as an evangelist for his cause and kingdom.
- 8.4.1. God takes the most unlikely subjects of Satan's kingdom and makes them children of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 8.4.2. He turned the king of Nineveh into an evangelist and preacher of righteousness (Jonah 3.7-9).
- 8.4.3. He took the venomous Paul and turned him into the great apostle.
- 8.5. God wanted to make it clear to all mankind that his grace is without bounds and that the salvation he offers is not dependent on birth, family-tribe, religious persuasion, or works; but on his mercy (Eph 2.8-10).
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

²⁵³ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), book 3.2.32, p. 580.

- 9.1. *Hardness* – We have seen in the example of Nebuchadnezzar that it took three heavy-duty lessons to bring him to repentance (the vision of the statue and its interpretation by Daniel, the witness of the four men in the brick kiln on the plain of Dura, and his own insanity).
- 9.1.1. All men are warned by the example of Nebuchadnezzar against being so hard-hearted so as to require the harsh chastisement that was necessary to bring Nebuchadnezzar to repentance.
- 9.1.2. God provided three lessons to Nebuchadnezzar as a great exemplar of his dealings with men.
- 9.1.2.1. He may not be as patient with other men and he may not lead them to saving faith. For example, he meted out ten plagues on Pharaoh who hardened his heart more and more after each plague.
- 9.1.2.2. We should not expect God to give three lessons to every man to bring him to salvation. If men won't believe from the example and proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar, they won't believe even if they had a miracle performed for them (Lk 16.31).
- 9.1.3. We should not be surprised if God has to chastise us, if we are his people, when we are disobedient. He disciplines those whom he loves and brings into his family (Heb 12.7).
- 9.2. *Health* – God has absolute authority over his creatures, including the provision of their health and wellbeing (Mt 6.25-34).
- 9.2.1. God removed Nebuchadnezzar's reason and restored it in his time. During the duration of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity God watched over him and provided for his physical needs.
- 9.2.2. Health (physical and mental) are gifts from God.
- 9.2.3. While we have health we should use it at every opportunity to praise God, not to indulge in the ways of the world or the passions of the flesh.
- 9.2.4. Give thanks to God for his mercy in providing you with physical health and mental abilities.
- 9.3. *Honour* – We are taught by the example of Nebuchadnezzar that God's sovereignty is to be honoured.
- 9.3.1. Just as Nebuchadnezzar worshiped and confessed God to be the only God—the Most High God—so we are to make his glory and honour our sincere objective.
- 9.3.2. We are to honour God's sovereignty by confessing that he does all things according to his own counsel and will (Ps 115.3); and that all that he does is just and good.
- 9.3.3. We must admit that even though we cannot see the whole picture of God's great painting of redemption we must trust him. It will be a magnificent masterpiece (Gen 1.31; Rev 4.11). We must never say of God's painting that there is a smudge here or too much black there. We must wait and see how everything fits together and then we can marvel at what he has accomplished (Rom 8.28).
- 9.3.4. At times we may not understand the processes God chooses to use, but we must trust him and believe that the product will be absolutely right and glorious.
- 9.4. *Humility* – Nebuchadnezzar was taught a lesson in humility.
- 9.4.1. We do not have to be the king of a great empire to need a lesson in humility.
- 9.4.2. Since God is the Sovereign, and we are his creatures, we must be humble before him.
- 9.4.3. All humans, by nature, are proud creatures who need to be humbled (Is 66.2; Dan 4.22; Mic 6.8; Lk 14.11; 1 Pt 5.6; James 4.10).
- 9.4.4. In particular, leaders (in government and the Church) must heed Nebuchadnezzar's warning and be humble. They are praised by men and have a tendency to let this praise swell their egos. They need to be especially careful to hold in check their natural, sinful, pride and continually remind themselves that they are mere humans who have been granted responsibility to act and the gifts to serve only at God's will.
- 9.5. *Heaven* – Heaven is a prominent theme in the chapter.
- 9.5.1. 'Heaven' appears 15 times in this chapter (using the ESV). In the rest of the book of

Daniel the term appears 18 times (using the ESV). So almost half of all the occurrence are in this one chapter.

9.5.2. There must be a reason for such a frequent use of the word ‘heaven’.

9.5.3. It is likely that these numerous references to Heaven are an acknowledgement on the part of Nebuchadnezzar that God reigns above the entire creation.

9.5.3.1. God has established his throne in Heaven (Ps 103.19).

9.5.3.2. God is transcendent—the infinite, eternal, omnipotent God (Gen 49.25).

9.5.3.3. God’s presence in Heaven differentiates him from idols (Ps 115.2-4). God’s being in Heaven makes him an uncreated God. The other gods are created by men.

9.5.3.4. God is the Creator (Is 45.12, 18).

9.5.3.5. God is Judge (1 Sam 2.10; 2 Chron 6.23; Rev 19.11).

9.5.4. This is the primary message that the world needs to hear. God is in Heaven, let the whole earth be subject to him!

Drunks Tamed (Dan 5.1-31)

Sacrilege (Dan 5.1-4)

1. Why did Belshazzar hold a great feast?

1.1. The feast may have been associated with an annual religious festival, in honour of one (or some) of their idols, it may have been a party to commemorate Belshazzar turning fifteen or sixteen (see the next section for the calculation of his age).

1.1.1. The fact that he held a feast is pointed out because it is not an ordinary occurrence.

1.1.2. He may have been constrained to hold this feast by virtue of his office (nominal head of the state religion) or position (the person whose birthday was being celebrated) and his obligations at the feast. However, Belshazzar may have been a ‘playboy’ and liked having his young cronies around him.

1.1.3. We will consider the historical context and events occurring around him below.

However, we can note that Cyrus’ armies (from the empire of the Medes and Persians) were besieging the city at the very time the feast was being held.

1.1.3.1. Belshazzar considered his city secure from assault because of its massive walls and is reported to have had supplies for many years stored in the city. In addition, the Euphrates River ran through the city (under part of the walls) from north to south, so the residents had a supply of water.

1.1.3.2. Holding the banquet may have been a message to his lords that they ‘had nothing to fear but fear itself’ and to encourage them by indicating that no disaster would overtake them (Amos 9.10). How wrong he was!

1.1.3.3. He may have been snubbing his nose at Cyrus and saying through the banquet that he felt secure with no serious concern for his future.

1.2. Who was present at the feast?

1.2.1. A thousand (likely a round number) of his lords.

1.2.1.1. Archaeologists have excavated a large hall in Babylon ~55 feet wide and ~165 feet long. Such a room would have been sufficient to accommodate a feast with a thousand guests.

1.2.1.2. The walls in the remnants of the hall, discovered and excavated by Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894), have a layer of coarse painted plaster, as in account.

1.2.2. His wives and concubines (2, 3). At the age of fifteen (or sixteen) he already had more than one wife!

1.2.3. We are probably told this so that we know that there were many witnesses to the events of that evening.

1.3. Why are we told that he drank wine before the nobles?

1.3.1. Wine would have been served at every meal. There would seem to be nothing special

- about his drinking wine at this time.
- 1.3.2. We are told this, likely, because he and his nobles were holding a drinking bout or contest (Is 5.22)
 - 1.3.3. He was filled with the fruit of the vine, rather than the Fruit of the Vine (Eph 5.18). When he should have been proclaiming a fast, he was holding a feast.
 - 1.3.4. Men, when they feel secure in their temporal estate, often indulge in the sensual without knowing how close approaching disaster is (Lk 12.16-20).
 - 1.4. When did he hold this feast?
 - 1.4.1. Verse 31 gives us a time marker—it was at the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians.
 - 1.4.2. The historian Xenophon says that Cyrus had been besieging Babylon with his army and knew of this feast. Cyrus presumed that the people would be off their guard due to the wine, and deep in sleep. So, he decided to attack the city that night.²⁵⁴
 - 1.4.3. According to most historians reckoning, the year was 539 BC (although Leupold says 538 BC) when Babylon was captured by Cyrus.
 2. Who was Belshazzar?
 - 2.1. Belshazzar was a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. The queen refers to Nebuchadnezzar as his father (11).
 - 2.1.1. Until the mid-19th century writers struggled with the identity of Belshazzar.
 - 2.1.1.1. There was no record of him in the ancient histories, discovered to that point. For example, Berosus, the Hellenistic-era Babylonian priest and historian, did not mention a Belshazzar in his Babylonian dynastic account.
 - 2.1.1.2. Many liberal commentators concluded that Daniel 5.1-31 was mythological and some conservative commentators tried to position Belshazzar, with a different name (Evil Merodach) as the immediate son of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 2.1.1.3. The discovery, in 1881, of the Nabonidus Cylinders (one in the British Museum, the other in Berlin), in the ruins of the Temple of Shamash at Sippar, identified Belshazzar as the eldest son of Nabonidus.²⁵⁵
 - 2.1.2. After Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 BC, his son Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach; 2 Ki 25.27; Jer 52.31) succeeded him. Amel-Marduk was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar (Nergal-sharezer; Jer 39.3, 13), reigned for four years (559-555 BC) and was succeeded by his young son, Labashi-Marduk, who was king for, at most, a few months.
 - 2.1.3. Nabonidus appears to have headed a conspiracy that overthrew the young king (555 BC) and then married his mother (Nitocris), the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom was born Belshazzar. So, Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, through his daughter.²⁵⁶
 - 2.1.4. In 552 BC²⁵⁷, Nabonidus left Babylon. After conquering Edom he went to live at Tayma, a rich oasis city in Arabia. Nabonidus' mother was the high-priestess of the moon god at Haran. It appears that she had a strong influence on him and, after intrigue, murder, and wars, he had a religious awakening. He became involved with restoring the temple of the moon god Sin. Some suggest that his residence in Tayma may have been due to a (physical or mental) illness.²⁵⁸ He may have had his religious awakening because he was approaching death)

²⁵⁴ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia – The Education of Cyrus*, book 7, chapter 5, paragraph 21. www.gutenberg.org/files/2085/2085-h/2085-h.htm

²⁵⁵ www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/c/cylinder_of_nabonidus.aspx
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinder_of_Nabonidus

²⁵⁶ An alternative view is that Belshazzar was already mature enough to be an officer under Neriglissar. Assuming that he was thirty in 560 BC, he would have been about fifty years old when Babylon fell in 539 BC.

²⁵⁷ If the 'third year' in the *Verse Account*, refers to the third year of his reign; although some place his departure in 549 BC.

²⁵⁸ www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus/l/babylon03.html

- 2.1.4.1. The *Verse Account of Nabonidus* states: “After he had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit, had built this abomination, a work of unholiness—when the third year was about to begin—he entrusted the army [?] to his oldest son, his first born, the troops in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him, and, himself, he started out for a long journey. The military forces of Akkad marching with him, he turned to Temâ deep in the west.”²⁵⁹
- 2.1.5. He left Belshazzar, who would have been only about three²⁶⁰ years old at the time, as coregent of the empire; presumably under a regent trustee—possibly his mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2.1.6. Belshazzar, apparently, was not actually crowned king, and would have been only about 15 (or sixteen) years old on the night of the events recorded in this chapter. As we noted above, it is possible that the feast was held that day to commemorate his birthday.
- 2.1.7. This coregency explains why Belshazzar was called king (1) and why he could only offer the third-highest position (7) in the kingdom, rather than the second highest (Gen 41.43; Est 5.3; Est 7.2; Mk 6.23).
- 2.2. How then was Belshazzar the ‘son’ of Nebuchadnezzar, or Nebuchadnezzar the ‘father’ of Belshazzar?
 - 2.2.1. There is no word in Aramaic for ‘grandfather’ or ‘grandson’.
 - 2.2.2. The words ‘father’ and ‘son’ were used to extend across generations.
 - 2.2.3. The Aramaic word translated ‘father’ (2, 11, 13, 18) can be used of ‘ancestor’, ‘predecessor’, ‘forefather’, or ‘grandfather’/‘grandson’ (2 Sam 9.8).
 - 2.2.4. We find a similar usage in ‘Jesus is *son* of David’ (Lk 18.38) or David as the father of Jesus (Lk 1.32), or in the Jews calling Abraham their father (Jn 8.53), and Mephibosheth being called the *son* of Saul (2 Sam 19.24; compare, 2 Sam 4.4).
- 2.3. Belshazzar means ‘Bel guard the king’ or ‘Bel has protected the king’.
 - 2.3.1. Nabonidus was in charge of the military, and Belshazzar was in charge of the administration of the empire.
- 2.4. Why is there a gap (of approximately twenty years, 559-539) in the account, between chapters 4 and 5, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation about his humbling experience among the animals to the last day of Belshazzar?
 - 2.4.1. There was an even longer gap (probably 30-35 years) between chapters 3 and 4.
 - 2.4.2. Daniel is not a biographical (or autobiographical) account, nor is it a historical chronicle. It is not intended to provide us with a continuous record of events from the lives of the Babylonian kings or of the lives of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity.
 - 2.4.3. The purpose of Daniel, when it was written, was to encourage the Jews living in captivity and to remind them that God is sovereign over all nations (present and future).
- 3. During the feast what did Belshazzar and his party do?
 - 3.1. They drank wine (as noted above).
 - 3.2. He called for the vessels (articles) from the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem to be brought into the feast.
 - 3.2.1. Where were the articles when he called for them?
 - 3.2.1.1. In the treasury of the temple of Nebuchadnezzar’s god (Dan 1.2).
 - 3.2.2. Which vessels were these?
 - 3.2.2.1. Ezra 1.9-11 lists the articles that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3.3. They drank wine from the vessels.
 - 3.3.1. The repetition of the words of the king’s command (2) in the retelling of its fulfillment (3) indicates that his command was carried out exactly as he had command.
 - 3.3.2. In Ezra’s list, drinking cups are not specifically mentioned. Belshazzar and his 1,000

²⁵⁹ www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus_1/babylon03.html

²⁶⁰ Or 5 years old, or 33-35 years old, depending on how one interprets the history of this period.

guests may have drunk out of the dishes and bowls. This could indicate that they were drinking large quantities of wine.

3.3.3. They were probably participating in a wild orgy.

3.3.3.1. The celebrations of cult of Dionysus the god of wine and fertility, which had its roots in Minoan Crete, predate Belshazzar by at least a thousand years. It is possible that the debauchery of that cult (or similar) was being practiced that night in 539 BC through the veneration of Tammuz (Ezk 8.14) a Babylonian equivalent of Dionysus.

3.3.3.2. If so, their drinking would have been accompanied by sensual dancing that became noisy and orgiastic, and possibly by extreme sexual improprieties.

3.3.3.3. Recall, this is likely happening when the king is just fifteen (or turning sixteen) years old.

3.3.3.4. His advisors should have counselled him against this behaviour. The general proverbial wisdom of the ME advised kings to avoid excess, particularly with alcohol (Prov 31.4-7; Eccl 10.16-17) and drunkenness in kings was considered to be a curse (Jer 13.13).

3.4. Why did Belshazzar make such a decree and commit this sacrilege?

3.4.1. He may have already been drunk when he called for the vessels.

3.4.1.1. This could have been the situation, particularly if we refer to an alternate translation of, “when he tasted the wine” which is, “when the wine was beginning to taste good.” In other words the wine was having its effect.

3.4.1.2. Under the influence of alcohol he committed sacrilege and other debased sins.

3.4.1.3. When wine, or any alcohol, is consumed to excess it becomes a mocker (Prov 20.1) and causes its drinkers to do things they might be ashamed to do when sober.

3.4.1.4. Did the effect of the alcohol remove his culpability and accountability?

3.4.1.4.1. His kingdom and life were demanded of him that very night. This drunken bash filled to the brim the measure of Babylon’s iniquity and prepared it for destruction.

3.4.1.4.2. The same applies to all the later ‘Babylons’ of the earth (Rev 18.3, 5); they will eventually be called to account and judged by God.

3.4.1.4.3. Losing sobriety and control does not provide an excuse for sin. Contrary to what some modern legislatures, judges, and courts might conclude (for example, excusing the *murder* of a pedestrian caused by a drunk driver and calling it something less, such as manslaughter), God holds drunks doubly accountable—once for their drunkenness and twice for the sins they commit while being drunk.

3.4.2. He wished to demonstrate his sovereignty over the Jews—God’s people—by exhibiting control over the holy vessels of their God.

3.4.2.1. The Jews cared greatly for the holy vessels (Jer 27.16, 18; Ezra 1.7).

3.4.2.2. Belshazzar’s committing sacrilege with the vessels from the Temple was a way of saying he had sovereignty over the Jews. It was similar to what a school bully does when he rips the cover off one student’s textbook or puts dog feces on another’s lunch plate.

3.4.2.3. His actions were similar to Antiochus Epiphanes’ sacking Jerusalem, persecuting the Jews, and setting up a pig sacrifice in the second Temple in 167 BC.

3.4.2.4. His actions were based on an unadulterated, maliciousness against the people of God.

3.4.3. He wanted to blaspheme the true God.

3.4.3.1. Belshazzar’s father, Nabonidus, married Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter and would have known of the way God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar and of Nebuchadnezzar’s confession. Yet Belshazzar was committed to honouring the

- gods of Babylon (4). It may be that Belshazzar wanted to out-do his father, who ignored Jehovah/Yahweh, by despising God.
- 3.4.3.2. Holding the banquet while hostile armies surrounded the city showed Belshazzar's contempt for men. He went further and showed his contempt for God by using God's holy vessels in his defiled debauch. He was in effect saying, "I defy men and God to challenge me!" This is like the posturing of Goliath (1 Sam 17.8-10).
 - 3.4.3.3. Belshazzar deliberately chose to commit the most wicked act he could imagine—delighting in blaspheming the true God, that he knew existed and holds men accountable. This is similar to how Dawkins acts. It is not enough for him to say that he is an atheist and doesn't believe in any god, he wants to blaspheme the true God, as he does in *The God Delusion*, where he calls the God he doesn't believe in a "pernicious delusion" and says he is "a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."
 - 3.4.3.4. It isn't enough for men to ignore God, they want to do evil and drag others into their evil (Rom 1.32).
 - 3.4.4. He was under God's providential governance.
 - 3.4.4.1. The downfall of Babylonia had been foreseen (Dan 2.39) and Belshazzar's action was the trigger to bring it about.
 - 3.4.4.2. The time for his demise had come and God led him, wilfully, to bring about his own judgement (Mk 14.10, 11; Lu 22.22, 37; Acts 2.23).
 - 3.4.4.3. Calvin: "Here we must consider the Providence of God, in arranging the times of events, so that the impious, when the time of their destruction is come, cast themselves headlong of their own accord."²⁶¹
 - 3.5. They praised their false gods. (Hab 1.16)
 - 3.5.1. They mocked the true God with gods made of different physical materials.
 - 3.5.1.1. How many different materials are mentioned?
 - 3.5.1.1.1. Six.
 - 3.5.1.2. Could there be any significance to the listing of six materials?
 - 3.5.1.2.1. As the number of man, six may symbolically represent the vanities of man and the human world that is destined for destruction.
 - 3.5.2. They mocked the true God with their superstitious practices
 - 3.5.2.1. Even when men know better, they cling to their superstitions, for example: they claim that the alignment of planets controls events on earth, they knock on wood to draw out sacred powers, or they espouse Darwinian Evolution and claim that it creates new information.
 - 3.5.3. They mocked the true God by giving his glory to images created by their own hands.
 - 3.5.3.1. They likely poured out wine oblations before carved and cast images of their demon-deities.
 - 3.5.3.2. They likely also made vows of allegiance to their idiotic idols.
 - 3.5.3.3. They probably also sang songs or read odes in praise of their graven gods.
 - 3.5.4. The absurdity of what they did is obvious to us. But it is not obvious to men without the saving grace of God. Men become fools without this grace, degrade themselves, and commit every kind of religious blasphemy and immoral practice (Rom 1.21-31).
 - 4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 4.1. The lessons from this section fall within a single class—the desperate wickedness of the heart of men who are without the saving grace of God (Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9).
 - 4.2. *Deadly Parody* – Mankind by nature, since the Fall, continually ridicules God.

²⁶¹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.i.html
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- 4.2.1. In the Garden of Eden, Satan began the ridicule by asking “Did God really say?” by saying, “Come on now, you can’t really believe that God said X,” he was declaring God’s opinion and will to be irrelevant for mankind.
- 4.2.2. Since that time, men have ridiculed God by ignoring his commands, declaring what he says in the Bible to be myths, claiming that his will, word, and ways cannot be normative for society, making jokes about him and his work of redemption, and blatantly blaspheming his holy name.
- 4.2.3. Belshazzar’s drunken party led to a deadly parody of God, but he did nothing different, in principle, from what all mankind has been doing for 6,000 years.
 - 4.2.3.1. What are some current examples of men participating in this deadly parody of ridiculing God?
 - 4.2.3.2. We have already considered Richard Dawkins’ blasphemous comments (above). Consider, instead, comments by Ricky Gervais when he hosted the Golden Globe Awards in 2011. He concluded his string of merciless insults with a series of ‘thank yous’ and end with “And thank you to God for making me an atheist.”²⁶²
 - 4.2.3.3. ACLU: Declaring war against any display of the Ten Commandments on government property, claiming that governments should be religiously neutral. They say, ‘The issue is not ‘religion in the public square’—as the rhetoric misleadingly suggests—but whether the government should be making decisions about whose sacred texts and symbols should be placed on government property and whose should be rejected.’²⁶³ Of course, they ignore key facts:
 - 4.2.3.3.1. God requires the civil magistrate to administer his laws and to be subject to him (Ps 2.1-12; Rom 13.1-7).
 - 4.2.3.3.2. Religious neutrality is an impossibility. If Christianity is not supported by the civil magistrate then it will be Islam or some other religion in its place.
 - 4.2.3.3.3. Secular Humanism is a religion that is being actively endorsed by the ACLU as a replacement for Christianity.
 - 4.2.3.4. Metropolitan United Church—Toronto: “Our work and worship take many forms throughout the year, including two public worship services every Sunday morning, monthly Taizé [monastic order in Taizé, Burgundy] services (first Wednesday), spirituality groups, workshop events, neighbourhood festival themes, Pride Day celebrations, liturgical dance, Wednesday noon hour worship, and walking the Labyrinth: a healing and restorative tool that crosses the boundaries of many spiritual traditions.”²⁶⁴
 - 4.2.3.5. Rational Response Squad: an organization founded by professed atheists came up with the Blasphemy Challenge in which they ask people to “make videos of themselves, denying, denouncing or blaspheming the Holy Spirit” and post the videos on YouTube. As of June 14th, 2009, more than 800 people had taken up the challenge.²⁶⁵
- 4.3. *Demon Possessed* – Mankind’s tendency is to make, and praise, idols.
 - 4.3.1. Notice that Paul says that the Thessalonians had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1.9). The implication is that the two phenomena (worship of God and worship of idols) are opposites that exist independently and should exist mutually exclusively.
 - 4.3.2. When men turn from the living and true God they *must* turn to idols. There is no neutral territory between the worship of God and the service of idols.

²⁶² www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ng99hnxQmol

²⁶³ www.aclu.org/religion/public/index.html

²⁶⁴ www.metunited.org/node/9

²⁶⁵ John Berman, Ethan Nelson and Karson Yiu, "Reject God: Take the Blasphemy Challenge" ABC News, 2009-06-14; a.abcnews.com/m/screen?id=2833103&pid=574

- 4.3.3. Contrary to what modern ‘scientific rationalists’ think, they themselves are not above religion and immune from it. They have substituted self-worship, the worship of an idea (materialism), and worship of nature or the environment for worship of the true God.
- 4.3.4. We considered the pervasive idolatry that afflicts all mankind in the summary lessons for 3.1-7.
 - 4.3.4.1. Idolatry can take many forms, since anything (people, objects, ideas) to which we offer adoration or reverence other than to God.
 - 4.3.4.2. If God is not our primary focus and first priority (Mt 6.33), then anything that is put in his place is an idol.
 - 4.3.4.3. Idolatry is pervasive throughout the human race, throughout history. It is a pernicious evil that pervades all of man’s thinking and practice.
 - 4.3.4.4. Thus, the NT writers warn us to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10.14; 1 Jn 5.21).
- 4.4. *Desired Partying* – Mankind wants pleasure for a moment rather than joy in an everlasting existence.
 - 4.4.1. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde, epitomizes man’s desire to participate in debauched parties. In the novel, Dorian Gray becomes enthralled by a friend’s worldview espousing hedonism. His friend suggests that the only things worth pursuing in life are beauty and the fulfillment of the senses. Realizing that his beauty will fade, Dorian sells his soul to have a portrait of him age rather than himself. As Dorian participates in a series of debauched acts, his portrait ages. The aging portrait reminds him of the effect each hedonic act has upon his soul.
 - 4.4.2. While Dorian Gray is fiction, it is an accurate account of the true state of man’s heart. Most people, without the saving grace of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, would sell their souls to have a lifetime of debauched pleasure that would not reap the consequences of their depravity.
 - 4.4.3. Even with the known risks of dissipation—sexual diseases, accelerated physical decay and bodily destruction from drugs and alcohol, and psychological problems—men still plunge in as often as they can.
 - 4.4.4. The youthful Belshazzar would have felt that he was among friends at any modern high school in North America where the students’ primary goal seems to be to obtain an invitation to the next wild party at the home of the coolest stud in the school. Christian young people need to heed the warnings in Scripture to be sober (1 Thess 5.6-8; 1 Pt 4.7; 1 Pt 5.8)
- 4.5. *Displaced Patrimony* – Mankind has a short memory and doesn’t learn the lessons of history.
 - 4.5.1. It had been about twenty-five years since Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar’s grandfather had testified about the power and sovereignty of God (Dan 4.37). Yet Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson had no interest in the profession of his grandfather.
 - 4.5.2. Biblical history has many examples of godly generations being followed by wicked ones:
 - 4.5.2.1. David’s grandson Rehoboam
 - 4.5.2.2. Uzziah and Jotham followed by wicked Ahaz
 - 4.5.2.3. Hezekiah followed by Manasseh and Amon
 - 4.5.2.4. Josiah followed by Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah
 - 4.5.3. We can easily find examples in family dynasties where the grandchildren of godly, or at least conscientious, grandparents depart from the ways of their grandparents (e.g., Rockefellers and Hiltons).
 - 4.5.4. It is a sad reality that family dynasties do not learn the lessons of their ancestors and displace their patrimony. In general, Christians, do not care to learn this lesson from history and ignore the importance of raising the next generation to serve and honour God (Dt 6.4-7; Dt 11.18, 19; Ps 78.1-4).
 - 4.5.5. This lesson teaches us the need for constant reformation in the lives of families, churches, countries, societies, and civilizations. Without this reformation, there is only decay and disaster ahead.

Stupefied (Dan 5.5-12)

1. What appeared suddenly in the banquet hall?
 - 1.1. A human-like hand with fingers.
 - 1.1.1. The hand may have been extending from a cloud or it may have faded into the air at the wrist.
 - 1.1.2. It was likely a manifestation of God, who took on a physical form—similar to when God speaks with an audible voice and causes air molecules to vibrate.
 - 1.1.3. It was the same hand that had written the two tables of the Ten Commandments (Ex 31.18; Ex 32.16; Ex 34.1; Dt 9.10). Then it wrote God’s demands, now it writes a man’s doom.
 - 1.2. Why did just a hand appear?
 - 1.2.1. The fingers/hand may have been larger than human-size and filled a major portion of the banquet hall.
 - 1.2.2. If so, those in attendance at the banquet would have been in awe thinking about how large the person would be behind the hand.
 - 1.2.3. Exposure of a small portion of the body tends to be tantalizing and lead people’s imaginations to think about what is hidden.
 - 1.2.4. The appearance of an angel (the size of a man or in giant configuration) or some genie-like appearance would have distracted from the message. The appearance of the hand was more than sufficient to grip their attention and propel it to the message being inscribed.
 - 1.3. What did the hand/fingers do?
 - 1.3.1. They wrote a text message (24). It wasn’t a full narrative communication; but rather four words.
 - 1.3.2. It was an abbreviated message of fifteen Aramaic characters carrying significant content.
 - 1.3.3. The characters may not have been separated into words, but rather they may have appeared as a string of characters: מנאנתקלפרסין
 - 1.3.4. Although it is also possible that they appeared in a 5X3 grid:

ס	ו	ת	מ	מ
י	פ	ק	נ	נ
נ	ר	ל	א	א

- 1.3.5. Al Wolters, a professor at Redeemer College, has suggested²⁶⁶ that the text on the wall was even more abbreviated, as nine characters: מנאנתקלפרס. The text may have appeared in a 3X3 grid:

פ	ת	מ
ר	ק	נ
ס	ל	א

- 1.3.6. We will consider the potential relevance of these words later, when we look at verse 24.
 - 1.3.7. The ability to write in the AME was largely confined to the scribal class, although some merchants were able to produce their own written records and communicate via writing

²⁶⁶ Al Wolters, *Wordplay and History in Daniel ch. 5*, a lecture presented at Living Waters from Ancient Springs, a conference in honour of Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on the occasion of his retirement – First Annual Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary Lecture Series, 2011-01-07.

- with peers without recourse to the use of scribes.²⁶⁷ Kings prided themselves in being educated and able to write.
- 1.3.8. The fact that the message came in the form of writing, and not as a voice from heaven (Dan 4.31) may be significant.
 - 1.3.8.1. God is putting the king in his place—either because he could not read and the appearance of the message which he could not read would have humbled him or, since he could read he was reminded that there was a royal authority greater than his.²⁶⁸
 - 1.4. Where did the message appear?
 - 1.4.1. The fingers wrote the text message on the plaster wall of the banquet hall in the palace. Why?
 - 1.4.1.1. The walls may have been covered with chronicles or accounts of exploits of the Babylonian kings, or praises to their gods, or pornographic art. If so, the writing appearing on top of the inscriptions could have been a symbol to reinforce the contents of the message—the ‘glorious’ kingdom of Babylon is overruled!
 - 1.4.1.2. God was sending a message even *where* the writing appeared.
 - 1.4.1.3. “The writing on the wall” is an idiomatic figure of speech that is well known²⁶⁹ even by people who have no idea that it comes from this account in Daniel in the Bible. The phrase is widely used in literature and is interpreted as a portent of doom, misfortune, or disaster. A query on Google with the text string (“writing on the wall”) produced 5,000,000 hits.
 - 1.4.2. The message was written near the main lampstand in the dining hall of the royal palace. Why?
 - 1.4.2.1. Probably so that both the hand and the message were clearly visible.
 2. What was the king’s reaction on seeing the hand?
 - 2.1. *White* – His face turned white. When someone is frightened or severely shocked, the body’s blood vessels expand. However, there isn’t enough blood in the body to fill all the expanded blood vessels, so blood runs out of the upper parts of the body due to gravity. As the head loses some of the blood it normally has, the skin in the face becomes white. Sometimes the draining blood causes a person to become weak, and faint (see point 3, below).
 - 2.2. *Worried* – He became frightened. He saw only the part of the hand that wrote the text, but did not see the entire person.
 - 2.2.1. The hand may have been very large. If so, the king may have assumed that behind the hand was a giant person. To think of meeting such a person would have been frightening.
 - 2.3. *Weak* – His knees knocked together and his legs gave way.
 - 2.3.1. The king had apparently jumped up when the hand appeared and started to write.
 - 2.3.2. He was unable to keep standing from fear, and possibly from a fainting spell.
 - 2.3.3. He may have fallen to the floor. If so, it is fitting that while he was unwilling to worship the true God, he was compelled to fall down when God’s message came to him.
 - 2.4. Why would he have been so frightened?
 - 2.4.1. It could have been a fear engendered by the possibility of meeting with a giant genie or angel.
 - 2.4.2. He did not understand the message, as he could not interpret it. So, it wasn’t the content of the message that frightened him.
 - 2.4.3. However, it was more likely that his fear arose from a guilty conscience.
 - 2.4.3.1. He knew, as with all men, that there is a true God and they are accountable to him (Rom 1.19-20).

²⁶⁷ Joshua Berman, *Created Equal* (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.110-114.

²⁶⁸ Donald Polaski, "Mene, Mene Tekel, Parsin: Writing and Resistance in Daniel ch. 5 and 6," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 123/4 (2004), 649-69.

²⁶⁹ "The Writing on the Wall," *Economist*, 2009-05-09, p. 35.

- 2.4.3.2. He knew that he was accountable before God for his debauched and degenerate life.
- 2.4.3.3. He likely concluded that God was calling him to account. He sensed that the time had come for him to face everlasting judgement.
- 3. What did the king do on seeing the inscription on the wall?
 - 3.1. He called for the wise men to interpret the writing.
 - 3.1.1. He called loudly, probably indicating his fear and commanding a sense of urgency.
 - 3.1.2. [We won't consider the roles of the wise men mentioned here as we already examined them when we looked at 2.1-6.]
 - 3.1.3. Even though he likely had a premonition that the writing was from the true God, he turned to the priests (enchanter, astrologers, and diviners) of pagan religions and not to God or to God's prophets.
 - 3.1.4. He called for men who were truly incompetent liars, when what he needed was truth-tellers.
 - 3.1.5. Note the parallel to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2.
 - 3.1.5.1. The lessons taught to Nebuchadnezzar, within living memory, had not been learned within the dynasty.
 - 3.1.5.2. The grandson ignored the painful lessons meted out on the grandfather.
 - 3.1.6. A repetition of this stupidity has to make us wonder how competent are the hordes of advisors that surround modern leaders such as the US President or Canadian Prime Minister.
 - 3.1.6.1. In spite of our thinking that we live in a non-superstitious age, every national leader who does not depend on God and his word, as revealed in Scripture, will be surrounded by many incompetents.
 - 3.1.6.2. The economists, scientists, educators, psychologists, sociologists, lawyers, and military strategists in the world leaders' cabinets are to varying degrees (depending on the extent to which they have, themselves, rejected the true God) going to be as useless as the ancient Babylonian 'wise men'.
 - 3.1.6.3. It is not just countries such as Zimbabwe, Iraq, and Cuba that have incompetent advisors. The incompetence afflicts all nations that desert God.
 - 3.1.6.4. Some examples of bad counsel include:
 - 4.5.5.1.1. Claims of manmade global warming, carbon footprints and cap-and-trade provisions
 - 4.5.5.1.2. Government funding and management of health care
 - 4.5.5.1.3. Giving house loans to people who cannot afford to make the payments
 - 4.5.5.1.4. Taxing productive workers heavily and transferring wealth to the non-productive
 - 4.5.5.1.5. Deficit spending on the supposition that governments can create jobs
 - 4.5.5.1.6. Defending abortion as beneficial to women
 - 4.5.5.1.7. Endorsing homosexual 'marriage' and policies that further their agendas
 - 4.5.5.1.8. Undermining free trade and implementing prohibitive tariffs
 - 4.5.5.1.9. Lowering standards in the name of racial or gender equity
 - 4.5.5.1.10. Subsidizing high-cost union manufacturing jobs, as in the auto sector
 - 4.5.5.1.11. Pretending that Islam is a religion of peace and that détente with countries such as Iran is possible.
 - 3.1.6.5. Just as Belshazzar didn't learn the lessons of his grandfather, so each generation today does not learn lessons from former generations. For example, Obama didn't learn the lessons of FDR's nationalization debacles. Instead, he prided himself in following in FDR's footsteps.
 - 3.1.6.6. It is only because of God's general grace that he permits any degree of common

sense or rationality to prevail in the governments of this earth.

3.1.6.7. We need to pray for national leaders; in particular, that they would seek advice from ‘Daniels’ in their governments and stop listening to the foolish sycophants that surround them.

3.2. He promised great rewards to anyone who was able to provide an interpretation of the writing.

3.2.1. *Prestige* – He would be clothed with purple.

3.2.1.1. Purple garments were expensive because the dye used to colour them came from a gland in a medium-sized (4-10cm) mollusc, the Murex snail.

3.2.1.1.1. Each mollusc produced a drop of dye and it required about 8,000²⁷⁰ snails to extract one gram of pure dye.

3.2.1.1.2. Credit for first extracting purple goes to the Tyrians (i.e., from Tyre)

3.2.1.1.3. Myth says that the dog of Herakles (Hercules) chewed on one of the snails and stained his mouth purple.²⁷¹ A nymph liked the colour and demanded that Hercules dye a robe for her or she would not love him. Other legends say that Hercules gave the robe to King Phoenix of Tyre. Phoenix proclaimed that all kings of Phoenicia should from then on wear purple as the symbol of royalty. Still other legends place the discovery in ancient Crete.²⁷²

3.2.1.1.4. In Acts 16.11-15 we read of the conversion of Lydia, an apparently wealthy seller of purple, in Philippi. She put up the apostle Paul and his travelling companions in her home.

3.2.1.2. Being rare, the dye was expensive, and so was the cloth dyed purple.

3.2.1.2.1. Purple threads in garments and purple cloths were used in the ceremonial system of the OT (Ex 26.1; Ex 39.2, 24; Num 4.13).

3.2.1.2.2. Only the rich and powerful in society could afford to be clothed in purple garments.

3.2.1.2.3. Over time, purple became associated with royalty or near royalty (Est 8.15; Jer 10.9; Lk 16.19; John 19.2).

3.2.2. *Position* – He would be given a gold chain.

3.2.2.1. The gold chain could imply wealth or property.

3.2.2.2. However, it is probably as insignia of an office or position.

3.2.2.3. A chain of office can also be called a livery collar.

3.2.2.4. For example, mayors wear a chain of office when performing official duties.

3.2.2.5. Pharaoh gave Joseph similar symbols of authority after he gave the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams (Gen 41.42).

3.2.2.6. A well-known painting of Sir Thomas More, painted by Hans Holbein the Younger (1527), shows him wearing the Collar of Esses as Lord Chancellor, with the Tudor rose badge of Henry VIII.²⁷³

3.2.3. *Power* – He would be given royal authority.

3.2.3.1. His position would be more than an advisor, chancellor, or governor of a territory. He would be promoted to a royal position, third over all the empire.

3.2.3.2. Why was the reward to be *third* in the kingdom?

3.2.3.2.1. Since Nabonidus was king and Belshazzar, his son, was coregent, the highest office that could be conferred was that of the third highest ruler.

²⁷⁰ R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology* (Leiden and Boston : Brill Academic Publishers, 1956; reprint 1987), vol. 4, pg. 118; books.google.com/books?id=Zc43AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0

²⁷¹ Julius Pollux (2nd c AD) was from northern Egypt and taught rhetoric at Athens, in the Academy created by Emperor Commodus. He wrote the *Onomasticon*, a dictionary of Greek (Attic) words and phrases, arranged by subject-matter. In the *Onomasticon*, he reports the legend of the discovery of the purple dye. See for example, George Rawlinson, Henry Rawlinson, and John Wilkinson, *History of Herodotus* (London, 1880), Book 3, p 420;

books.google.com/books?id=bBkGAAAAQAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0 or

²⁷² J.M. Good, O. Gregory, and N Bosworth, *Pantologia. A new Cabinet Cyclopædia* (London, 1819), vol 11, SPA – TZE, Tyrian Purple; books.google.com/books?id=72vgv4yVQOAC&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0

²⁷³ www.umsl.edu/~schreyerk/index.html

- 3.2.3.2.2. We noted earlier that Nabonidus had left Babylon, apparently to devote himself to restoring the temple of the moon god Sin and to deal with a debilitating illness. He left Belshazzar as coregent of the empire.
- 3.2.3.2.3. Therefore, Belshazzar could not offer the second highest position in the kingdom, as others did (Gen 41.43; Est 5.3; Est 7.2; Mk 6.23).
- 3.2.4. Belshazzar was so desperate to obtain an answer to the riddle on the wall that he would have promised almost anything.
 - 3.2.4.1. He acted in a similar way to his grandfather (Dan 2.6) with respect to promising rewards, just as he had acted like his grandfather in calling for the wise men to solve his problem.
- 4. Why were the wise men unable to read and interpret the inscription?
 - 4.1. They likely were able to make out the script written by the finger on the wall. It was probably in Aramaic alphabetic characters. However:
 - 4.1.1. The sequence of characters may have been displayed in a form they were unfamiliar with (e.g., in columns, instead of in a row).
 - 4.1.2. The letters may have been written in cuneiform characters rather than Aramaic characters.²⁷⁴
 - 4.1.2.1. The writing may have been a series of scratches (|||+) on the wall made by the hand, which Daniel interpreted as numbers and then translated into weights. However, the Babylonian wise men should have been able to read cuneiform, but they may not have realized that it was cuneiform.
 - 4.1.2.2. The cuneiform symbols (|||+) can be read as 3½, as 62½, or as 121½, which may have a connection with the years given in Daniel's visions (Dan 7.25; Dan 9.25; Dan 12.7). However, this idea may be dangerously close to the application of the concepts of numerology.
 - 4.1.3. They may have been able to spell out the characters without being able to discern the words, let alone interpret the meaning of the words. It would be similar to a modern English speaker seeing a sequence of letters like the following: THCTNTHHT, which without context is difficult to interpret as: 'The Cat in the Hat'.
 - 4.1.4. The fear caused by the appearance of the hand may have nonplused them to such an extent that they could not think clearly. It would be like someone being so frightened that he cannot scream but can only gesture and gurgle.
 - 4.1.5. God may have engulfed them with a spirit of stupor, confusion, and darkness so that for all their trying they couldn't make out the words on that night, even if the words might have been readable under different circumstances.
 - 4.2. Even if they could have made out the individual words, they would have been unable to comprehend their meaning.
 - 4.2.1. The words are allegorical, like being part of a puzzle or riddle. Their meaning was indecipherable until explained.
 - 4.2.2. Once explained they seem so straightforward and clear that their explanation is 'obvious'.
 - 4.2.3. They are like Samson's riddle (Judges 14.12-14) that was too difficult for the wedding guests to discern without additional information.
 - 4.2.4. Consider this riddle as an illustration of how difficult it can be to find the meaning, but once the explanation is given the answer is obvious: "Mountains will crumble and temples will fall, and no man can survive its endless call. What is it?" Time.
 - 4.3. Why didn't the wise men attempt to fool Belshazzar with a made-up explanation?
 - 4.3.1. From their perspective, no one could have proved them wrong. Con artists often get away with their conniving by acting with assurance so that they appear believable. Just

²⁷⁴ David Instone Brewer, "MENE MENE TEQEL UPARSIN: Daniel 5:25 in Cuneiform," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2 (Nov. 1991) 310-316; 98.131.162.170/tyndul/library/TynBull_1991_42_2_08_Brewer_MeneMeneTekel_Dan5.pdf

after a company I worked for was taken over by a much larger company the internal financial overseers asked for information about a project I was managing. The account sales executive said something like, “We have a waiver and don’t have to provide the report to you. We completed, form B32 Legacy Account Reporting Waiver.” We never heard from the accounting folks again about the particular report they were originally looking for.

- 4.3.2. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t tell the wise men the content of his dream (chapter 2) so that he would know if they were telling the truth when they gave both the content and its interpretation. However, in this case, the writing was visible to all, so any wise man could have made up an explanation and probably gotten away with it.
- 4.3.3. This verse (8) can be translated “then all the king’s wise men *kept coming* in ...” [Leupold]. It may be that since the wise men were not all assembled at the same time, each was concerned that if he made up an explanation he might contradict something that someone else had said and be scorned by his peers.
- 4.3.4. Whatever the exact reason, God kept the wise men in a state of confusion so that they couldn’t even pretend to give an explanation. The pagans were silenced before the revelation from the true God.
- 4.4. Compare Genesis 11.6-7 with Daniel 4.5, what do you notice?
 - 4.4.1. One account speaks of the founding of Babel (Babylon), the other speaks of its fall.
 - 4.4.2. Both accounts include a confusion of language.
 - 4.4.3. Man’s pretensions to self-aggrandizement, in one case building a tower to challenge God, in the other promising prestige, position, and power are doomed to failure.²⁷⁵
 - 4.4.4. Human wisdom and plans have no substance when compared with God’s authoritative control over the dispositions of men. The Lord laughs at and scoffs at the foolishness of rebellious men (Ps 2.4).
5. What was the reaction of Belshazzar and his nobles to the failure of the wise men?
 - 5.1. *Panic* – On seeing the hand writing the inscription on the wall, the king had become alarmed (6). But, the fact that the wise men could not provide an interpretation of the inscription caused him to become *greatly* alarmed, or as the NIV translates it, “even more terrified”.
 - 5.2. *Paleness* – If he could become more pale than he already was, the compounded panic caused any remaining colour to drain away.
 - 5.2.1. Without a question, the king was afraid.
 - 5.2.2. We need to remember that Belshazzar was probably fifteen years old. To this point in his life he had probably been pampered and coddled. In spite of his posturing and proud strutting before his nobles at the debauched party that evening, he was barely a man and had had no experience handling extreme situations.
 - 5.3. *Perplexity* – His lords/nobles were probably as frightened as he was. However, the account speaks of their perplexity (or being baffled) rather than their fear.
 - 5.3.1. Undoubtedly, Belshazzar himself was also perplexed.
 - 5.3.2. Their inability of the wise men to provide an interpretation made the message more ominous and perplexing.
 - 5.3.3. Belshazzar knew that something very important was happening but he was aware of no means by which to obtain an explanation of the phenomenon or an interpretation of the test on the wall
 - 5.4. The reaction of Belshazzar and his nobles provides an analogy for how it will be at the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to bring about the final judgement of all men.
 - 5.4.1. All unbelievers, on seeing his return (Rev 1.17), will be filled with panic.
 - 5.4.2. All colour will drain from their faces and they will become weak-kneed.
 - 5.4.3. They will be perplexed not knowing what to do, how to avoid the wrath that is coming

²⁷⁵ M. Hilton, “Babel Reversed-Daniel chapter 5,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (1995), pp. 99-112.

upon them.

5.4.4. If the events that occurred on that night (calculated to be October 12, 539 BC) were harrowing for Belshazzar and his nobles, we can only begin to imagine the level of consternation that will fill the hearts of men when Christ appears to wrap up time and cleanse this sin-stained created order.

6. Who stepped in to provide wise counsel?

6.1. The queen. Who was this queen?

6.1.1. She was probably the Queen Mother, Nitocris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who was Belshazzar's mother. She had been married to Neriglissar. She became the wife of Nabonidus after he murdered Neriglissar's (and probably Nitocris' young son) who had assumed the throne in his father's place.

6.1.2. It is possible, alternatively, that she was the last wife/queen of Nebuchadnezzar and thus the grandmother of Belshazzar. This option is suggested by the apparent familiarity she had with both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel.

6.1.3. If this queen was Nitocris, she is reported by Herodotus to have been shrewd in avenging the death of her brother Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach) by inviting the conspirators to a dinner in an underground suite and drowning them with a diversion from the Euphrates.²⁷⁶

6.1.4. Her authority must have been significant (i.e., the mother of Belshazzar) since she came into the banquet uninvited and commanded attention and respect.

6.2. Why had she not been at the banquet?

6.2.1. She was apparently not present, and only came into the banquet hall on hearing the commotion (the loud voices of fear and concern) in the banquet hall.

6.2.2. Since she was not a wife or concubine of Belshazzar (Dan 5.2), she may not have been invited.

6.2.3. Alternatively, and more probably, she may have absented herself, being repulsed by the debauched behaviour of her son, who was treating his wives and concubines (his harem) as communal objects for the sexual pleasure of the men present at the banquet.

6.3. What was the advice she gave to Belshazzar?

6.3.1. *Calm Down* – don't panic!

6.3.1.1. She greeted the king with the traditional greeting of deference and respect.

6.3.1.1.1. We have already considered the use of this greeting (Dan 2.4; Dan 3.9; it is also used in Dan 6.6, 21) which appears to have originated in the Akkadian kingdom in the upper reaches of the Tigris over 1,700 years before Daniel's time.

6.3.1.1.2. It was likely used as a wish that the king's reputation be perpetuated.

6.3.1.1.3. It was likely nothing more than a formality when used by the queen. She probably had a fair degree of disdain and consternation at the behaviour of her son and his lords.

6.3.1.2. Her specific words were: "Not let thoughts of you alarm you or color of you not let it change."

6.3.1.3. She told Belshazzar to show a bit of fortitude.

6.3.1.4. In modern words, she probably said something like, "Act like a man! Don't let your concerns get the better of you, and stop this silly shaking!"

6.3.2. *Call Daniel* – get real help.

6.3.2.1. She didn't just rebuke her son for displaying such weakness, she went on and gave him advice on how to solve his dilemma.

6.3.2.2. Her advice was to call for Daniel who could provide an interpretation of the

²⁷⁶ Peter E Laurent, *The Nine Books of the History of Herodotus translated from the text by T. Gaisford* (Oxford, 1837), 2nd Edition, Vol 1, p. 152. books.google.com/books?id=DIIEAAAAQAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0

writing.

6.3.2.3. Where was Daniel at this time?

6.3.2.3.1. He may have been living in retirement. He would have been about 82²⁷⁷ years old at this point. As Belshazzar became older, Daniel may have had no interest in the court intrigues and vying for influence and power. He also knew from the prophecies (i.e., chapters 2, 7, and 8) that the time of the Babylonians was coming to an end.

6.3.2.3.1.1. He probably served through the various regime changes, through the reigns of the kings since Nebuchadnezzar (Amel-Marduk, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidus, Belshazzar).

6.3.2.3.1.2. He probably served until into the reign of Belshazzar, to at least the time when Belshazzar was 4 or 5 years old (Dan 8.2, 27) and he was about 70 years old.

6.3.2.3.2. Alternatively, it may be that there is nothing more significant in this reference than that Daniel wasn't present at the debauched party.

6.3.2.3.3. Even though the city of Babylon was under siege by Cyrus' armies, Daniel had not deserted the city. He was a man of faith and constancy to his dying breath. He likely believed that his place was to remain in the capital of the empire in the event that he could provide any influence that could help his people.

6.3.2.4. What does the queen's advice to call for Daniel say about Belshazzar's wise men?

6.3.2.4.1. They were fools.

6.3.2.4.2. They were unable to give advice because, ultimately, they were irrational, believing myths instead of God's truth.

6.3.2.5. What does the queen's advice tell us about God and Daniel?

6.3.2.5.1. In contrast, she had complete confidence that Daniel was wise and could provide an interpretation of the writing on the wall.

6.3.2.5.2. God so ordered events that Daniel was not left in obscurity. He was called back into service as the head of gold was being replaced by the body of silver.

6.3.2.5.3. God planned to use Daniel as a witness to his power in the next empire—that of Cyrus (as we will see when we consider chapter 6; see also 10.1).

6.3.2.5.4. Michael's words to Daniel (Dan 12.3) can be applied to Daniel—"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens."

6.3.2.5.5. God is in control of history, and he orders events for his glory.

7. How does the queen view Daniel?

7.1. She gives Daniel a positive *character reference*. She says that Daniel is:

7.1.1. *Spiritual* – Daniel displayed a spiritual (godly) character.

7.1.1.1. The spirit of the holy gods, or the Spirit of the Holy God was displayed through Daniel.

7.1.1.2. His excellent spirit (ESV; 12), or spiritual nature, was exhibited by his humble, holy, and heavenly ways before God and men. He was content to be a servant in service of a foreign king, he refused to compromise with the pagan materialism around him, and he looked toward heaven and his everlasting redemption.

7.1.1.3. He had been dedicated in his faithful service to Nebuchadnezzar.

²⁷⁷ See the notes on verse 13.

- 7.1.1.4. He was determined, with a zeal for the glory of God.
- 7.1.1.5. He was disciplined and devout and did not let duties or detractors deflect him from the worship of God (Dan 6.10).
- 7.1.2. *Sagacious* – Daniel brought light or insight into a dark situation. He was a perceptive and farsighted wise counsellor.
 - 7.1.2.1. His counsel was based on an understanding of God’s Law and God’s providential dealings with his people and the nations.
 - 7.1.2.2. When we considered 1.17-21 we noted that Daniel and his three friends stood above their peers because their training in the Babylonian school was tempered by their having received training as children of the Covenant. We saw, for example, that Daniel had a right understanding of creation, the origin of sin, the origin of the nations, God’s law (all from the Pentateuch), the ‘problem of evil’ (from Job), the meaning of life (from Ecclesiastes), God’s control of history (the histories as recorded by the chroniclers), God’s plans (from the prophet Isaiah, for example), and guidance for the spiritual and temporal life (from Psalms and Proverbs).
 - 7.1.2.3. Daniel had resources that the pagan world, to the extent it had deviated from available truth, could not conceive of. Today, vestiges of many of the Biblical principles are still part of Western culture and Christian moral principles and Biblically-based wise counsel may not seem so extraordinary. However, as the West falls back into irrational paganism, those who are well trained in the principles of the Bible are going to once again shine like Daniel did in his day.
- 7.1.3. *Smart* – Beside being wise because he based his thoughts and actions on the Scriptures, Daniel had God-given native intelligence. We noted at various points, when considering his character, that Daniel had exceptional understanding as a young man. He continued to show this throughout his life in his wise dealings with those in authority over him.
- 7.1.4. *Solver* – The Queen also attributed to Daniel the ability to solve problems (including interpreting dreams and explaining riddles).
 - 7.1.4.1. The translation “solve problems” appears to be based on an Aramaic idiom which means ‘untying knots’.
 - 7.1.4.2. The ability to solve riddles is a gift from God (Prov 1.2-7).
- 7.1.5. This list of attributes includes attributes which all true Christians have, to a lesser or greater extent.
 - 7.1.5.1. We must start with the key attribute—being spiritual—or the other attributes are merely based on human wisdom and they will fail.
 - 7.1.5.2. All Christians have access to the Bible and have a more complete set of Scriptures than what was available to Daniel. Christians therefore can be wiser than their contemporaries, to the extent that they understand and apply Biblical principles and are not blinded by the foolish, every changing opinions and views of the world.
 - 7.1.5.2.1. For example, we can know more about human behaviour than the most ‘learned’ humanist psychiatrists or psychologists because they reject the reality of the soul and original sin. They do not believe that many of man’s psychological problems are the result of a guilt because of their rebellion against God. They have no place in their models for repentance. Nor do they understand the dangers of pride and the need for humility, but instead they view building self-esteem as a key to solving personal problems.
 - 7.1.5.2.2. We can find examples in many other areas of human behaviour and relationships, in domains such as politics, economics, and sociology, and science.
 - 7.1.5.3. A NT example of the core qualifications that Daniel had can be found in the

qualifications for Elders (1 Tim 3.2-7; Titus 1.7-9). It is expected that there will be many men in a congregation from which to draw Elders, therefore these attributes should be common among Christians.

7.2. She gives Daniel a *commendation of relationship*.

7.2.1. Her father (or husband), Nebuchadnezzar, viewed Daniel highly.

7.2.1.1. Nebuchadnezzar was the king represented by the head of gold in the vision of the statue (chapter 2) and was considered to be the greatest king ever to have been raised up among men.

7.2.1.2. The implication of her statement is that any of the descendants, in the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar, who viewed Nebuchadnezzar positively should view Daniel the same way.

7.2.1.3. How does the queen demonstrate Nebuchadnezzar's respect for Daniel?

7.2.1.3.1. By reminding her son that his grandfather had made Daniel chief of the wise men.

7.2.1.3.2. Since a number of classes of wise men are listed, the implication is that Daniel was over them all—both in his authority and his abilities; although, as we noted, he would not have participated in their pagan rituals.

7.2.2. What do you notice about the queen's use of personal names?

7.2.2.1. She refers to Daniel by the name (Belteshazzar) given to him by Nebuchadnezzar. However, she also refers to him by his Hebrew name, Daniel.

7.2.2.2. She honours Daniel (a captive hostage or slave) by using his birth name, which we saw (when we considered chapter 1) means: "God has judged" or "God is my judge."

7.2.2.3. The fact that she referred to Daniel's birth name over 60 years after it was changed to Belteshazzar by Nebuchadnezzar, tells us that Daniel continued to use his own name.

7.2.2.3.1. This reminds us of Daniel's faithfulness to his God, to God's covenant people, and to his covenant upbringing,

7.2.2.3.2. Daniel was not ashamed of being associated with the true God and his people, and made a public stand for God through the use of his Hebrew name.

7.2.2.3.3. What could be an application of this principle today? Since personal names today have less significance than they did in Daniel's day, we could follow Daniel's example by using the term 'Lord's Day' to refer to Sunday. This would make an explicit statement of where we stand, and of our Christian principles.

7.2.2.4. The queen's use of the name 'Daniel' goes further than merely honouring Daniel because it also commends Daniel's relationship with the true God.

7.2.2.4.1. The queen implies, without necessarily realizing it, that Daniel is worthy of respect and a wise counsellor, because of his relationship with the true God.

8. Why had Daniel been 'forgotten'?

8.1. He was probably not part of Belshazzar's direct administrative, or cabinet, staff.

8.1.1. It is possible that Daniel had been pushed aside as Belshazzar became older. It was standard operating procedure for kings to select their own cabinets when they came to power, just as presidents and prime ministers do today.

8.1.2. However, it is probable that Daniel wasn't demoted or dismissed.

8.1.2.1. He may have retired from *active* service around the age of 80 (two years before this). From that point, he may have led a life of quiet study and reflection, waiting for the 70 years of captivity to come to an end (as prophesied by

Jeremiah 25.11; compare Daniel 9.1).

8.1.2.2. Alternatively, Daniel may have been appointed by Nabonidus as an ambassador to the Persians and was in Susa (Dan 8.2, 27) for a time. He may have returned to Babylon sometime after receiving his second vision (chapter 8), knowing of the pending end of the Babylonian Empire. If so, he may have been relatively unknown to Belshazzar.

8.2. Since Daniel was not present and active in the court setting, he was quickly forgotten. Why would he have been forgotten?

8.2.1. The kings that followed Nebuchadnezzar likely did not want to be reminded of, or think about, the humbling that Nebuchadnezzar had experienced. They preferred to put God and his chastisements out of mind.

8.2.1.1. Daniel may have been shunted aside by one of the kings who followed Nebuchadnezzar, into a less important role and may have been unknown to Belshazzar.

8.2.2. Men quickly harden themselves to truth. What are some examples?

8.2.2.1. The history of the kings of Judah show us that even when one king or generation feared the LORD, the next could easily be excessively evil.

8.2.2.2. Shem, the son of Noah, was living for 500 years after the Flood, to the time of Abraham (he overlapped Abraham by 150 years, and died only 25 years before Abraham died). He was likely living in Ur during that time, and was a witness to the Flood and carried through the Flood the earlier pre-Flood records. Yet his contemporaries ignored his presence and witness and invented myths such as the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

8.2.2.3. The Jews at the time of Jesus claimed that he was not from Bethlehem (Jn 7.52) and didn't want to check the facts.

8.2.2.4. Contemporary 'historians' create myths that are constantly perpetuated by popular-level books and the media, for example:

8.2.2.4.1. They call the Middle Ages the Dark Ages and pretend that the Church and monasteries kept the people in irrational ignorance, Islam preserved learning, and the Renaissance was the beginning of rationality.

8.2.2.4.2. They idolize Abraham Lincoln. He personally abhorred slavery but was elected on pledge of no interference with slavery where it already existed. He was a political and economic pragmatist who was hesitant to adopt an abolitionist policy. He even revoked the slave freedom declarations of General John Freemont and would have left slavery in place if it would have saved the Union. The Emancipation Proclamation was as much political expediency as it was principle.

8.2.2.4.3. They ignore the fact that most of the founders of modern science were believers in God (either the Christian definition or a deistic definition with an intelligent designer) and claim that science liberates people from religion.

8.2.2.5. Similarly, many people today ignore reality and invent myths, such as (a 'dirty dozen'):

8.2.2.5.1. Atheism is scientific and rational.

8.2.2.5.2. Matter and energy can spontaneously generate life and information.

8.2.2.5.3. All living species (including men and apes) had a common ancestor.

8.2.2.5.4. Resources are scarce and we are in grave danger from population growth.

8.2.2.5.5. Sexual licence and 'alternative lifestyles' are healthy, natural, and need to be protected as rights.

8.2.2.5.6. Global warming, if it exists, can be attributed mostly to anthropogenic

causes.

8.2.2.5.7. A foetus is not an independent living human being.

8.2.2.5.8. There is no correlation or causation between abortion and breast cancer or psychological complications (e.g., depression) from the procedure.

8.2.2.5.9. Gun registration will reduce crime committed with guns.

8.2.2.5.10. Islam is a religion of peace and does not oppress women.

8.2.2.5.11. More regulation and government administration (e.g., of healthcare) will lead to prosperity and better services.

8.2.2.5.12. Government ownership of the means of production will make people better off than private ownership.

8.2.3. Daniel was forgotten and ignored for the same reason that truth is ignored. Men would rather believe a lie than the truth, especially if it shields them from facing the reality of God and his demands on the world.

9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

9.1. *Witness* – God reveals himself and his will to all mankind. He has not left the world without a witness to himself (Rom 2.14-15; Heb 2.1-4).

9.1.1. God makes himself known to mankind through natural revelation (Ps 8.1; Rom 1.19-20); through his written word; and, at times, through special acts of revelation (Heb 1.1); and through his Son, the living Word (Heb 1.2). Even though men in their sin cannot rightly read and interpret God's word, nevertheless, it is visible and available to all.

9.1.2. Just as the word of God was visible to all in the banquet hall, but none could understand it without an interpreter, so it is with God's written word.

9.1.2.1. We need the true interpreter, the Holy Spirit (not a priest!), to help us make sense of God's Word to us. Without the illumination of the Spirit, most people think of the Bible as nothing more than a series of myths written by a wandering tribe of shepherders or by a disillusioned group of disciples of a dead rabbi.

9.1.3. Men today know, even while they suppress and deny the truth, that the 'writing is on the wall' and they will be called to account by God. They are without excuse (Rom 1.20).

9.2. *Worry* – Life lived without the true God is scary.

9.2.1. When Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall, he was shaken and paralyzed with fear.

9.2.2. Men, without belief in the true God, claim to be rational but are in fact superstitious. Men have to replace the true God with something because we are by nature religious beings.

9.2.3. Without God there cannot be a belief in a rational (cause-effect) universe. Myths, ghosts and magic become the basis of operation and thinking for all unbelievers. It is only by God's general grace, and the vestiges of a Christian ethos that still permeates Western civilization, and has been picked up in the East, that men function at all.

9.2.4. Jesus tells us not to worry (Mt 6.25-34). The basis for lack of worry is:

9.2.4.1. We know that God is in control of the universe.

9.2.4.2. Our lives are not ruled by capricious fates or pagan deities.

9.2.4.3. There are no ghosts and magic.

9.2.4.4. God loves us and has promised to care for us.

When we worry, we deny these truths.

9.3. *Wisdom* – The Bible gives us access to God's wisdom.

9.3.1. Just as Daniel was wiser than his contemporaries, so is any true believer who grounds his thinking on God's word and not on the worthless theories and opinions of men.

9.3.2. Men continue to reincarnate the failed ideas of Nebuchadnezzar's world dominating kingdom, and the pagan thinking of his religious establishment. Men will never learn, without being given new life from the Holy Spirit, that human schemes and wisdom are foolishness and will only fail (1 Cor 1.18-25; 1 Cor 3.19).

9.3.3. We have noted a number of times, through our study of this book, that God's wisdom which we find in the Bible provides us with a foundation to think correctly in *every* area

of life (personal, family, social, political, economic, scientific, etc.).

9.3.4. We should never be ashamed of being believers in Jesus. This belief has opened to us a world of true knowledge and wisdom that the world cannot comprehend.

Significance (Dan 5.13-28)

1. How did the king respond to the advice of the dowager queen? (13)
 - 1.1. He listened to the advice of his mother.
 - 1.1.1. It is possible that to this point he had been belligerent toward her and in wilful rebellion, especially with regard to the debauched party that was held on the evening in which the writing on the wall appeared.
 - 1.1.2. The fright he had experienced caused him to be sober and to reflect on wiser counsel.
 - 1.2. He called for Daniel and had him brought into the banqueting chamber.
 - 1.2.1. We noted that Daniel may have been retired, if such a concept existed in ancient Babylon.
 - 1.2.2. He was likely no longer in active service as a counsellor and the servants of the king would have had to go to Daniel's home to bring him in the middle of the night to appear before the king.
 - 1.2.3. Although Daniel was advanced in years, that he was 'brought in' probably does not mean he had to be carried in on a litter/sedan chair. Rather, it probably means that he was ushered into the king's presence.
 - 1.2.4. He was probably welcomed as a venerable wise man with authority and respect, not as a subject cowering before a tyrant.
 - 1.3. How old was Daniel at this time?
 - 1.3.1. Daniel had been taken captive from Jerusalem in 606 B.C. The year in which the writing appeared on the wall in Babylon was 539 (or 538) B.C
 - 1.3.2. If Daniel was 14²⁷⁸ in 606 BC, then he was around 82 years old.
2. What confessions did the king make? (15)
 - 2.1. The wise men were 'unwise men'. They had been brought in to provide an interpretation of the writing but had been unable to do so.
 - 2.2. A prophet of God had to be called to provide an answer to the dilemma.
 - 2.3. The wisdom of the world is foolishness when compared with the wisdom of God.
 - 2.4. Is this a general problem among government advisors? i.e., do all government advisors give bad advice because they are unwise?
 - 2.4.1. The immediate response might be that the wise men in this account were called into a situation that involved the supernatural (a direct communication from God) and that they could not have been expected to provide advice in such a situation. However, in other matters (e.g., about administration of law, construction of irrigation canals, setting of wheat prices, and execution of battle plans) their advice would have been sound.
 - 2.4.2. However, we can respond:
 - 2.4.2.1. The wise men should have known their limitations and advised the king to call for Daniel, as the Queen-mother did.
 - 2.4.2.2. The wise men's inability to provide good advice in this instance is indicative of a general problem—they based their thinking on a false religion filled with myths and superstitions.
 - 2.4.2.3. Advisors in governments today have only two ultimate, and opposite, worldviews on which to base their thinking:
 - 2.4.2.3.1. The Bible is the only foundation for understanding:
 - 2.4.2.3.1.1. Law and justice.
 - 2.4.2.3.1.2. Human nature.

²⁷⁸ See: *Daniel's Training – Selection* (Dan 1.3-7).

- 2.4.2.3.1.3. The problem of, and solution, to sin.
 - 2.4.2.3.1.4. How human social systems should function.
 - 2.4.2.3.2. Materialism reigns supreme—there is no God, man is product of chance, there is no ultimate morality, and there are no standards for good or equity.
 - 2.4.2.4. To the extent that government advisors in any administration ignore the Bible, to that extent they are fools and provide bad advice to those who govern. Of course, because of God's general grace, we do not see a total collapse of society and governance in every country where God's word is ignored.
 - 2.4.2.5. In addition, non-Christian advisors don't give good advice because they are easily influenced by other factors besides serving God faithfully, such as: concern about their careers, desire to make money, desire for recognition and power, fear of telling a ruler what he needs to hear rather than what he wants to hear.
 - 2.4.2.6. It is because Daniel was a man who feared God first and then served kings for God that he stood out above his peers.
 - 2.4.2.7. Real 'Daniels' are needed in every government administration for there to be the possibility of truly wise decisions made by government. We need to be constantly in prayer for our governments, for those who govern, and for those who are true Christians in government (appointed or elected) positions.
3. How did the king address Daniel? (13, 14, 16)
- 3.1. His address to Daniel shows a mixture of responses. As a tyrant, in the tradition of absolute monarchies, he did not expect to have to ask for assistance. He expected to ask his wise men for their opinions and then to make a final determination, not to be at a loss for an answer or opinion—this was a new experience for him. His superior attitude comes through in his address to Daniel, but so also does the fact that he has been humbled by having to call for Daniel.
 - 3.2. *Belligerent Doubt* – There is a belligerent doubt shown in his address—doubt about who Daniel is and about his ability to provide any assistance. How is this shown?
 - 3.2.1. The king *asked* Daniel if he was really the one about whom he has heard these reports of great things.
 - 3.2.1.1. The NIV (and NASB) translates part of verse 13 as a question: “Are you that Daniel ...?” instead of as an indicative as in the ESV, “You are that Daniel ...”
 - 3.2.1.2. The Septuagint also marks the statement as a question; however the inclusion of the question indicator (a ;) could be a later interpretive addition.
 - 3.2.1.3. Forming the statement as a question is a possible translation of the Aramaic which reads, “you that Daniel”.
 - 3.2.1.4. The verb ‘are’ has to be supplied and could be supplied before or after the ‘you’.
 - 3.2.1.5. Even if we don't accept the translation of the text in the form of a question, we can still hear the king's doubt expressed in his repeated statement “I have heard “ (14, 16), and in the ‘if’ (16).
 - 3.2.2. The king, even when pressed by fear and necessity has doubts that anyone not from his immediate associates is going to be able to provide an answer.
 - 3.2.3. A similar doubt could be expressed in modern terms:
 - 3.2.3.1. “You don't have a PhD in _____ [supply the specialized discipline, such as genetics, biology, biochemistry, palaeontology, astrophysics, etc.] so how can *you* doubt the abundance evidence that evolutionary processes created the panoply of life we see around us?”
 - 3.2.3.2. “You don't read Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, so how can you question a translation of Isaiah 7.14 which uses “young woman” instead of ‘virgin’?”
 - 3.2.4. Men, in general, behave the same way. Men are racially, ethnically, and culturally arrogant, doubting that anyone not from their own kin-group can be superior to them in

knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, or skill.

3.3. *Belittling Dismissal* – He tries to dismiss Daniel with comments intended to put him in his place. In what ways does he do this?

3.3.1. He refers to Daniel as an exile, implying that the nation from which Daniel was taken was weak and ineffective if it could not stand against Nebuchadnezzar. The inference is that Daniel, like his nation, was considered weak, if not a simpleton, by Belshazzar.

3.3.2. He makes specific reference (twice) to the national origin of Daniel—from Judah.

3.3.2.1. The queen did not refer to Daniel as being from Judah.

3.3.2.2. We are not told how Belshazzar knew that Daniel was from Judah.

3.3.2.2.1. It is possible that he inferred it from Daniel's name, and the fact that Daniel persisted in using his birth name, as evidenced by the queen's comment (12) about Nebuchadnezzar giving him a new name and yet calling him Daniel. We also infer things about people when we hear their names; for example, Mohamed Mawahib, Sanjay Krishna, Manjeet Singh, Dieter Khol, Aaron Goldstein, Sven Lindegren, etc.

3.3.2.2.2. He may have asked for more information about Daniel from of his wise men or his mother while he was waiting for Daniel to be summoned.

3.3.2.3. His reference to Judah appears to be intended as an insult against Judah; the people of Judah, the Jews; and by association the God of Judah, who presumably was unable to defend the inhabitants against Nebuchadnezzar's armies.

3.3.2.3.1. He probably was holding his nose with the thought of it having become necessary to ask a Jew for help.

3.3.2.3.2. His reaction would be similar to that of a Muslim today having to consult with a Christian on an important matter (e.g., for medical, financial, or technical advice).

3.3.3. He not only held Daniel, Judah, and the Jews in contempt, but also the only true God.

3.4. *Begrudging Deference* – In spite of his negative attitude toward Daniel Belshazzar does offer begrudging deference and respect for him.

3.4.1. What attributes of Daniel does he enumerate as being exhibited Daniel?

3.4.1.1. Spirit of the gods.

3.4.1.2. Light (NIV insight).

3.4.1.3. Understanding (NIV intelligence).

3.4.1.4. Excellence (NIV outstanding) wisdom.

3.4.1.5. Ability to give interpretations

3.4.1.6. Ability to solve difficult problems.

We reviewed the importance of these kinds of attributes when we studied the counsel of the queen, so will not consider them again at this time.

3.4.2. Belshazzar repeats essentially the same things reported about Daniel by the queen. What differences do you notice?

3.4.2.1. He does not say "holy gods", as the queen did.

3.4.2.1.1. If this was deliberate and not just an oversight caused by a failure of short-term memory resulting from the pressures of considerable stress, then the omission shows an unwillingness to attribute holiness (sacredness, transcendence, uniqueness, perfection, etc.) to God.

3.4.2.1.2. He wants to have the benefit of being associated with the true God without having to acknowledge him.

3.4.2.1.3. People today are similar. For example, they want the benefits of peace and prosperity associated with a pervasive Christian morality in society, but they do not want themselves to be made subject to the requirements of God's Law.

3.4.2.2. He does not mention Daniel's reported ability to explain riddles. However, this is implied by his ability to solve difficult problems.

- 3.4.2.3. He does not refer to Daniel's having been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as chief of the various classes of wise men.
 - 3.4.2.3.1. Just as Nebuchadnezzar put great faith in the abilities of his wise men, so did Belshazzar.
 - 3.4.2.3.2. It was difficult for him to acknowledge that a captive hostage/slave could have been of such consequence as to be the chief of all the wise men in the court of the greatest king the earth has ever produced.
 - 3.4.2.3.3. It is quite likely that Belshazzar, therefore, chose to ignore this particular commendation of the queen and leave out Daniel's relationship to the wise men of Babylon.
- 3.4.3. God extracts a confession—that God has his messenger—from Belshazzar in spite of himself. Even the wicked are constrained to confess the true God, and Jesus as Lord (Phil 2.11); and condemn themselves for their rejection of his holy laws.
- 3.5. *Based on Derivation* – He states (twice) that he had heard these various things about Daniel. Apparently he did not know Daniel personally and first hand.
 - 3.5.1. He was too engaged in satisfying his own ego and lusts to learn about the most valuable counsellor in his dominion.
 - 3.5.2. He was like men today who dismiss the Bible without ever having read it. They make up myths about what the Bible says, which they then attack.
- 4. What reward did Daniel turn down? Why?
 - 4.1. The king repeated the promise he had made to the wise men about the reward he would provide to anyone who could provide an interpretation of the writing.
 - 4.2. We observed previously that the reward consisted of:
 - 4.2.1. *Prestige* – Purple was the sign of a noble office.
 - 4.2.2. *Position* – The gold chain was an insignia of office.
 - 4.2.3. *Power* – Royal authority next to king Belshazzar and his father.
 - 4.3. How did Daniel respond to the reward? Why?
 - 4.3.1. He turned it down, before he had provided the interpretation of the writing, likely for the following reasons:
 - 4.3.1.1. He did not want it to appear that he used the prophetic office and God's speaking through him to a pagan king as a means of advancing his own situation.
 - 4.3.1.1.1. When he gave Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of his dream, he was not explicitly promised rewards in advance (although the king had made a promise of rewards to the wise men; 2.6). In fact the king was prepared to kill all the wise men for their failure, before Daniel came into his presence to provide the interpretation.
 - 4.3.1.1.2. Daniel, in this instance, acted in a way that was similar to Elisha by turning down the rewards (2 Ki 5.16, 26). He did not believe that it was a time for taking rewards.
 - 4.3.1.2. He already had sufficient provisions from his long tenure in Nebuchadnezzar's service and did not have a lust for more of these worldly rewards.
 - 4.3.1.3. He understood that the kingdom of Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty was at the end and that the rewards would have been worthless with the advent of a new regime.
 - 4.3.1.3.1. Daniel knew from Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2) that the kingdom of the Babylonians was to be replaced by the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.
 - 4.3.1.3.2. Likewise, the visions he had received during the reign of Belshazzar (chapter 7 and 8) confirmed that the kingdom of the Babylonians was ending.
 - 4.3.1.3.3. Isaiah had prophesied that a king named Cyrus would arise and subdue

the nations and in particular the nation that had taken Jerusalem captive (Is 44.28; Is 45:1).

4.3.1.3.4. Cyrus, the king of the Medes and Persians, was besieging the city of Babylon at the very time that Belshazzar was holding his debauched party.

5. How did Daniel use this opportunity to appear before the king?
 - 5.1. He used it as an opportunity to rebuke the king for his evil ways.
 - 5.2. Daniel had no fear of kings because he was the man who feared God (the title of our study). So he spoke the truth without fear of the consequences.
 - 5.3. What other prophets rebuked rulers? Examples, include:
 - 5.3.1. Moses with Pharaoh (Ex 9.15-17)
 - 5.3.2. Samuel with Saul (1 Sam 15.16-23)
 - 5.3.3. Nathan with David (2 Sam 12.1-14)
 - 5.3.4. Elijah with Ahab (1 Ki 18.18)
 - 5.3.5. Unnamed prophet with Ahab (1 Ki 20.35-43)
 - 5.3.6. Jonah (possibly) with the king of Nineveh (Jonah 3.6)
 - 5.3.7. John the Baptist with Herod (Mk 6.18)
 - 5.3.8. Jesus with Herod (Lk 13.32-35)
 - 5.3.9. Paul with Felix (Acts 24.25).
 - 5.3.10. We can also think of examples from extra-Biblical history such as Anselm with William II (Rufus) and John Knox with Mary Queen of Scots.
 - 5.4. What we find recorded here (~120 words in Aramaic, ~250 words in English), while brief and succinct, presents a powerful message of rebuke.
 - 5.4.1. Daniel became for a moment a great court preacher. There was no cringing or pandering as he spoke the simple truth boldly.
 - 5.4.2. Notice that he rebuked the king before interpreting the message.
 - 5.4.2.1. He didn't use the fact of his having provided an interpretation as a leverage to get the king's ear.
 - 5.4.2.2. He didn't let the king be distracted by the interpretation.
 - 5.4.2.3. Rather, he made the king listen while he was most frightened and focused.
6. What messages did Daniel give to Belshazzar before he read the writing on the wall?
 - 6.1. *God's Supremacy* – God, the only God, is the sovereign over the material realm, life, and knowledge and truth
 - 6.1.1. We can think of the totality of the created realm as consisting of four dimensions:
 - 6.1.1.1. Materiality: Space, matter, energy, and time (not applicable to angels).
 - 6.1.1.2. Life: An animating principle or spirit that imparts vitality to entities (which for men and animals includes reaction to stimuli, metabolism, growth, and reproduction) and volition, will and purpose (in the case of men and angels).
 - 6.1.1.3. Information: Knowledge and communication with accompanying social interactions (applicable to animals, men and angels to varying degrees)
 - 6.1.1.4. Imperatives: Laws established by God that show how he executes the orderly operation of the universe (descriptive rather than prescriptive); and, legal, moral and ethical²⁷⁹ stipulations for his rational creation.
 - 6.1.2. God is supreme over all four of these dimensions.
 - 6.1.3. Daniel begins his instruction of Belshazzar by indicating (or implying) that God's sovereignty extends over all four of these dimensions. How do we see this in the first part of Daniel's message (17-20)?

²⁷⁹ Although 'morals' and 'ethics' may be used synonymously, morals can be defined as positive personal characteristics (e.g., just, truthful, loving, chaste, etc.), whereas ethics can be considered right conduct, or the specific application of moral principles in a social context (e.g., do not murder, steal, commit adultery, etc.).

- 6.1.3.1. The Most High gave kingdoms (lands and peoples) into Nebuchadnezzar's hands (18-19). God is sovereign over the material realm and the disposition of life.
 - 6.1.3.1.1. God is the author of life (physical and spiritual) and the one who ends physical life, in his timing.
 - 6.1.3.1.2. God sovereignly disposes of material blessings as he sees fit.
 - 6.1.3.1.3. God can even change the order of the universe so that a man can eat grass, like an ox, for seven years and subsist on it.
- 6.1.3.2. Daniel indicated that he would read the writing on the wall and make its interpretation known (17).
 - 6.1.3.2.1. Daniel knew that he could receive that information only from the author of the inscription, God.
 - 6.1.3.2.2. Therefore he communicates, indirectly, that God is sovereign over information and all that is associated with it: facts, knowledge, truth, communication, etc.
- 6.1.3.3. Nebuchadnezzar became arrogant and proud (20). Such terms (arrogance and pride) can only have meaning if there is an absolute standard against which to define them. God is the supreme lawgiver, defining all aspects of morality and ethics.
- 6.2. *Glory Shamed* – Daniel then gave Belshazzar a history lesson from the life of Nebuchadnezzar. What aspects of Nebuchadnezzar's life did he address?
 - 6.2.1. Daniel does not address what the chroniclers would have recorded: campaigns and conquests, constructions and cities, or cheering and compliments.
 - 6.2.2. Instead, he reviews the essence of Nebuchadnezzar's life from a considerably different direction.
 - 6.2.2.1. *Absolute Despotism* – The power and greatness of his reign was feared by all nations (18-19).
 - 6.2.2.2. *Arbitrary Decisions* – Like all monarchs in the AME, his will was incontestable in matters of life and death and the disposition of rewards (19).
 - 6.2.2.3. *Arrogant Depravity* – He let his power, position, and provisions inflate his ego, and became proud and stubbornly rebellious against God's moral demands (20).
 - 6.2.2.4. *Abject Debasing* – So God deposed him from his throne and debased him by sending him into the fields to live as a wild beast (20-21).
 - 6.2.2.5. *Acknowledged Divinity* – At the end of his chastisement, he professed that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of men and establishes whom he will to rule on earth (21).
 - 6.2.3. Why did Daniel review the life of Nebuchadnezzar in this way?
 - 6.2.3.1. Recounting of history (secular or Biblical) can have only a few possible reasons, such as to: entertain, celebrate, or teach.
 - 6.2.3.2. Daniel's purpose clearly was not to entertain or celebrate; it was to teach. His purpose was to warn and teach Belshazzar from the example of his grandfather.
 - 6.2.3.2.1. [We noted when considering 5.2, that since there is no word in Aramaic for 'grandfather' or 'grandson', the word 'father' in 18 can be translated as 'ancestor', 'predecessor', or 'forefather'.]
 - 6.2.3.3. Why do (should) we study history? The study of history:
 - 6.2.3.3.1. Helps us understand people and societies
 - 6.2.3.3.2. Helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be
 - 6.2.3.3.3. Contributes to moral understanding
 - 6.2.3.3.4. Provides identity
 - 6.2.3.3.5. Is essential for good citizenship
 - 6.2.3.3.6. Develops critical thinking skills (assess evidence, weigh interpretations,

- and extrapolate from one situation to another).²⁸⁰
- 6.2.3.4. By reviewing what God had done with his important progenitor he desired to inform Belshazzar of his own situation and call him to repentance.
 - 6.2.3.5. Daniel was saying, in effect, “If your ancestor, the great Nebuchadnezzar, who had fought and worked hard to establish his glory, was punished for pride and rebellion against the Most High God, then surely, you, Belshazzar who have squandered your inherited wealth and status in debauchery, should be subject to at least the same punishment for your pride and rebellion.”
 - 6.2.4. What were the particular lessons Daniel wished to communicate to Belshazzar?
 - 6.2.4.1. The degree of one’s worldly position (status), power, or prosperity is not a sign or ultimate arbiter of his standing before God.
 - 6.2.4.2. God is the ultimate dispenser of blessings and disasters; rewards and punishment.
 - 6.2.4.3. When men gain power, they tend to abuse it. They use force and fear to intimidate and gain compliance.
 - 6.2.4.3.1. It is rare and difficult for men to acquire absolute and arbitrary power, and not to use it for selfish ends.
 - 6.2.4.3.2. We have noted, throughout this study of Daniel a number of times the truth of what Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”
 - 6.2.4.4. God holds all men, even the greatest of men, in all nations accountable for their attitudes and actions. In particular, he judges pride that exalts a man to challenge God’s sovereignty.
 - 6.3. *Grievous Sins* – After proclaiming God’s sovereignty and recounting Nebuchadnezzar’s essential history, Daniel turns to the immediate subject before him—the grievous sins of Belshazzar (22-23).
 - 6.3.1. What particular sins of Belshazzar does Daniel mention?
 - 6.3.1.1. *Pride* – His heart was lifted up against the Lord of heaven.
 - 6.3.1.1.1. Belshazzar was a young man who had lived his ~15 years in luxury and comfort. He felt that he innately deserved the honours that he had received.
 - 6.3.1.1.2. As a result, whatever he knew about the true God, he ignored and, by so doing, stole the place that belonged to God.
 - 6.3.1.1.2.1. He likely had more knowledge of God than is afforded by natural revelation (Rom 1.19-20) alone.
 - 6.3.1.1.2.2. Many Jews lived in captivity. They had brought with them the Scriptures available to that point and many lived lives of holy distinction in a pagan society. Belshazzar had undoubtedly heard of them and their beliefs—even if only in a derogatory context.
 - 6.3.1.1.2.3. He would have had access to the counsel of the wise that was known throughout the ME such as is recorded in Proverbs 30.1-33 and Proverbs 31.1-31.
 - 6.3.1.1.2.4. In addition, the account of the events in the latter days of Nebuchadnezzar and his proclamation were likely not completely forgotten.
 - 6.3.1.1.2.5. Belshazzar chose to suppress and ignore the light of truth that he had (Rom 1.18) and put himself forward in the place of God.
 - 6.3.1.1.3. His pride was lifted to the highest in the moments before his destruction (Prov 16.18)

²⁸⁰ Adapted from: Peter N. Stearns, *Why Study History?* American Historical Association; www.historians.org/pubs/free/WhyStudyHistory.htm

- 6.3.1.2. *Sacrilege* – He committed abominations with the holy vessels that had been taken from the Temple by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 6.3.1.2.1. We noted earlier that drinking wine from these vessels was likely associated with the Babylonian equivalent of the celebrations of the cult of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility,
 - 6.3.1.2.2. His intention was clearly evil—to blaspheme God and declare his sovereignty over God by abusing the objects of God’s ordinance.
- 6.3.1.3. *Idolatry* – He used the vessels from the Temple in the worship of false gods.
 - 6.3.1.3.1. The parties likely:
 - 6.3.1.3.1.1. Poured out wine libations to the pagan gods.
 - 6.3.1.3.1.2. Mocked the true God by honouring lifeless objects made by man’s hands. We noted that the listing of six (the number of man) materials probably symbolizes a summation of the varieties of human invention.
 - 6.3.1.3.1.3. Sang odes and made vows to the abominable images.
 - 6.3.1.3.2. Daniel may have used a form of a pun and visual object lesson (23-24) when he said “the God, in whose *hand* is your breath. ... sent the *hand* that wrote the inscription.”
 - 6.3.1.3.2.1. We concluded previously (5) that the hand was likely a manifestation of God, who took on physical form.
 - 6.3.1.3.2.2. Daniel may have pointed to the hand that had written the message of judgement.
 - 6.3.1.3.2.3. The false gods they were worshiping were lifeless. In contrast, the true God was very much alive and holding Belshazzar’s life in his hand.
 - 6.3.1.3.2.4. It was the same hand that had written the two tables of the Ten Commandments. Then it wrote God’s demands, now it writes a man’s doom.
- 6.3.1.4. We can summarize the sins of Belshazzar as: stealing God’s height, holiness, and honour.
- 6.3.2. How do men commit the same sins today? Men steal God’s height, holiness, and honour in various ways, including:
 - 6.3.2.1. Blaspheming God’s names by combining them with as many sexual and scatological words as possible and calling it freedom of expression.
 - 6.3.2.2. Calling God evil, for example as Dawkins does in *The God Delusion*, where he calls the God he doesn’t believe in “a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”
 - 6.3.2.3. Putting a ‘Christian’ religious icon in urine and calling it art²⁸¹ or smearing feces on a cross on the roof of a church.²⁸²
 - 6.3.2.4. Creating songs that mock the Christian sacraments or the person of Jesus.²⁸³
 - 6.3.2.5. Using pages of the Bible as toilet paper.²⁸⁴
 - 6.3.2.6. Creating a poster with a picture portraying Jesus on the cross with guys making fun of him, and calling it: “Blasphemy - A ticket to hell has never been funnier.”²⁸⁵
 - 6.3.2.7. Lest you think that this is only an issue rampant in the pagan world, the Church is full of blasphemy as displayed by many forms of false worship. For example, many of the songs used in worship contain false doctrine, insipid emotionalism,

²⁸¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piss_Christ

²⁸² ebaumnation.com/2009/03/03/man-smears-feces-on-cross-in-protest

²⁸³ www.lyricsyoulove.com/n/nofx/blasphemy_victimless_crime/

²⁸⁴ www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=44324

²⁸⁵ www.motivatedphotos.com/?id=1475

and trite or banal statements. A web site that lists examples of problem songs²⁸⁶ misses the opportunity to extol the virtues of singing the God-breathed words of the Psalms.

6.3.2.7.1. Yet most people in the Church today do not think that how we worship is all that an important a topic about which we should be concerned.

6.3.2.7.2. If you asked people in the Church which is the *most* (all are!) important: doing evangelism, caring for the needy in the Church, caring for the needy in society, having a correct doctrine about six-day creation, having Sunday School classes that cater to inquirers, not cheating on your taxes, or worshiping God in the correct way (only in the way he requires); having correct worship would be the absolute last on the list.

6.3.2.7.3. Yet of all the above, God did not punish with death anyone who did (or failed to do) any of these things, *except* for offering false worship!

6.3.2.7.4. Offering proper worship of the holy God is not to be an after-thought. It is the *most* important thing that we can do in our lives. If the Church doesn't get this right it will eventually get everything else wrong.

7. What was the message communicated by the writing on the wall?

7.1. We have already considered the possible form of the fifteen characters that made up the message. Daniel now parses the characters into three different words (the first word was repeated) and provides the meaning of the words.

7.2. The three words were:

7.2.1. **MENE** is an Aramaic noun that refers to a weight of 50 shekels (a mina, equal to a little more than .5kg). In its verbal form it means “to number”, “to account”, or “to reckon.”

7.2.2. **TEKEL** is an Aramaic noun referring to a shekel (~11gms). In its verbal form it means “to weigh.” It may be that the second *mene* is a modifier of *tekem*, meaning a half *tekem*.

7.2.3. **PARSIN** is an Aramaic noun meaning a half-mina (.3kg). In its verbal form it means “to break in two, to divide.” The word written on the wall was actually *uparsin*, which means “and Parsin”. The English ‘u’ comes from the *waw* (ו) which is the letter/word for ‘and’.

7.3. Each of the words, as written, is a noun that referred to a common weight in the AME.

7.3.1. Daniel had to apply their verbal interpretation to derive the full meaning of what had been written.

7.3.2. This helps to explain the comment about the wise men being unable to read the writing (8), since the words appear to be a series of nouns giving weights.

7.3.3. If we saw a listing of three nouns, we also would have trouble making sense out of them unless we had additional contextual information; for example:

7.3.3.1. Rat, cat, dog – We might interpret this as the rat ran, the cat chased it, the dog saw the cat running and chased the dog. But it could also be interpreted as three animals that live in proximity to humans. Without additional context it would be difficult to know what the message is.

7.3.3.2. Ottawa, Washington, Mexico – This could refer to the three countries that make up the North American continent or the NAFTA. Without additional context it would be difficult to know what the message is.

7.3.3.3. Red, white, blue – This could refer to the US or French flags and could be a message about a country. Without additional context it would be difficult to know what the message is.

7.3.3.4. So if we saw a list of weights such as tonne, kilogram, and gram, we also would be confused as to the meaning.

²⁸⁶ www.thywordistruth.com/Songs/

- 7.3.4. To compound the complexity of the interpretation, Daniel had to convert each of the nouns into a verbal equivalent: ‘numbered’, ‘weighed’, and ‘divided’.
- 7.4. Why was the message composed of written characters?
 - 7.4.1. God could have communicated verbally or through dreams as he did in other instances.
 - 7.4.2. His purpose in communicating in writing may have been:
 - 7.4.2.1. To ensure that the message was clearly seen. There was less possibility of confusion if it was written down than if communicated orally.
 - 7.4.2.2. To follow the form of covenants, which in the AME were written down. Contracts and evidence are generally considered to have more authority or weight if written than if committed in verbal form. We often hear a statement something like, “I won’t believe it/accept it unless I see it written down”.
 - 7.4.2.3. To emphasize the importance of the message—in that it was written by his own hand (Ex 31.18; Dt 9.10; 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11).
 - 7.4.2.4. As a symbol of the eternal books of judgement (Dan 7.10; Rev 20.12).
 - 7.4.2.5. To put to shame the scribal class who kept the royal and religious records and prided themselves in being literate, and who were unable to interpret the message.
- 7.5. What was the message that God communicated to Belshazzar?
 - 7.5.1. *Numbered* (MENE) – “God has numbered the days of your kingdom (NIV: reign) and brought it to an end.” (26)
 - 7.5.1.1. What is the principle communicated by this statement?
 - 7.5.1.1.1. Life’s duration is determined by God. Each person is in the hand of God. No one can add an hour or a second to his life (Lk 12.25). So, also, the duration of the reign of every king is in the hand of the LORD, the only true God.
 - 7.5.1.1.2. Belshazzar had not learned the lesson from Moses, written some 800 years before, that we are to learn to number our days (Ps 90.12; Prov 10.27).
 - 7.5.1.1.3. Daniel is reminding Belshazzar, and all subsequent rulers, that God is sovereign over all life and time.
 - 7.5.1.2. Why was the first word, MENE, repeated?
 - 7.5.1.2.1. Possibly for emphasis, to show that the judgement was certain; compare with the double dream of Pharaoh (Gen 41.32).
 - 7.5.1.2.2. As we noted above, the second mene may be a modifier of *tekel*, meaning a half *tekel*.
 - 7.5.2. *Weighed* (TEKEL) – “You have been weighed in the balances (NIV: scales) and found wanting.” (27)
 - 7.5.2.1. Daniel may have intended a play on words here, as the expression ‘found wanting’ could be translated ‘too light’.
 - 7.5.2.1.1. The idea could be that his measure was equivalent to a dishonest weight (Lev 19.35-36; Dt 25.13-16; Prov 16.11).
 - 7.5.2.1.2. Measurements, were at first based on variable ‘standards’ such as the length of a man’s (the king’s) forearm (a cubit), a hand span, thickness of a man’s thumb (inch), a foot, etc.
 - 7.5.2.1.3. A king kept a ‘standard’ in the palace. Weights used by merchants had to match the royal standard. If they were too light (or heavy—depending on the direction of the transaction) they were rejected as unacceptable and dishonest.
 - 7.5.2.1.4. Measures like the pound and the foot were variable during the Middle Ages. Liquid measures were fluid (pun!) even until recently (e.g., the Canadian gallon and the US gallon were different). Charlemagne, in the 8th and 9th centuries, tried to bring consistency to measurements in

Europe during his reign, as did other later kings.

7.5.2.1.5. When Gabriel Mouton, the vicar of St. Paul's Church in Lyons, France, introduced, what we today call, the metric system (as a decimal system of measurement) in 1670, he proposed two possible 'universal' standards for determining length (weights have generally been derived from length, since a gram is \cong 1cc of water at sea level at room temperature).

7.5.2.1.5.1. The first was that a meter could be one minute of arc of a great circle of the Earth (now called a nautical mile, 1852 meters). This would give a longer meter than we have today.

7.5.2.1.5.2. He also proposed the swing-length of a pendulum with a frequency of one beat per second as the unit of length (with a half-period of about 25 cm).

7.5.2.1.6. Later, in 1791, the French Academy of Sciences defined the meter as one ten-millionth²⁸⁷ of the length of the Earth's meridian along a quadrant that is the distance from the equator to the North Pole. [This is not totally accurate as the earth isn't a perfect sphere but an irregular oblate spheroid.]

7.5.2.1.7. The metric system definition has been refined further. For example, until 1983 the meter was defined as 1,650,763.73 wavelengths in a vacuum of the orange-red line of the spectrum of krypton-86. Since then, it has been equal to the distance traveled by light in a vacuum in $1/299,792,458$ of a second. A second is defined as the duration of 9,192,631,770 cycles of the radiation associated with a specified transition of the cesium-133 atom.

7.5.2.1.8. What do you observe has happened to measures of distance, volume, and even time over the history of mankind?

7.5.2.1.8.1. The standards have moved away from being based on man's subjective position to being based on natural objects.

7.5.2.1.9. What key, subtle, assumption is implied by the move to standards based on natural systems?

7.5.2.1.9.1. That nature is consistent.

7.5.2.1.9.2. To be truly useful, measurements need to be based on *objective* standards so that they can apply to anyone and can be reproduced by anyone.

7.5.2.1.9.3. Nature cannot be consistent if it is the product of chance. Consistency and standards can only be obtained if the universe has an ultimate objective standard behind it—that is God. We can measure things accurately only because there is a God behind creation.

7.5.2.2. What is the implication of Daniel saying that Belshazzar had been found wanting (or too light)?

7.5.2.2.1. God has an objective standard for moral behaviour as much as for defining an objective royal weight.

7.5.2.2.2. Belshazzar's payment (e.g., his work as king or his personal life) was too light to meet the true Royal standard of God (Job 31.6; 1 Sam 2.3).

7.5.3. *Divided* (PARSIN) – "Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (28)

7.5.3.1. Daniel may have also intended a play on words here, since a change in the vowels (which were not included in the text) changes the meaning of the

²⁸⁷ The earth is approximately 40,000kms around, or 40,000,000 meters. $\frac{1}{4}$ of that distance (equator to North Pole) gives 10,000,000 meters.

consonants that were displayed.

7.5.3.1.1. The word פֶּרֶס, when read with an ‘e’ instead of an ‘a’ can have different meanings.

7.5.3.1.2. The three letters PRS can give the word *peres* (divided) or *Paras* which means “Persian”.

7.5.3.2. What does Daniel’s mention of the Medes and Persians tell us?

7.5.3.2.1. How to interpret the second (silver) kingdom/empire in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2.32).

7.5.3.2.2. That Daniel wrote the book and not some later (Maccabean) author who would have ignored the Medes since later history referred generally only to the Persian Empire (Ezra 4.9; but contrast Esther 1.19).

7.5.4. What is the unifying message across these three words?

7.5.4.1. All three words were based on monetary weights in the Babylonian (Middle Eastern) mercantile system: a mina, shekel, and half-mina.

7.5.4.2. All three have a connection with weights and scales in a balance.

7.5.4.3. Al Wolters, a professor at Redeemer College, has suggested²⁸⁸ that the symbols of the weigh scales in the writing was supported by a sign in the heavens in the constellation Libra.²⁸⁹

7.5.4.3.1. As we noted previously, the events of this particular evening have been calculated to have occurred on October 12, 539 BC.

7.5.4.3.2. Wolters has consulted astronomers and has determined that the constellation Libra rose in the sky the night before, i.e., October 11, 539 BC.

7.5.4.3.3. We should be cautious to suggest that God uses astrological signs. However, it is *possible* that he sent the superstitious astrologers in the Babylonian civil-religious system a message: “You think the heavens can be read for signs of pending events. You didn’t see judgement coming. I will show you who really controls the constellations and all events of history.”

7.5.5. What, in summary, was the message that God communicated to Belshazzar?

7.5.5.1. Because of the moral and spiritual degradation of Belshazzar, his nobles and the entire kingdom, God was terminating the Babylonian Empire.

7.5.5.2. God weighs (measures) the nations and when their evil reaches a tipping point he brings judgement on them (Gen 15.13-16; Zech 5.6).

7.5.5.3. Men today in the East and West need to heed this message. God is God over all the earth—the God over all, is not the Islamic Allah or a president over a ‘secular’ democracy.

7.6. Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall also teaches us about divine revelation.

7.6.1. Even when the Bible is available to all, and readable by all, all do not understand it.

7.6.2. The essential message of the Bible may be simple (like the string of 15 characters on the wall), but it isn’t always clear.

7.6.2.1. For example, prophetic passages related to end-times, may perplex some people today but they will become clear as they are fulfilled, just as the prophecies related to the incarnation became clear as they were fulfilled in Christ (born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, with a home in Nazareth of Galilee, etc.)

7.6.3. The problem, however, isn’t with the message but with the readers. Their hearts are cold, their minds numbed, their eyes heavy, and their spirits dead so that they are unable to

²⁸⁸ Al Wolters, *Wordplay and History in Daniel ch. 5*, a lecture presented at Living Waters from Ancient Springs, a conference in honour of Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on the occasion of his retirement – First Annual Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary Lecture Series, 2011-01-07.

²⁸⁹ The Sumerians called the constellation Zib-ba An-na, meaning “the balance of heaven.” The Akkadian name for the constellation, was zibanitu, meaning ‘scales’.

understand (Is 6.10; Lk 8.10).

7.6.4. Just as Daniel, a prophet of God, was required to interpret the message from God, so we need a prophet to interpret the Bible. However, the prophet we need is not, ultimately, a priest or preacher who gives his own private interpretation, but rather the true Prophet, Jesus Christ, and his emissary the Holy Spirit (Jn 14.26; Jn 16.13).

8. What lessons can we derive from this section (13-28)?

8.1. As Daniel told Belshazzar “the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.” (21) Daniel reminded Belshazzar of the sovereignty of God. All of our lessons from this section are derived from that essential truth.

8.1.1. *Revelation* – All knowledge and wisdom come from God.

8.1.1.1. Men who want to be autonomous from God think that they can search for and find knowledge on their own.

8.1.1.1.1. However, man could have no knowledge at all if it were not for the fact that man is created in the image of God and create with innate intuitive knowledge provided by the Creator.

8.1.1.1.2. It would be impossible for man to learn anything at all if he did not have an innately endowed initial set of knowledge.

8.1.1.1.3. As an analogy, we can think of a system like a search program on the Internet. If our computer didn’t have an operating system we couldn’t make the search program work. In the same way, humans could learn nothing if they did not have a basic set of informational instructions implanted in them by God (Rom 1.19-21).

8.1.1.2. What is some of the basic information with which God endows mankind? God endows mankind with innate knowledge, such as:

8.1.1.2.1. Of his existence; all men know that there is only one true God, they suppress that truth

8.1.1.2.2. Our self-existence and the existence of things beyond us; that we really exist and are not merely a mental mirage concocted by some meta-mind (e.g., as hypothesized in movies such as *The Matrix* or *Inception*)

8.1.1.2.3. How to differentiate between the “I” and the “you”

8.1.1.2.4. How to process language; children know innately how to process language, and all children acquire language skills in the same way

8.1.1.2.5. Moral imperatives—the difference between right and wrong; all men know innately that certain things are wrong, although they suppress this truth along with the knowledge of the existence of God

8.1.1.2.6. Logic rules such as the law of non-contradiction

8.1.1.2.7. The essence of beauty.

As image bearers of God, we all have a common, God-given, set of basic knowledge. If each person learned *all* of what he knows, then everyone’s knowledge would be purely empirical, self-determined, and entirely unique and it would be impossible for men to communicate with one another.

8.1.1.3. Special revelation (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the writing on the wall of Belshazzar’s banquet hall, or the Bible) comes immediately from God.

8.1.1.3.1. God communicates into space-time—he is not silent.

8.1.1.3.2. God chooses to reveal truths, primarily, through prophets.

8.1.1.3.2.1. Although both Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson Belshazzar were given messages, they could not understand the full import of the message until Daniel, the prophet, provided the interpretation.

8.1.1.3.2.2. Jesus, as the ultimate Prophet of God, is Truth and the final revealer of truth—communicating the image and essence of

God to man.

8.1.1.3.2.3. The Bible, as the authoritative word of God, was also delivered through the mouths/hands of God's prophets.

8.1.1.3.3. Without special revelation, man is left in a semi-ignorant state. He would know that there is a God and that he is accountable to him but would not know how to deal with the problem of sin.

8.1.2. *Reflection* – A significant portion of this section is a history lesson on God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. God expects mankind to reflect on his dealings with other men and to learn the lessons of history.

8.1.2.1. As we noted above, the study of history (secular or Biblical) can have only a few possible reasons, such as to: entertain, celebrate, or teach.

8.1.2.2. Daniel's purpose clearly was not to entertain or celebrate; it was to teach.

8.1.2.3. We should study history because it:

8.1.2.3.1. Helps us understand people and societies

8.1.2.3.2. Helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be

8.1.2.3.3. Contributes to moral understanding

8.1.2.3.4. Provides identity

8.1.2.3.5. Is essential for good citizenship

8.1.2.3.6. Develops critical thinking skills (assess evidence, weigh interpretations, and extrapolate from one situation to another).

8.1.3. *Rejection* – However, men usually reject both the study of history and the lessons taught by history. Thinking themselves to be wise, they become fools. They reject the lessons of history in various ways, by:

8.1.3.1. Treating the study of history as irrelevant or boring.

8.1.3.2. Treating the *now* and *new* as natural and normative. Most men today think that all that is important to know anything about is only what has existed for the past few nanoseconds (e.g., the latest Twitter feed). If information is more than a week old it is treated as irrelevant.

8.1.3.3. Interpreting history through false paradigms (e.g., 'black history', 'feminist history', 'class struggle', 'recursive history', 'pathology of modernity', 'progressiveness', 'deconstruction', 'reconstruction') and modern philosophies and worldviews (e.g., Freudian psychology, logical positivism²⁹⁰, utilitarianism, etc.), instead of as the account of God's unfolding dealings with mankind as he directs events toward the final consummation.

8.1.3.4. Rejecting the truth, evidence, and examples that they have been given by God in his historical record—the Bible.

8.1.4. *Rebuke* – Daniel rebuked Belshazzar for both his rejection of the lessons taught to his grandfather and for his debauched behaviour.

8.1.4.1. Both ignorance and iniquity are evil—ignorance of God and his demands, and disobedience against his laws are equally culpable.

8.1.4.2. Into our state of confusion and chaos, truth is to be proclaimed by God's messengers; even when men will not listen, and without consideration of the consequences (recompense or resistance) or the human status of the recipients.

8.1.4.3. Daniel rebuked Belshazzar as if he were nothing more than a belligerent boy, and not the coregent of the most powerful empire on earth. So God's people, and especially those in positions of leadership in the Church (the functional equivalent of prophets in the OT who forthtold God's truth), are to be ready to:

8.1.4.3.1. Rebuke the sins (2 Tim 4.2; Titus 2.15) of the lowly and the haughty, without being respecters of persons;

8.1.4.3.2. Proclaim righteousness, self-control and the coming judgement (Acts

²⁹⁰ I.e., observational evidence is indispensable for knowledge.

24.24, 25).

- 8.1.5. *Recompense* – God will not be ignored or mocked; he will repay sin; for, as he says, vengeance belongs to him (Dt 32.35, 41; Rom 12.19).
 - 8.1.5.1. God has prescribed a certain time for all kingdoms and for all men (Job 14.5; Acts 17.26), after that there will be judgement (Heb 9.27).
 - 8.1.5.2. Belshazzar met his untimely end on October 12, 539 BC.
 - 8.1.5.3. So, God will judge the wickedness of men by, often, cutting it short in this life and ultimately by bringing all their sins before his judgement throne (Ps 98.9; Acts 17.31; Rev 20.11-15).
- 8.1.6. *Resolve* – Our resolve, and the resolve of every man, must be to serve God.
 - 8.1.6.1. Our primary purpose in existence is to glorify God—we do this through loving and obeying him.
 - 8.1.6.2. We must devote ourselves to the advancement of his honour and not, as Belshazzar did, to the veneration of our false gods.
 - 8.1.6.3. Our commitment must be to please God; our concern must be to praise him.

Score (Dan 5.29-31)

- 1. What happened to Daniel after he gave the interpretation of the writing on the wall?
 - 1.1. Belshazzar commanded that Daniel be rewarded with the great rewards that Belshazzar had promised to anyone who was able to read and interpret the writing. We noted previously (7) that the rewards consisted of:
 - 1.1.1. *Prestige* – He was clothed in purple, which was a sign of royalty or near royalty.
 - 1.1.2. *Position* – He was given a gold chain, which would have symbolized an important office.
 - 1.1.3. *Power* – He was given royal authority as the third highest (after Nabonidus and Belshazzar, the coregents) ruler in the kingdom.
 - 1.2. Why is it surprising that Belshazzar carried out his promise of rewarding the person who interpreted the writing on the wall?
 - 1.2.1. We might have expected Belshazzar to have become enraged at the defiance of his authority that Daniel had shown in rebuking him for his sin.
 - 1.2.2. Alternatively, we should have seen Belshazzar falling on his knees in repentance and calling for sackcloth and ashes, as the king of Nineveh did at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3.6).
 - 1.3. Why did Belshazzar ignore the prophet's warnings and give the rewards?
 - 1.3.1. He may have fatalistically resigned himself to his pending destruction and didn't care what would happen next, so he carried out his promise because he wanted to save face with his guests (Mk 6.26). In this was the case, he may have believed intellectually the word of God without allowing it to affect him emotionally. There was a form of respect for the word of God, but no repentance.
 - 1.3.2. However, he was probably displaying a vain bravado in the face of imminent danger. By commanding that the rewards be given, he was shirking off the pending threat and pretending not to be worried or concerned.
 - 1.3.3. He probably also did not believe that the prophesied events would actually transpire.
 - 1.3.3.1. Some people who claim not to believe in the true God display a vain hope that pending unpleasant or disastrous events might not happen. For example, they deny the facts when told that they have terminal cancer.
 - 1.3.3.2. Belshazzar is typical of men who ignore God's messages (promises, warnings, threats) and treat them with disdain by refusing to repent.
 - 1.3.3.2.1. Men often claim that if God would give better evidences of his existence, set out his requirements and laws more clearly, or demonstrate unequivocally that Jesus is the God-man, they would believe.
 - 1.3.3.2.2. For example, they make absurd claims, such as, "If God knocks me off

this chair in the next 15 minutes, then I will believe he really exists.”

1.3.3.2.3. Jesus silences this kind of testing of God in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16.19-31) by teaching that:

1.3.3.2.3.1. *Signs Harden for Conversion* – Signs are confirmatory not convincing. They are designed by God to validate his prophets, in particular Jesus. But, in general, signs are not his means for leading people to salvation. We must not make the mistake that miracles are primarily (or even, effective) instruments of evangelism.

1.3.3.2.3.2. *Scripture Heralds Christ* – A messenger rising from the dead could say no more than the Scriptures, so Abraham leaves the rich man’s brothers to the teachings of Moses and the prophets. Notice that it is the OT that they were to hear and heed. The OT does not present a different message from the NT. The OT is the word of God pointing to Jesus Christ. God’s method for presenting Christ is by preaching his truth from the Bible (Rom 10.14-15; 1 Cor 1.21).

2. Why did Daniel (apparently) now accept the rewards given to him, when previously (17) he had declined them?

2.1. He accepted whatever rewards were dispensed, after he had provided a service to the king because he had not bargained for them. Consider an example: Suppose I ask a friend who has a truck to help me move some large furniture. If the person bargained beforehand for payment he would not be viewed as much of a friend. However, if, after the move, I offered him \$50 to cover gas and the equivalent of renting the truck, he could graciously accept the gratuity without any qualms of it undermining our friendship.

2.2. After rebuking the king for sinful behaviour he could not be viewed as having sold his services for the rewards.

2.3. Daniel knew that the enjoyment of the prestige, position, and power were short lived.

2.3.1. He knew that very soon (he may have even expected it that night) Belshazzar would be dead and that a king of the Medes and Persians would take over the empire.

2.3.2. He did not expect the rewards to amount to anything.

2.3.2.1. He may have even thought that his life would come to an end, shortly or that evening.

2.3.2.2. He would have been around eighty-two years old if he was 14 in 606 BC, when he was taken captive and had lived a full (Ps 90.10) temporal life, and may have been ready to move on to the eternal life.

2.3.2.3. He may have been expecting and looking forward to his call home to his everlasting reward.

2.3.3. In fact, Daniel survived the change of regime and became a respected elder statesman in the new regime (as seen in chapter 6). He continued to serve kings into the reign of Cyrus.

3. What was the outcome of the prophecy (27-28, 30)?

3.1. Belshazzar lost his life that very night at the hands of Cyrus’ army.

3.1.1. The city had been under siege by the Persian army, led by a general named Ugbaru,

3.1.2. The Persian army was divided, with part camping outside the walls at the point where the Euphrates entered the city from the north and the other part was camped where the river exited from the city, under the wall to the south.

3.1.3. The army had diverted some of the river water north of the city by digging a canal from the river to a nearby lake.

- 3.1.4. When the water level in the river became shallow enough to wade through, the soldiers entered the city by going under the sluice gate in the wall and were able to take the city without a fight because the people were mostly in a drunken revelry.²⁹¹
- 3.2. Belshazzar met personal judgement and Babylon met national judgement.
 - 3.2.1. God deals judicially with both individuals and nations.
 - 3.2.2. In some instances God deals specifically with leaders as federal representatives of their nations (e.g., dealing with Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4). In other instances he punishes leaders along with their entire nation, as he did in this case.
 - 3.2.3. Babylon had served its purpose as an agent of judgement on Judah. It was now time for Babylon to be punished for its rebellion against the only true God.
- 3.3. God demonstrated that his prophecy and his prophets were true.
 - 3.3.1. The defeat of Babylon fulfilled the prophecy Daniel made earlier that same night (27-28).
 - 3.3.2. Other prophecies made by Isaiah (Is 47.1-5) and Jeremiah (Jer 25.12-14; Jer 27.7; Jer 51.11, 39) also foretold the destruction of the city.
 - 3.3.3. God declares in his word that he can foretell the future with precision (Is 42.9; Is 44.7; Is 45.11; Is 46.9, 10; Is 48.5, 6; Dan 2.28).
 - 3.3.4. God *knows* precisely what will happen in the future because he has planned the actions of every entity in all of creation, including the actions of rational and responsible men.
 - 3.3.4.1. There is not a logical contradiction between God's providence and mankind's responsibility—there is only an antinomy that results from our finite minds being unable to grasp the possibility of the two coexisting.
- 3.4. How did God's dealings with Belshazzar differ from his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar?
 - 3.4.1. God extended mercy to Nebuchadnezzar and gave him three warnings. Nebuchadnezzar repented of his sins.
 - 3.4.2. God gave Belshazzar one warning. Belshazzar had the advantage of knowing the history of God's dealings with his grandfather and chose to ignore both the lessons and warning. God dealt with him swiftly.
 - 3.4.3. God gives representative examples of punishments and gracious mercy, to teach, warn and encourage us. However, he deals with each individual differently.
- 4. Who took over the empire as king?
 - 4.1. Cyrus (the Great) became the king over Babylon.
 - 4.1.1. He was born around 600 BC, so he was about 62 years old in 539 BC.
 - 4.1.2. His combined armies of Media and Persia (in modern terms, think of Iran/Afghanistan/Pakistan) had been sweeping up parts of the Babylonian Empire (in modern terms, Iraq/Syria/Lebanon/Egypt). His armies had been besieging Babylon for a number of years.
 - 4.1.3. The territory of the Medes and the Persians under Cyrus and his descendants to the time of Alexander the Great, grew to include Egypt and Libya, Turkey and parts of Macedonia and Thrace, all of the Middle East, and all the lands from the Caspian Sea, below the Aral Sea and the Hindu Kush mountains, to the Indus River.
 - 4.1.4. It is claimed that his dynasty lasted longer than two and a half millennia²⁹² until the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (the Shah of Iran) celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy in 1971. It was toppled eight years later (in 1979) in the Iranian Revolution (also known as the Islamic Revolution) that transformed Iran from a monarchy into an Islamic 'republic' under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic.

²⁹¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book I, paragraph 191; classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia – The Education of Cyrus*; www.gutenberg.org/files/2085/2085-h/2085-h.htm.

²⁹² However, some argue that the *Shahnameh*, the national epic of the Persians, tells of the last Shah of Persia, who spent his final days hiding in a mill after the conquest of Persia by the Muslims. Refer to: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahnameh for more information on the *Shahnameh*.

- 4.1.5. He continued to rule the vast empire until 530 BC, and died when he was about 70 years old.
- 4.1.6. The Biblical references to Cyrus are:
 - 4.1.6.1. Isaiah prophesied (150-200 years before the event) that a king named Cyrus would arise and subdue the nations and in particular the nation that had taken Jerusalem captive (Is 44.28; Is 45:1).
 - 4.1.6.2. Cyrus made the decree (in the first year of his reign over the entire territory that included Babylon [i.e., 538 BC]) to allow the Jews to return to Judea (2 Chron 36.22, 23; Ezra 1.1-4).
 - 4.1.6.3. Cyrus returned to the Jews the Temple vessels (Ezra 1.7-11) that Nebuchadnezzar had carried off (Dan 1.2) and Belshazzar had used for his blasphemous drunken orgy (Dan 5.2, 3).
 - 4.1.6.4. Cyrus is mentioned in Ezra 3-6 as being the author of the decree to allow the Jews to return, especially in association with the challenges made to rebuilding the Temple.
 - 4.1.6.5. Daniel continued to serve as an advisor and prophet into the reign of Cyrus (Dan 1.21; Dan 6.28; Dan 10.1).
- 4.2. Who, then, is Darius the Mede?
 - 4.2.1. This person is not Darius I who came to the throne in 522 BC (and reigned until 485 BC). If it were the same person he would be about 80 years old by 522 BC. However, Darius I lived until 486 BC, so the two people with the name Darius are not the same person.
 - 4.2.2. There are many explanations given for who Darius was.
 - 4.2.2.1. Matthew Henry says he was Cyrus' uncle.
 - 4.2.2.2. Calvin and Keil say he was Cyrus' aged father-in-law (and uncle), Cyaxares, and suggest that Cyrus was content with his military victory and conceded the title of king to him.
 - 4.2.2.3. Another suggestion is that Darius is Cambyses, Cyrus' son, who ruled Persia 530-522 BC.²⁹³ This view, however, would make Cyrus' son the same age (62) as Cyrus.
 - 4.2.2.4. Leupold says it was Gobryas (Ugbaru or Gubaru; with Gobryas being a Greek form of the same name) governor of Gutium, who was appointed by Cyrus to rule Babylon. Gutium and Media were adjacent provinces.²⁹⁴
 - 4.2.2.5. John Whitcomb says that Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, conquered Babylon, and that Gubaru, with an alias of Darius, was the subordinate of Cyrus appointed to rule Babylon.²⁹⁵
 - 4.2.2.6. E. J. Young says that the identity of the person is unknown as secular historical sources are silent concerning him. He says, however, that this should not affect our understanding of the Bible's accuracy and points to similar doubts in the past about Belshazzar (until his name was discovered in the Nabonidus Cylinders in 1881).²⁹⁶
 - 4.2.2.7. Some argue that since verse 31 says that Darius "received" the kingdom that this means that he did not capture it, but that it was handed to him by Cyrus. However, Cyrus did not have to fight to conquer Babylon after the siege, and therefore received the kingdom as the people surrendered to him.
 - 4.2.2.8. Darius may be Cyrus under a different name. The name 'Darius' may have been

²⁹³ Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 142-55.

²⁹⁴ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961), p. 238. See also, William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20. Autumn 1982, pp. 229-47,

²⁹⁵ John C Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede: The Historical Chronology of Daniel*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959).

²⁹⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinder_of_Nabonidus and

www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/c/cylinder_of_nabonidus.aspx

a localized name for Cyrus.²⁹⁷

4.2.2.8.1. It has been suggested that Cyrus was called ‘Darius the Mede’ with respect to his ancestry (at least on one side), whereas he was called ‘Cyrus’ with respect to his rule in the Empire. He could be Darius the Mede by descent (see, Dan 9.1) and Cyrus the Persian by title in his reign over Medo-Persia.

4.2.2.8.2. ‘Darius’ may be a nickname like referring to John F. Kennedy as ‘Jack’ or the ‘Irishman’.

4.2.2.8.3. That he had two names is not farfetched. Daniel and his three friends all had two names (Dan 1.7)—a Jewish one and a Babylonian one. It is possible that Cyrus had two names (one a Median, and the other a Persian name). People today often have two (or more) names depending on their cultural background; for example some of the Chinese people I worked with have Chinese names and Western names (e.g., Ting Li was Melanie, and Yan-Li Fu was Arey, etc.).

4.2.2.8.4. ‘Darius’ may have been his personal name and ‘Cyrus’ his royal assumed name. This would be similar to kings and popes, throughout history, taking a new name upon ascension, different from their birth name. Examples include:

4.2.2.8.4.1. Mithridates took the name Antiochus IV (Epiphanes; “Manifestation of god”) after he assumed the throne

4.2.2.8.4.2. George VI originally went by the name Albert but changed his public name to George to appear more English after his brother abdicated; his full name was Albert Frederick Arthur George Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

4.2.2.8.5. Daniel may refer to him first as the ‘Mede’ to emphasize the northern part of his realm with respect to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and other prophecies (Is 13.17; Is 21.2; Jer 51.11).

4.2.3. What is the evidence supporting the view that Darius is Cyrus?²⁹⁸

4.2.3.1. It was common for ancient rulers to use different names in various parts of their realms.

4.2.3.2. The age of Darius (about 62) is the same as the age of Cyrus at this time (assuming he was born in 600 BC, as secular history indicates).

4.2.3.3. Darius appointed 120 satraps (Dan 6.1). The cuneiform texts say that Cyrus appointed satraps in Babylon after its capture. It would be peculiar if Darius appointed satraps when Cyrus was around, if Darius was only a subordinate.

4.2.3.4. It seems unlikely that Darius would have issued a decree to all of the Persian empire (Dan 6.25-26) if he were only a subordinate ruler under Cyrus.

4.2.3.5. Ezra (Ezra 5.17) mentions that the decree of Cyrus was made from Babylon, although the record of the decree was found in Ecbatana, the summer residence of Cyrus in Media (Ezra 6.1, 2), not in Babylon. It seems, therefore, that it was Cyrus who was in Babylon at the time of Babylon’s fall and who received the kingdom of the Babylonians; and then issued the decree for the Jews to return.

4.2.3.6. Darius cast Daniel into the lions’ den (Dan 6.5-17). In *Bel and the Dragon* (in the Apocrypha; 15.1) it is Cyrus of Persia who casts him into the lions’ den.

4.2.3.7. Daniel chapter 9 (in particular verses 1-2, 25²⁹⁹) implies that the restoration of the Jews would occur during the first year of Darius’ reign. Other references in

²⁹⁷ D. J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 12-14.

²⁹⁸ Some of these reason are drawn from: James M. Bulman, “The Identification of Darius the Mede,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol 35, number 3, Spring 1973, pp. 247-267; www.scribd.com/doc/18735417/Identity-Of-Darius-The-Mede

²⁹⁹ Refer to the discussion about which decree of Cyrus is referred to in Dan 9.25 in the section entitled *Seventy Sevens*.

the Bible say that it was during Cyrus' first year (2 Chron 36.22; Ezra 1.1ff; Ezra 4.3; Ezra 5.13-15; Ezra 6.3-5).

- 4.2.4. What are some possible counter arguments—i.e., that Darius was not Cyrus?
 - 4.2.4.1. The English translations of Daniel 6.28 appear to present Darius and Cyrus as two separate individuals. However, the verse may be legitimately translated, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, *even* (or *that is*)³⁰⁰ the reign of Cyrus the Persian." The NIV has this alternate translation as a footnote.
 - 4.2.4.2. The name 'Darius' is not mentioned in the monuments as a name applied to Cyrus. However, this would make the silence of the archaeological evidence take precedence over the Bible. Daniel, guided by the Holy Spirit, tells us that Darius became king. We can accept this as historically accurate. If this was Cyrus (which it probably was) then Daniel has told us that an alternate name for Cyrus is Darius. We don't need any extra-Biblical evidence supporting this in order to accept it.
 - 4.2.4.3. The *Nabonidus Chronicle*³⁰¹ indicates that Gobryas [Ugbaru], the governor of Gutium, and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle on October 12th. Cyrus however did not enter Babylon until October 29th. Therefore, it is claimed by some that Gobryas is another name for Darius the Mede and that the Darius of Dan 5.31 cannot be Cyrus. However, the Biblical text does not say that Darius *entered* the city; rather it says that he "received the kingdom". His general Gobryas and army had taken Babylon without a battle. Ironically, those who claim that Darius and Gobryas are the same individual under different names are not willing to accept the possibility that Darius and Cyrus are the same individual under different names.
 - 4.2.5. The transference of the kingdom into the hands of a single person who headed the Medo-Persian Empire fulfills completely the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2).
 - 4.2.5.1. The transfer from the head of gold to the silver chest and arms is now complete.
 - 4.2.5.2. The identify of Darius with Cyrus reinforces the view that the second Empire in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar was the single Medo-Persian Empire and not a kingdom of the Medes followed by a third Empire which was Persian (as we discussed when we considered chapter 2).
 - 4.2.6. The identification of Darius as Cyrus, information that nonbiblical sources are unable to provide, indicates that Daniel had personal knowledge of Cyrus. This provides evidence that Daniel was written from a contemporary historical perspective and not ~300 years later.
5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 5.1. *Personal Dealings* – God deals with each person in an individually unique manner.
 - 5.1.1. While one king, Nebuchadnezzar, was given three warnings and spared from an early death, another, Belshazzar, was given one warning and brought to an immediate end.
 - 5.1.2. Why does God deal differently with each person?
 - 5.1.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar was comparatively ignorant about God. Belshazzar had Biblical revelation, Daniel 2-4 at least, and the witness of his grandfather. He deliberately preferred to pursue a program of paganism and debauchery in the face of knowledge of the truth. God often deals more harshly with those who have had exposure to the Gospel and reject it (Acts 17.30).
 - 5.1.2.2. God's dealings with some people are paradigmatic, setting an example of his mercy (e.g., miraculous healings [2 Ki 5.1-14] or special revelation [Dan 2.31-45]) or judicial punishment (e.g., being punished for touching the Ark of the

³⁰⁰ As an example, Judges 8.29, 30 (compare, Judges 7.1; Judges 8.35) translates the Hebrew 'and' as 'now'. Also, compare, Σαῦλος δέ, ὁ καὶ Παῦλος (Acts 13.9), which has a similar construct

³⁰¹ www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus/_/babylon02.html

- Covenant [2 Sam 6.6, 7] or for dishonestly reporting the amount from the sale of property [Acts 5.1-11]).
- 5.1.3. We must deal with God in the individual situations he has placed us.
 - 5.1.3.1. We should not compare God's dealings with us, with how he deals with others.
 - 5.1.3.2. We should not say "It isn't fair!"
 - 5.1.3.3. Rather, we should use each opportunity presented to us to determine if we need to repent and to learn how we may glorify him.
 - 5.2. *Providential Deity* – God is sovereign and moves according to His predetermined plans.
 - 5.2.1. God controls all nations and their kings.
 - 5.2.1.1. If someone were to read only the NT one might miss the clarity of this point.
 - 5.2.1.2. The OT prophets speaking to the nations clearly indicate that all nations are under God's control.
 - 5.2.1.3. Ironically, most people think of the OT as an exclusively Jewish book and the NT as and trans-national. In fact the OT is very clearly trans-national, calling on all the nations around Israel and beyond to believe in the only God, repent of grievous sins (e.g., idolatry) and follow God's law obediently.
 - 5.2.2. The statement of the writing on the wall indicated that the Babylonian Empire was under judgement by God.
 - 5.2.2.1. When God's purposes for Babylon had ended, God dismissed the nation.
 - 5.2.2.2. No one can resist God's will or challenge his purposes.
 - 5.2.3. While Babylon was going down, Daniel was clothed in purple and given a gold chain.
 - 5.2.3.1. God protected him through the regime transition.
 - 5.2.3.2. We have in this an example of a general principle in which we can take confidence: God protects his people (when it is his purpose to keep them in the world and not to take them home to be with him) regardless of how much disaster is unfolding around them.
 - 5.3. *Prophetic Determination* – God's word is accurate and trustworthy.
 - 5.3.1. If God says something, it is true. If he prophesies an event, it will transpire. If he promises something it will come to pass—provided the associated conditions are met.
 - 5.3.1.1. God prophesied the demise of Belshazzar, his dynasty, and Babylon through the writing on the wall. As he said, so it was!
 - 5.3.1.2. In like manner, God had declared through Jeremiah that Babylon would meet its end (Jer 25.11 at its appointed time). As he said, so it was! The seventy years were finished and Babylon is no more.
 - 5.3.1.3. In the same way, God declared through Isaiah the arrival of Cyrus (Is 44.28; Is 45:1) who would issue a decree for rebuilding the Temple. As he said, so it was!
 - 5.3.2. We can have absolute confidence in the Bible as God's word.
 - 5.3.2.1. We can be sure that what God reports in Genesis 1.1-31 is an accurate record of how the world came into existence.
 - 5.3.2.2. We know how sin came into the world and how it spoiled God's creation.
 - 5.3.2.3. We can be confident that man is an image-bearer of God and has a God-given purpose.
 - 5.3.2.4. We can believe that Jesus has provided a solution to the sin-problem, through his death and resurrection.
 - 5.3.2.5. We can hold our heads high knowing that we are blessed members of his Kingdom.
 - 5.3.2.6. We can look forward with confidence to the coming of our Lord and the resurrection of the dead.
 - 5.3.2.7. We can rejoice in the hope of an everlasting existence in a renovated universe.
 - 5.3.2.8. As he said, so it was! So it is! So it will be!
 - 5.4. *Punished Delinquencies* – God punishes wickedness.
 - 5.4.1. God cannot be trifled with, he holds all men accountable against the Ten

Commandments, will judge men accordingly, and will mete out punishment for every breach of his holy Law.

5.4.1.1. In particular, God is disgusted with the wickedness of blasphemy with respect to his holy name and his sacred objects or ordinances.

5.4.1.2. All forms of false worship are especially displeasing to him because they are direct sins against him. Other sins (e.g., theft) are first sins against our fellow men and indirectly sins against God. False worship is a direct slap in the face of Almighty God.

5.4.2. We want justice to be done and want it to be seen to be done.

5.4.2.1. We get frustrated when we see people getting away with unlawful and sinful behaviour (e.g., speeding, running red lights, stealing from supermarkets, consorting with prostitutes, etc.).

5.4.2.2. We can rest assured that their apparent escape from judgement is only temporary. God knows all, and will bring all their wicked actions to account.

5.4.2.3. We should rejoice in God's judgements because he is just in all his ways (Dt 32.4; Dan 4.37).

5.4.3. God punishes wickedness directly in life (e.g., the consequences of living a debauched life) and in death, through everlasting separation from his face and presence (Mt 25.41).

5.4.3.1. He punishes both individuals and nations.

5.4.3.2. We must, however, not point at others. God will punish us if we have not repented of our sin and had them all covered by the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

5.4.3.3. The message to Belshazzar teaches us that we are sinners, that we must repent and repent quickly, and that we must look to him for forgiveness.

Dungeon Trial (Dan 6.1-28)

Scheme (Dan 6.1-9)

1. How did Darius (Cyrus³⁰²) organize the administration of his kingdom?

1.1. He established 120 provincial territories with provincial governors over each.

1.1.1. Since there were 120 satraps (governors), there probably were 120 provinces.

5.4.3.4. Some commentators state that nonbiblical sources indicate that there were fewer. They then claim that Daniel's account is inaccurate and that it was probably written much later than the period it claims to be covering.

5.4.3.5. Why Bible 'scholars' cannot take the Biblical account at face value and as a reliable witness to history always causes no end of amazement. It is clear that in spite of their feigned interest in studying the Bible, they want to undermine it as the word of God.

5.4.3.6. Even if nonbiblical sources mention fewer provinces, there could be valid reasons; for example, the count of provinces may serve different purposes or may have been taken at different times.

5.4.3.7. The text does not speak of provinces *per se*, but of satraps, and there may have been (although unlikely) multiple satraps over some of the provinces. It is also possible that the organization mentioned in this account was an initial organization and that subsequent re-organizations are mentioned in the nonbiblical historical accounts.

1.1.2. About 60 years after the time of this account (539-538 BC) there were 127 provinces in an expanded Persian Empire (Est 1:1 [~480 BC]), so it is reasonable to accept the existence of 120 provinces at the time of Daniel.

1.1.3. Since Daniel said there were 120 satraps (and likely, provinces) we should accept it as a fact. In other instances where sceptics have claimed that the Bible is wrong, when

³⁰² As we noted when we studied chapter 5, verses 29-31, Darius is probably another name for Cyrus; we will use 'Darius' as we study chapter 6, since Daniel uses the name 'Darius' in the Biblical text.

- compared with nonbiblical history, the Bible has been vindicated with subsequent archaeological or textual discoveries.
- 1.2. He divided the 120 provinces into three super-territories and placed three over these regions.
 - 1.2.1. The ESV had ‘presidents’ (changed to ‘high officials’ in the latest edition) whereas the NIV has ‘administrators’.
 - 1.2.1.1. The Aramaic is: ܫܪܦ which can be translated ‘administrator’, ‘high official’, ‘public officer’.
 - 1.2.1.2. It is probably better to use ‘administrators’ because ‘president’ has a very different connotation in our age, as it implies a position that is elected.
 - 1.2.2. The satraps were responsible to the three administrators
 - 1.2.3. Possibly there were 40 satraps to each administrator. However, the allocation was probably not equal since some of the provinces, such as Babylon and Egypt would have had considerably larger populations and likely required significantly more administrative attention.
 - 1.3. What was the role of the three territorial administrators?
 - 1.3.1. To hold accountable the provincial satraps.
 - 1.3.2. To ensure that the king did not suffer any loss.
 - 1.3.3. The three territorial administrators, probably had the following duties:
 - 1.3.3.1. Act as supreme justices, to hear complaints, receive appeals, and administer justice decisions and sentences.
 - 1.3.3.2. Ensure that the provincial administrators were not abusing or inflicting harsh discipline on the empires’ subjects in their provinces, which might cause them to rise up in rebellion.
 - 1.3.3.3. Audit the accounts of the provincial administrators under their jurisdiction to ensure that they were collecting and remitting taxes accurately to the central treasury and spending funds wisely.
 - 1.3.3.4. Review the public works projects of the provincial administrators to ensure that they were carrying them out in accord with the wishes of the emperor.
 - 1.3.3.5. Levy manpower from the provinces for military and central administrative purposes.
 2. Who was one of the senior administrators, who is named in the account?
 - 2.1. Daniel.
 - 2.2. How does Daniel refer to himself?
 - 2.2.1. He writes in the third-person; almost as a disinterested historian.
 - 2.3. What was Daniel’s purpose for including the account (in chapter 6) in his record?
 - 2.3.1. Daniel did not write an autobiography or a comprehensive history of the Babylonian and the Persian Empires.
 - 2.3.1.1. He was selective in terms of what he recorded.
 - 2.3.1.2. Even though he was an important man across multiple governments he did not focus on his own accomplishments and history.
 - 2.3.2. The history he has included, so far, covers:
 - 2.3.2.1. Chapter 1 – The arrival of the Judean youth at the Babylonian civil service academy and the test of their faithfulness related to the food sacrificed to idols (c605BC).
 - 2.3.2.2. Chapter 2 – Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the large image (c603 BC).
 - 2.3.2.3. Chapter 3 – The test of the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the challenge of Nebuchadnezzar’s false worship (c593 BC).
 - 2.3.2.4. Chapter 4 – Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling for seven years as he lived like an ox (570-563 BC).
 - 2.3.2.5. Chapter 5 – Belshazzar’s debauched birthday party (539 BC).
 - 2.3.2.6. Chapter 6 – The test of Daniel’s faithfulness when facing the challenge of the

- jealous government administrators and the lions' den (sometime after 539 BC).
- 2.3.3. Daniel served as an advisor to kings for about 70 years, and his work covered the entire period of the Jewish Babylonian Captivity.
 - 2.3.3.1. At this point in his life he is probably in his 84th year (or older).
 - 2.3.4. He selected incidents from the two empires which helped reinforce his purposes. The material he selected to include in his book is for our instruction, to:
 - 2.3.4.1. Demonstrate God's sovereignty over the nations.
 - 2.3.4.2. Confirm our faith in God's power and ability to work on behalf of his people.
 - 2.3.4.3. Encourage the saints to faithful obedience.
 - 2.4. What is significant about his being one of the three administrators?
 - 2.4.1. He had been an advisor in a former administration, in a different dynasty, in a conquered empire.
 - 2.4.1.1. Darius would have had his own trusted administrators who had come with him from Persia.
 - 2.4.1.2. However, the kings of the ancient Near East often incorporated leaders of conquered people in their governments.
 - 2.4.1.3. Even so, that Daniel would have been one of the top three administrators is a surprise.
 - 2.4.2. Daniel, was not 'royalty' from the current or previous regime. He was, originally, a hostage slave.
 - 2.4.3. Daniel was very old and the workload of a regional administrator would have been great.
 - 2.4.4. We see God's providence at work, keeping Daniel safe and providing for the Jews in captivity so that they would not be oppressed under a new master who did not know them as Nebuchadnezzar did.
 - 2.5. What might have contributed to the inclusion of Daniel in Darius' administration?
 - 2.5.1. When he arrived in the city (Dan 5.29, 30) of Babylon, he may have found Daniel, who had been appointed to the third-highest position in the Babylonian empire (but who was not a dynastic threat), clothed in royal garments. On enquiring into who he was, he would have found out about the interpretation of the writing on the wall earlier that evening (or the night before) and may have been impressed; to the extent that he wanted this powerful 'Chaldean' to serve in his own kingdom.
 - 2.5.2. Darius may have been informed by his staff of Daniel's skill in interpreting dreams and he may have heard of (may even have had copies of) the prophecies recorded in the book of Daniel (e.g., about the body of silver in chapter 2, and the prophecies in chapter 7 and 8). Darius may have understood the prophecies to be speaking about himself and his dynasty (Dan 2.39; Dan 7.5; Dan 8.3, 20). Notice how explicit 8.20 is in referring to the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.
 - 2.5.3. Daniel's reputation may have been known beyond the bounds of the Babylonian Empire (e.g., Ezk 14.14, 20; Ezk 28.3).
 - 2.5.4. He had been an advisor throughout almost the entire Babylonian period and by this point he may have been known in Persia.
 - 2.5.4.1. He may have served as an ambassador to Elam or Persia, representing Nebuchadnezzar or one of the kings that followed him (specifically Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father).
 - 2.5.4.2. It is possible that Darius had met Daniel before Darius' conquest of Babylon.
 - 2.5.4.3. That Daniel may have been in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire, may be hinted at in his vision (chapter 8). He saw himself standing by the canal (Dan 8.2) in Susa, and recognized it as such from having seen the city. He may have been in Susa on Babylonian business (Dan 8.27) at the time of his vision.
 - 3. What did Darius plan to do, that upset the civil servants? (3)
 - 3.1. To promote Daniel to the highest position in the kingdom, second only to the king himself.

- 3.1.1. Daniel may have had a similar position in Nebuchadnezzar's administration (Dan 2.48).
- 3.1.2. He was brought out of retirement. He likely had not had an administrative position under Belshazzar. For example, as we saw when we studied chapter 5, Belshazzar appeared not to have known Daniel personally (Dan 5.11).
- 3.1.3. His position under Darius would have had greater responsibility since the physical size of the empire was twice as big, the number of provinces was increased, and the population was substantially greater.
- 3.2. What are possible reasons why Daniel was selected for this position?
 - 3.2.1. Age – He was probably around 84 years old; age in the AME was respected as being wise (Job 32.6, 7; Prov 16.31; Prov 20.29). Even at this age he seems to have been able in both body and mind to take on a new assignment and role. He was an oak in an administration of willows (sycophants that bent with the winds).
 - 3.2.2. Experience – Daniel had served in Nebuchadnezzar's administration for 39 years. He knew how to administer an empire.
 - 3.2.3. Performance – In a short time serving Darius he demonstrated his skills so that he distinguished himself above the other two administrators (Prov 22.29).
 - 3.2.3.1. He strove to perform with quality, for the Lord (Col 3.23), and did not make mistakes or blunders.
 - 3.2.4. Character – He displayed an excellent spirit. What might this have included?
 - 3.2.4.1. He was scrupulously honest so the king had suffered no loss (2).
 - 3.2.4.2. He served faithfully (Dan 1.21) in whatever task he was assigned.
 - 3.2.4.3. He was prudent and did not waste the king's resources either on himself (e.g., by throwing lavish parties) or through negligence.
 - 3.2.4.4. He was wise beyond his years. We saw this in how he handled the situation during his training (chapter 1) when he refused to eat the food presented to idols. His advanced age only added to his wisdom.
 - 3.2.5. Spirit filled – The excellent spirit that was on him was ultimately the Holy Spirit who inspired and guided Daniel.
- 3.3. What does this plan say about Darius?
 - 3.3.1. He was able to see character and competency and to select it over other considerations.
 - 3.3.2. At least in Daniel's case, he was not given to nepotism (appointing relatives or friends).
- 4. How did the other civil servants react to Darius' plan? (4)
 - 4.1. They were envious of Daniel's pending promotion. Why?
 - 4.1.1. In many situations men become envious of those who are given power or prestige when they think that they deserve the promotion.
 - 4.1.1.1. They would have felt that their tenure and long service should have counted for something.
 - 4.1.1.2. They would have believed that the enlarged kingdom would have increased their opportunities for advancement.
 - 4.1.1.3. Basic envy settles in when people see others being rewarded (Eccl 4.4; Mk 7.22; Rom 1.29; Gal 5.21).
 - 4.1.1.4. Envy often raises a more ugly front when the person receiving the honours is an especially good and humble man. Envy is worse when the object of the envy is a better person. The ones who are envious think of the person gaining advancement as some sort of 'goody two shoes'. Sinful men do not like the display of virtue (Rom 1.32).
 - 4.1.1.4.1. The Jewish religious leaders handed over Jesus to be crucified out of envy (Mt 27.18).
 - 4.1.1.4.2. Consider how unpopular Tim Tebow is with many in the media.
 - 4.1.2. Men often think more highly of themselves than they really are and overlook their weaknesses and incompetence, and think that they deserved the honour rather than

another person.

4.1.2.1. This is even more exaggerated as men are elevated to positions of power and prestige. They let their promotions go to their heads and start to think that they are better or more important than they really are.

4.1.2.2. It takes great self-examination and insight for a person to be truthful with himself about his performance—unless there is an external objective measure (e.g., a stopwatch or a scoreboard).

4.1.2.3. There is even a name for this phenomenon in social psychology: *illusory superiority*.

4.1.2.4. It is a bias in our thinking and self-perception that causes us to overestimate our positive qualities and abilities and to underestimate our negative qualities, relative to others.

4.1.2.5. This phenomenon can be seen in areas such as: intelligence or memory, skilled task performance, personality traits such as humour or likability, physical appearance, communication abilities, physical fitness and health, etc.

4.1.2.6. For example:³⁰³

4.1.2.6.1. Most people think that they are above average drivers.³⁰⁴

4.1.2.6.2. The majority of university faculty rate themselves in the top 25% in teaching ability.

4.1.2.6.3. Almost 90% of MBA students in a top university rate their performance as above the median (middle).

4.1.2.6.4. Stock market traders invariably think they are the best and most likely to succeed.

4.1.2.6.5. Trial lawyers believe that their abilities will help them win cases.

4.1.2.6.6. People generally have exaggerated perceptions of their own popularity, particularly in comparison to their own friends.

4.1.2.6.7. Almost everyone thinks that he lives a ‘pretty good life’ and is ‘better than average’ when it comes to morality, and will ‘make it safely through’ on the Judgement Day.

4.1.2.7. Why do people think this way?

4.1.2.7.1. Social psychologists posit various reasons such as:

4.1.2.7.1.1. Selective comparison, focus on one’s perceived strengths relative to other’s weaknesses in order to appear better on the whole.

4.1.2.7.1.2. Egocentrism, the idea that one is more important than others.

4.1.2.7.1.3. Focalism, where the object in focus is given more attention.

4.1.2.7.1.4. Individual versus the aggregate, in which any single member of a group is evaluated more positively than the average member of that group.

4.1.2.7.2. Paul in Romans 1.18-22 tells us the underlying reason, which is self-deception.³⁰⁵ Jeremiah indicates that the problem is because the human heart is, by nature, desperately wicked (Jer 17.9). Sin causes us not to be able to discern our own real condition.

4.1.3. How are Christians to respond when others receive rewards, such as promotions?

4.1.3.1. Not to be envious (1 Pt 2.1).

³⁰³Most of these examples were derived from “Illusory superiority” on *Wikipedia* where they are documented with references; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illusory_superiority

³⁰⁴ Frank P. McKenna, Robert A. Staniera and Clive Lewis, “Factors underlying illusory self-assessment of driving skill in males and females,” *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, Vol. 23, Issue 1, February 1991, Pages 45-52.

³⁰⁵ Greg Bahnsen, “The Crucial Concept of Self-Deception in Presuppositional Apologetics,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, LVII (1995) 1-31; www.cmfnow.com/articles/pa207.htm

- 4.1.3.2. To be content with our situation and not be envious (Prov 14.30).
- 4.1.3.3. In particular, not to be envious of sinners (Prov 3.31; Prov 23.17; Ps 73.3) who might get ahead.
- 4.2. They attempted to find a fault with him.
 - 4.2.1. They wanted to find something which they could use as a complaint or charge against Daniel that they could bring before the king. Why?
 - 4.2.1.1. Their hope was that if they could find something against Daniel they could discredit him and that the king might demote him or dismiss him.
 - 4.2.1.2. The Jewish leaders attempted to do the same thing with Jesus (Lk 11.54) so that they could discredit him.
 - 4.2.2. What was the particular area in which they hoped to find fault?
 - 4.2.2.1. With “regard to the kingdom” (ESV), or “his conduct of government affairs” (NIV).
 - 4.2.2.2. What kinds of things were they looking for?
 - 4.2.2.2.1. Abuse of power
 - 4.2.2.2.2. Exploitation
 - 4.2.2.2.3. Embezzlement
 - 4.2.2.2.4. Accepting bribes
 - 4.2.2.2.5. Dishonesty
 - 4.2.2.3. The things they were looking for in Daniel’s behaviour were likely the very things they were doing. They would know what to look for because they had personal practical experience with them.
 - 4.2.3. What is a key word in the first part of this verse (4) that helps us understand what is happening?
 - 4.2.3.1. They ‘sought’ or ‘tried’ to find something against him.
 - 4.2.3.1.1. This indicates that they had to look hard for some area of fault.
 - 4.2.3.1.2. No man is sinless, and Daniel was not sinless. But, whatever his faults, they were not obvious or the civil servants would not have had to look for something with which to accuse Daniel.
 - 4.2.3.1.3. Considering that they tried to find fault, it indicates that Daniel’s judgement and behaviour must have been exemplary and above reproach.
 - 4.2.3.2. Since the nobles of the realm envied Daniel they betrayed their malice by showing that they had no regard for the public good, but desired to seize upon all things for their own interests. In their behaviour we observe the natural consequence of envy.
- 5. What was the problem with the administrators intended scheme?
 - 5.1. The civil servants were unable to find any fault with Daniel which they could bring before the king as a complaint.
 - 5.2. Why were they unable to find any faults?
 - 5.2.1. It was not because they had not looked hard enough.
 - 5.2.2. Rather it was because, as we are told, he was without any faults.
 - 5.2.2.1. As we noted above, his lack of faults was not because he was sinless.
 - 5.2.2.2. Rather, it was with respect to the execution of his official duties that they could find no fault with him.
 - 5.2.3. In what areas of his character and behaviour was he faultless?
 - 5.2.3.1. He was faithful. He carried out his assigned duties promptly and efficiently.
 - 5.2.3.2. He was trustworthy. The king never needed to audit Daniel’s revenue or expenditure accounts
 - 5.2.3.3. He was competent and did not make mistakes while performing his duties. He did not cause unnecessary expenses to the royal treasury because of malpractice.

- 5.2.4. We are not told how long Daniel had been serving Darius by the time Darius was planning on promoting him, but it is evident that Daniel's character and integrity had made a favourable impression on Darius and on the others in the royal court.
 - 5.2.4.1. A man of integrity stands out among his peers in government, business, or sports.
 - 5.2.4.2. People may think his profession of Christianity odd and think him a bit of kook, but nevertheless his integrity is noticeable.
- 5.3. Daniel is a type of Christ and an example of what those who follow Jesus should be like.
 - 5.3.1. We find a parallel with Jesus when the Jewish leaders could not find any fault with which to accuse him and had to manufacture false witnesses against him (Mt 26.59-61).
- 6. How did the administrators contrive to bring trouble on Daniel? (5-8)
 - 6.1. They used Daniel's observance of the law of God in their attempt to bring him down.
 - 6.1.1. They decided that they would have to find a basis for an accusation against him in the area of his religious practices.
 - 6.1.2. In particular they used his observance of true worship practices (10), and conversely his rejection of false worship practices (7).
 - 6.1.3. His religious practices were obviously well known to them.
 - 6.1.3.1. Daniel continued to stay faithful to the observance of the religious practices he had been taught as a child and to what he understood from the portion of the Bible available to him. For at least 84 (~71 in captivity) years he continued this faithful observance.
 - 6.1.3.2. What might have been some of the things that made his religious observance obvious?
 - 6.1.3.2.1. Sabbath keeping; not working on the Lord's holy day; as set aside at the time of creation (Gen 2.3) and in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.8-11).
 - 6.1.3.2.2. Abstinence from meat sacrificed to idols (Dan 1.8).
 - 6.1.3.2.3. Nonparticipation in pagan festivals; implied by his apparent absence from the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's image on the plains of Dura (recorded in chapter 3).
 - 6.1.3.2.4. Regular devotional observances (Dan 6.10; Ps 55.17).
 - 6.1.3.2.5. Exemplary way of life (3) with no participation in debauched parties.
 - 6.1.4. It is to God's glory and Daniel's credit, and an example to us, that the most offensive thing that the civil servants in Darius' government could find against Daniel was his observance of true worship practices.
 - 6.1.5. Why was Daniel in danger?
 - 6.1.5.1. There was no law that required Daniel to espouse the king's religion or prevented him from serving the king as an adherent of another religion.
 - 6.1.5.1.1. The Babylonians and Medes and Persians were broadly polytheistic and absorbed most pagan rituals from their conquered lands.
 - 6.1.5.1.2. They would have claimed a religious tolerance that permitted many religious practices.
 - 6.1.5.1.3. However, the pagans knew of the uniqueness of Daniel's religion and that, if pressed, Daniel would have claimed exclusivity for the true worship of God.
 - 6.1.5.2. Because he was sincere about the correct and regular worship of God.
 - 6.1.5.3. Because he made his religious practices consistent with his profession of belief.
 - 6.1.5.4. Because he did not compromise truth and true practice for personal convenience or safety.
 - 6.1.6. What are some examples of how evil men in our day do something similar in their attacks against Christians?

- 6.1.6.1. Homosexuals take items for photocopying into an establishment known to be run by Christians and challenge them to copy pornography or announcements about homosexual events so that they can press charges against them for discrimination if they refuse to copy the material.
- 6.1.6.2. Homosexuals demand that Christian clerks provide them with marriage certificates.³⁰⁶
- 6.1.6.3. Homosexuals book places in B&Bs run by Christians so that they can charge them with discrimination if they refuse to let them stay at their establishment.³⁰⁷
- 6.1.6.4. Radical feminists target pregnancy care centres, attempting to expose false claims or intolerant practices.³⁰⁸
- 6.2. They conspired together to flatter the king and to hide their true motives from him as they brought before him their petition.
 - 6.2.1. They came together by agreement and colluded in their plot against Daniel.
 - 6.2.1.1. They were able to suspend their jealousy of one another to cooperate in their hatred of a righteous man.
 - 6.2.1.2. We can picture them sneaking through the back alleys of Susa (assuming that Daniel was there, rather than in Babylon) at night to enter the rear entrance of one of the local administrator's palaces. Then, they would have sat cross-legged or reclined on their cushions to eat a multi-course meal served by a harem of scantily clad maidens. Their dinner party would have been filled with crude jokes and raucous laughter. Afterwards, they would have sat puffing their hookahs while they brainstormed ideas for how to bring down Daniel. They would have examined different ways to approach the king and the potential consequences depending on how he reacted. They never thought of the worst possible scenario—their whole scheme backfiring and themselves ending up as a lions' lunch (Prov 26:27; Ps 7:15).
 - 6.2.1.3. Then they went as a delegation to the king. They believed that if they showed a united front the king would be more ready to hear their suggestion. Bullies are bravest when they have their peers with them!
 - 6.2.2. They flattered the king (6-8).
 - 6.2.2.1. They used a common greeting for approaching a king (we considered the use of this greeting when we looked at 2.4). In summary, this greeting:
 - 6.2.2.1.1. Appears to be as old as the ancient Akkadian kingdoms (c 2350 BC); i.e., going back to shortly after the Flood.
 - 6.2.2.1.2. Applies primarily to the reputation of the recipient or his dynasty, not an expectation that the individual person will actually not experience death.
 - 6.2.2.1.3. May include an element of blessing. This greeting was probably used insincerely, as an empty formality, by the territorial administrators.
 - 6.2.2.2. They treated the king as a demigod.
 - 6.2.2.2.1. We have noted previously that in the kingdoms of the AME, the kings were regarded as representatives of the gods, if not sons of the gods, or gods in their own right.
 - 6.2.2.2.2. They reinforced this belief by suggesting that people should pray to him as a god.
 - 6.2.2.2.2.1. It is possible that their suggestion was that people could pray to their own gods through Darius, rather than *to* him.

³⁰⁶ Kevin Kisilowsky, "One Canadian's story of Religious persecution, C.A.R.E. (*Christian Apologetics Research & Evangelism*) Ministries of Winnipeg; www.carewinnipeg.com/CanReligiousPersecution.html

³⁰⁷ Susan Lazaruk, "Homosexuals and BCHRT terrorize Christian B&B owners: Gays, gospels battle it out again in rights court," *No Apologies*, 2010-03-12; noapologies.ca/?p=7296

³⁰⁸ community.feministing.com/2009/05/pregnancy-care-centres.html

- 6.2.2.2.2. They would suggest that people did not need to abandon their own god's but could use Darius as the mediator to their gods.
- 6.2.2.2.3. This would be similar to the mythology in Roman Catholicism where one prays to Mary or the saints, but in their thinking they are praying through these mediators to Jesus.³⁰⁹
- 6.2.2.3. They made the king think that his laws were timeless and above all other laws.
- 6.2.2.4. They feigned loyalty and made it appear that they had only the king's interests in mind.
- 6.3. They used the psychology of peer pressure to influence the king.
 - 6.3.1. The administrators acted in concert to present their petition before the king.
 - 6.3.2. By doing this they were using a form of peer pressure on the king, even though they were not technically his peers. With dozens, and possibly a hundred-plus, administrators in agreement, the king would have felt pressured to acquiesce to their recommendation.
 - 6.3.3. This form of pressure has been labeled as 'herd mentality'. It provides a label for what occurs when people are influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviours, follow trends, or purchase items. The concept was addressed by Sigmund Freud and Wilfred Trotter in their book *Herd Instincts in Peace and War*, considered a classic in the field of social psychology. Sociologists and economists have written about it, showing how individuals imitate others in their spending on consumer goods. In 2004, Malcolm Gladwell used the concept in *The Tipping Point*, where he shows how cultural, social, and economic factors converge to influence consumer behavior. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, used the term disparagingly speaking of the subservient crowd (of anarchists and socialists), in contrast to the 'superman' who could stand on his own, whom he extols in *Thus Spoke Zarathushtra*.
- 6.4. They recommended the creation of a law against worship of the true God.
 - 6.4.1. They used the power of human law against truth.
 - 6.4.1.1. They pretended that the law was in the king's best interest in order to attack God's law.
 - 6.4.1.2. Advisors to presidents and prime ministers do the same sort of thing today when they advise adoption of a specific course which will increase the leaders' popularity among specific special interest groups.
 - 6.4.2. They made it a temporary law so that it would appear to be less offensive.
 - 6.4.2.1. They put a time limit of thirty days on the law. This would allow them sufficient time to carry out their evil plans against Daniel but not make the king suspicious that they were plotting evil—he would merely think that they were honouring him.
 - 6.4.2.2. The provision of 'temporary' laws allows the proponents to get their way and breakdown resistance to the establishment of a more permanent enactment of a similar law. Examples where temporary measures can erode freedoms, include:
 - 6.4.2.2.1. Emergency or war measures acts allow for the suspension of certain freedoms, due process, and legal rights such as *habeas corpus*³¹⁰ and the requirement for search warrants.
 - 6.4.2.2.2. Income tax acts in the UK (1842)³¹¹, US (1913)³¹², and Canada (1917)³¹³ were introduced as temporary measures (e.g., to pay off war debts) and have been continued to finance general government

³⁰⁹ www.catholic.com/library/Praying_to_the_Saints.asp

³¹⁰ "You may have the body" is a legal recourse by which a person who is arrested can be released from unlawful detention when sufficient evidence of criminal acts is lacking.

³¹¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Income_Tax_Act_1842

³¹² history1900s.about.com/od/1910s/qt/incometax.htm

³¹³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taxation_in_Canada

activities. These taxes have permitted the growth of large government bureaucracies and the introduction of social engineering and income redistribution schemes.

6.4.2.3. They only wanted to get rid of Daniel, however, if the result had been as they expected they probably would have tried to enact more permanent legislation and bring all the Jews into danger, as was done in the later Persian Empire at the time of Esther.

6.4.3. They recommended that the law be signed/sealed.

6.4.3.1. Signing or sealing laws announces the power of the one holding the pen.

6.4.3.2. Signing or sealing laws makes them appear to be more official.

6.4.3.3. Famous (or infamous) signing ceremonies include:

6.4.3.3.1. King John signing the *Magna Carta* by attaching the Great Seal; in a meadow at Runnymede on June 15, 1215.

6.4.3.3.2. Signing of the Solemn League and Covenant by both Houses of Parliament and the Scottish commissioners on September 25, 1643.

6.4.3.3.3. Signing of the Declaration of Independence in the Assembly Room, by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776,

6.4.3.3.4. Signing the Treaty of Versailles, in the Hall of Mirrors, June 28, 1919.³¹⁴

6.4.3.3.5. Roosevelt signing the Social Security Act (August 14, 1935)³¹⁵

6.4.3.3.6. Franklin Roosevelt signing a declaration of war against Japan (Dec 8, 1941)³¹⁶

6.4.3.3.7. Franklin Roosevelt signing a declaration of war against Germany (Dec 11, 1941)³¹⁷

6.4.3.3.8. John F. Kennedy signing the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, October 7, 1963.³¹⁸

6.4.3.3.9. President Obama signing the Health Care Overhaul Bill, with 22 pens, March 22, 2010.³¹⁹

6.4.4. What are examples of God-haters (antichrists) using manmade laws today against true worship of God and Christianity?

6.4.4.1. Creating zoning laws and municipal by-laws which prohibit the assembly of Christians (e.g., for home Bible studies, but not Tupperware parties), or the construction of church buildings.

6.4.4.2. Prohibiting Christian groups on university campuses from requiring adherence to a particular statement of faith for those who would be executives of the group.

6.4.4.3. Creating protest-free zones around abortuaries

6.4.4.4. Liberals and anti-constitutionals who use the laws when it is to their advantage but ignore the laws when it is not. Christians, by contrast are to obey the law in all situations (except when a law commands them to do something that is contrary to God's law; Acts 4.19, 20; Acts 5.29) whether they like the law or not.

6.5. They included the threat of severe punishment as the consequence for breach of the law.

6.5.1. In their minds, it was not sufficient to bring down Daniel or to have him removed from office, they wanted utterly to destroy him.

6.5.2. Their plan was to expose him to an extremely painful form of execution—being torn to death by ravenous beasts. Chopping off his head would have been too quick and 'painless'. They wanted to inflict considerable mental and physical pain using "cruel and unusual punishment".

³¹⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles

³¹⁵ queencityma.wordpress.com/2009/11/13/roosevelt-signing-the-social-security-act-august-14-1935/

³¹⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Franklin_Roosevelt_signing_declaration_of_war_against_Japan.jpg

³¹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Franklin_Roosevelt_signing_declaration_of_war_against_Germany.jpg

³¹⁸ www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/314791/119459/US-President-John-F-Kennedy-signing-the-Nuclear-Test-Ban

³¹⁹ www.nytimes.com/2010/03/24/health/policy/24health.html

- 6.5.3. It is Satan's desire to silence God's people through the strongest possible abuse he can heap on them. If it were not for God's protective grace, Satan would cause far more havoc than he does now.
7. What did Darius do with the administrators' scheme? Why?
- 7.1. He went along with their scheme and signed/sealed the decree declaring himself to be the only permitted object of worship or prayer-path to the gods.
- 7.2. He was:
- 7.2.1. *Fiendish* – He was a pawn of Satan; being used in an attempt to stifle good. He was of course no robot, his own wicked spirit compelled him to do wrong.
- 7.2.2. *Flattered* – He let the adulation and praise blind him to his humanity and humble status before the true God.
- 7.2.2.1. Since the laws of the Medo-Persian Empire were proverbially and traditionally irrevocable (Est 1.19; Est 8.8), he was putting his law over God's law and declaring himself to be a god.
- 7.2.3. *Foolish* – He let the plotting administrators lead him like a dupe at a mystics' fair.
- 7.2.4. *Foiled* – He did not think through the consequences of his actions and was backed into a corner without realizing it.
- 7.2.4.1. Since the laws of the Medo-Persian Empire irrevocable, he put himself into a position where he would have to live with the consequences of the law.
- 7.2.4.2. He was in a similar situation to Jephthah (Judges 11.30-31) and Herod (Mk 6.22-29) who made rash vows and had latter to face the consequences—taking the life of an innocent person.
- 7.2.5. What key lessons, for kings, rulers, leaders, and legislatures can be taken from this example?
- 7.2.5.1. They need to slow down and consider the short-term and long-term ramifications of what they propose to enact. They often make laws too hastily, in reactionary mode, and do not think through all the consequences of their legislation.³²⁰
- 7.2.5.2. Determine the real motive that people have for proposing particular laws. Often the laws are proposed out of jealousy or to increase the power of special interest groups (unions, university administrators, people of a particular skin colour, etc.). For example, the SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) which was before the US legislature in 2012 was clearly a piece of legislation put forward by corporations and individuals (from 'Hollywood') with vested interests.
- 7.2.5.3. It would be best if governments made as few laws as possible. Too much of government thinking today is driven by a call for 'action,' and 'action' is shown by a legislative timetable. What Tacitus said is true: "The more corrupt the state, the more it legislates." or more literally, "... laws were most numerous when the commonwealth was most corrupt."³²¹
8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (1-9)
- 8.1. *Character Witness* – Christian character stands out, and should stand out.
- 8.1.1. In Daniel's case, his fellow administrators knew that he was a Christian.³²²
- 8.1.2. In our case, our co-workers and neighbours are to know that we are Christians through our manner of speech (what we say and how we say it) and way of life.
- 8.1.3. In Daniel's case his character stood out as exemplary among his peers. We noted that he had a reputation for honesty, faithfulness, prudence, wisdom, and experience; and that he was Spirit filled. His peers were unable to find any faults with him.

³²⁰ We will consider the problem of *unintended consequences* in law-making when we study the next section—Spite (10-18).

³²¹ Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, Book III, 27, 117 AD;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D27

³²² It is not anachronistic to refer to the OT believers as 'Christians'. They were trusting in faith in the Anointed One (Messiah/Christ) as do NT believers.

- 8.1.4. There was nothing in Daniel's character that made him a saint above what we can and should display through God's grace. Our character should stand out in the same way as Daniel's.
- 8.1.5. Only a select few Christians will be in powerful positions like Daniel's. However, it is not recognition for our powerful positions that we are to seek but recognition for our proven probity.³²³ In whatever place God has assigned us we are to exemplify Christian character.
 - 8.1.5.1. A good example is Joseph, who displayed Christian character while a peon, a prisoner, and a prince.
- 8.2. *Correct Worship* – There was another aspect of Daniel's situation which stood out, beside his personal character; it was his religious practice.
 - 8.2.1. It is possible, through God's general grace, that there will be individuals who are not Christians who will *display* many (even all) of the character attributes which Daniel displayed. Sadly, some people who are not Christians display some of these attributes to a greater degree than some Christians; to our shame!
 - 8.2.2. However, what also stood out in Daniel's case, and was noted by his peers, was his faithful observance of true worship over a lifetime. Daniel not only believed in the true God but also worshiped correctly. He viewed the form, or as some disparagingly call it the 'mechanics', of worship to be as important as his attitude of worship. He believed in the principle that true worship is worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4.23).
 - 8.2.2.1. Daniel had not been willing to compromise the practice of true worship for convenience or circumstance. We noted that his way of worship probably stood out in the following areas:
 - 8.2.2.1.1. Sabbath keeping.
 - 8.2.2.1.2. Abstinence from meat sacrificed to idols.
 - 8.2.2.1.3. Nonparticipation in pagan festivals.
 - 8.2.2.1.4. Regular devotional observances.
 - 8.2.3. As with Christian character attributes, there can be people who are not Christians who observe the outward form of true worship; but hypocrites are generally soon discovered.
 - 8.2.4. When Christians stand for truth in respect to God's Law—his requirements for worship and walk—the world turns against them with an ugly venom.
 - 8.2.4.1. Our society claims to believe in religious tolerance.
 - 8.2.4.1.1. Their definition of 'tolerance' is that a person can practice anything he wishes, as long as he doesn't bother other people or impose his beliefs on other people.
 - 8.2.4.1.2. Their view that multiple *opinions* must be allowed to co-exist in the 'marketplace' fails when challenged by the clash of two conflicting beliefs that are diametrically opposed. One view eventually has to prevail over the other (or both fail); and generally it is the majority's view (whether or not it is valid) that wins out. When reduced to its simplest form, the end of 'pluralism' is that man's *opinion* becomes supreme and we become subjected to the tyranny of the masses.
 - 8.2.4.1.3. As an example: "The [US] Supreme Court ruled on Monday that a public university can refuse to officially recognize a Christian student group that bars membership to those who violate its beliefs. In a 5-4 decision split along ideological lines, the high court agreed with a decision by the University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco to refuse to grant a campus chapter of the Christian Legal Society because it expressly barred gays and non-Christians."³²⁴

³²³ The quality of having strong moral principles, honesty and decency.

³²⁴ Ben Conery, "Supreme Court rules against group that bans gays", *Washington Post*, 2010-06-24; www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jun/28/supreme-court-rules-against-group-that-bans-gays/

- 8.2.4.1.4. Of course, while they speak of ‘tolerance’ they want to impose *their* beliefs on other people—i.e., that religion is a private matter but sexual practices can be publically exposed and espoused.
- 8.2.4.2. Many in the Church would claim the same thing—i.e., that men have a *right* to their own religious beliefs and practices. For example, one organization that states that their “mission is to spread the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, and to encourage its acceptance through apologetics-focused evangelistic outreach efforts”³²⁵ includes in their statement of faith the following item: “9. Religious Liberty: We believe in religious liberty; that every person has the right to practice and propagate his or her beliefs.”³²⁶
- 8.2.4.2.1. This is a false view. People do not have a *right* to practice and propagate falsehood. Man does not have a *right* to proclaim atheism or any false religion, nor to endorse the existence of a plurality of religious views (Ex 20.4-6; Dt 8.19; Ps 53.1; Mt 4.10; Acts 17.22-31).
- 8.2.4.2.2. The modern idea of religious tolerance (toleration) largely developed after the English Revolution and the Enlightenment.
- 8.2.4.2.3. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (along with other, earlier, Reformed confessions) does not use the word ‘tolerance’. It was written in a period of history hot with persecution and yet it continues to express the belief that there is, and can be, the endorsement of only one religion—the true one—by the state.
- 8.2.4.2.4. A study of the history of, and views about, religious tolerance is too detailed for our considerations today, especially since any topic of religious tolerance must address numerous difficult questions, such as:
- 8.2.4.2.4.1. What are the boundaries for religious tolerance? For example, most people would not permit false religions to sacrifice children or adults (like the Moabites or Aztecs) or practice ‘honour killing’. The real issue is not if there will be boundaries, but where they will be drawn. Some practices must be excluded.
- 8.2.4.2.4.2. How should the state outlaw false religious practices?
- 8.2.4.2.4.3. What should be done with dissent?
- 8.2.4.2.4.4. What should the state do with those who practice illegal religions or illegal rituals?
- 8.2.4.2.4.5. Where could people go who do not agree with the official position?
- 8.2.4.2.4.6. How should dissidents to be treated?
- 8.2.4.2.4.7. How do we avoid an inquisition?
- 8.2.4.2.5. A few brief considerations:
- 8.2.4.2.5.1. History has shown that the introduction of Christian civil government in a sinful world is probably not possible
- 8.2.4.2.5.2. However, if possible, a *truly* Christian state would not be inquisitorial or totalitarian, as many suppose. ‘... if a modern State were to embrace biblical law, the result would probably look more like the absence of a State than an Islamic tyranny or the “family values” of the Christian right ... We are far too immature to face the radical liberties of biblical law. We have such State-induced slave mentalities that we couldn’t handle the responsibilities of

³²⁵ www.carewinnipeg.com/Home/

³²⁶ www.carewinnipeg.com/Home/statement-of-faith

real freedom.”³²⁷ See my *Christian Libertarian Manifesto* for an example of what a truly Christian state might look like.³²⁸

- 8.2.5. It is *particularly* when the worship of God is at stake that Christians must stand like Daniel.
 - 8.2.5.1. We must take the perspective that this life is short and passing, and an everlasting existence is before us.
 - 8.2.5.2. Compromises in the worship of the eternal God, whether to appease others in a denomination, or to avoid persecution is to miss entirely the weight of the Law, the preservation of God’s honour, and standing in good conscience.
 - 8.2.5.3. We need to heed the example of Daniel, the man who feared God.
- 8.3. *Constitutional Waffle* – Men will often abuse the law for selfish ends and citizens, in particular Christian citizens, need to be constantly vigilant against this evil behaviour.
 - 8.3.1. We saw how the advisors of the king encouraged him to enact a law that they could use to destroy Daniel. Their reason for wanting the law was not to protect property or to deal with different forms of criminal activity, but to fulfill their vengeful hatred of goodness.
 - 8.3.2. Their behaviour is an example, and warning, that men abuse law in different ways:
 - 8.3.2.1. Men abuse God’s law by:
 - 8.3.2.1.1. Ignoring it—for example, not enforcing the cessation of commercial activity on the Lord’s Day.
 - 8.3.2.1.2. Misinterpreting it—often trying to make it say the opposite of what is says—for example, claiming that God’s prohibitions against homosexual practices are merely cultural and time bound.
 - 8.3.2.1.3. Trumping it with their own laws—for example, redefining marriage to include other relationships besides that between a man and a woman.
 - 8.3.2.2. They abuse their derived law-making (legislative or judicial) powers and usurp the place of God by:
 - 8.3.2.2.1. Outlawing behaviours that God does not outlaw—for example making it a crime for individuals to pay for medical care when the state provides the services, or prohibiting distribution of Christian literature at an event attended by Muslims.
 - 8.3.2.2.2. Making the law support their humanistic philosophies—for example outlawing the teaching of creation and mandating the teaching of Evolution.
 - 8.3.2.2.3. Creating unjust laws—for example, enacting rent controls or defining minimum-wage laws that create artificial scarcities and limit options for the poor.
 - 8.3.2.2.4. Playing favourites and catering to special interest groups—for example, exempting particular groups from taxes or making exceptions for special categories of people (gender, language, race, skin colour, disability, etc.)—in the name of reparation or compassion; even though God makes it clear that civil magistrates are not to be respecters of persons (Lev 19.15; Ex 23.2; Dt 16.18; Prov 31.9; Ezk 18.8).
 - 8.3.2.2.5. Using the law to reengineer society to achieve their paternalistic visions of utopia, which are actually a dystopia—for example, turning education into a means of socializing children to their perverted ideas about gender neutrality, sexual *disorientations*, lifestyle choices, respect for evil religions, or other ‘political correct’ nonsense.
 - 8.3.2.2.6. Making citizens dependent on government—for example, subsidizing

³²⁷ Douglas Jones, Douglas Wilson: “And Babylons Fall,” *Angels in the Architecture*, Canon Press, 1998, p 153.

³²⁸ Available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

non-productive behaviours and encouraging people to expect handouts as an entitlement.

- 8.3.2.2.7. Attempting to make laws to cover every contingency rather than encouraging people to act on principle, thereby encouraging irresponsibility—for example, outlawing particular kinds of light bulbs or the use of specific cooking oils or sugared drinks.
 - 8.3.2.2.8. Using legislation to skew the economy—for example, mandating the use of blended fuels containing petroleum distillates and ethanol derived from crop plants or creating carbon emission caps and rights trading.
 - 8.3.2.2.9. Making too many laws—when men create laws there are often unforeseen and unintended consequences³²⁹ which they in turn deal with by making more laws rather than rescinding the former law. The result is an endless spiral of increasingly complex and contradictory laws. Western society (in particular the EU and US) are so overregulated that it is practically impossible for a person to obey all the laws consistently—obeying one law will likely lead to a breach of another.
 - 8.3.2.2.10. ‘The Russian czarina Catherine the Great ... kept pressing her guest [Mercier de la Rivière] with questions on how to create the best law only to get scolded by the French political economist: “To give or make laws, Madame, is a task which God has left to no one. . . . What is man, to think himself capable of dictating laws to beings whom he knows not?” “To what, then,” asked the indignant monarch, “do you reduce the science of government?” The reply: “To studying carefully, recognizing, and setting forth the laws which God has engraved so manifestly in the very organization of men, when he called them into existence. To wish to go any further would be a great misfortune and a most destructive undertaking.”’³³⁰
- 8.3.3. Christians are never safe when it comes to human regimes:
- 8.3.3.1. Christians must watch vigilantly to ensure that law is not abused.
 - 8.3.3.1.1. Given the constant tendency in human nature to degradation, it is essential that Christians watch carefully the ‘progress’ of legislation to ensure that rights (e.g., parental rights to educate and discipline their children and Christians rights to religious worship and declaration of the Gospel) and responsibilities (e.g., of men to provide for the welfare of their families) are not eroded and, in particular, that the Christian religion is not being usurped.
 - 8.3.3.1.2. We are to use whatever lawful (divine and human) means are available to us to hinder or correct the tendency of sinful leaders to abuse law. Some of the means available to us include:
 - 8.3.3.1.2.1. Taking legal action through the courts.
 - 8.3.3.1.2.2. Electing representatives who will rescind the unjust/evil law or counter it with new law.
 - 8.3.3.1.2.3. Work to put Christian advisors into governments, like Daniel, who can influence those in positions of power.
 - 8.3.3.1.2.4. Conducting peaceful civil disobedience or resistance (to obey God rather than man).
 - 8.3.3.1.2.5. Preaching so that men are convicted of their sins and repent.

³²⁹ We will consider the problem of *unintended consequences* in law-making when we study the next section—Spite (10-18).

³³⁰ Alex Tokarev, "Natural law," *World Magazine blog*, 2010-08-10; online.worldmag.com/2010/08/10/natural-law/

- 8.3.3.1.2.6. Praying that God will intervene directly and change the hearts of leaders either to see the foolishness of their actions or to repent of their sins.
- 8.3.3.2. Ultimately, Christians are always safe in the hands of God.
 - 8.3.3.2.1. We are not to put our faith in political systems or intrigues.
 - 8.3.3.2.2. We are not to depend on human means for achieving a just and equitable society.
 - 8.3.3.2.3. We are to trust God, that he is working all things, including unjust/evil law for his glory and the good of his people.
 - 8.3.3.2.4. We are to look to the city whose builder is not man—the city of God—that will be manifest in all of its glory in an everlasting existence.
- 8.4. *Covetous Weasels* – Envy is a sin that skews the minds and wills of men so that they can no longer think coherently.
 - 8.4.1. Envy wells up when a person thinks that he should have an actual or perceived power, position or possession of another person. It results from people making comparisons with others—feeling that they are another’s equal and thinking that they deserve the equivalent treatment, feeling inferior to another and wishing to have more, or feeling superior to another and believing that the other person should not have received what he did.
 - 8.4.2. Envy causes people do all kinds of evil things. We will see, in the next section, how the envy of the Persian administrators led them to act in spite and plot murder.
 - 8.4.3. Envy is a primary cause of unhappiness and is found everywhere—among kings and philosophers, knights and pages, and knaves and paupers.
 - 8.4.4. It is not a surprise, then, that the Church during the middle ages included envy among the seven deadly sins. It not only kills the soul that possesses it but wreaks the havoc of death on others.
 - 8.4.5. Envy is pervasive and we need to be on guard against it in our own hearts and as it manifests itself in the thoughts of others and leads them to perform acts of great malice.

Spite (Dan 6.10-18)

- 1. What did Daniel do when he learned about the king’s decree?
 - 1.1. He went home and prayed.
 - 1.2. Why did he pray?
 - 1.2.1. He prayed because he was a man of prayer.
 - 1.2.1.1. Daniel was a man of character, consistency, and constancy.
 - 1.2.1.2. Even though he was an old man (~84) he did not think of prayer as a childish thing but as a truly manly thing.
 - 1.2.1.2.1. How many men today think of praying as being an attribute of manliness? They think of prowess in sports or business, driving fancy cars, or having influence with the ladies as defining a man.
 - 1.2.1.2.2. But a true man of God, is a man of prayer (Ps 90.1, title).
 - 1.2.1.3. He had been an exile for about 70 years and had faced many challenges and trials, yet he had shown perseverance and patience throughout his entire life.
 - 1.2.1.3.1. Would we be as constant?
 - 1.2.1.3.2. If we are faced challenges for a few weeks, does our faith weaken or strengthen?
 - 1.2.1.3.3. If we face challenges for a few years? Can we endure a lifetime?
 - 1.2.1.3.4. As Paul says, these trials are momentary and passing compared with the eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4.17).
 - 1.2.1.4. For Daniel prayer was a manly thing to do. He was a man of prayer first and then a man of action.
 - 1.2.1.5. His prayers defined him as a man of God; he did not define himself by his own

- standards.
- 1.2.2. He prayed to give thanks to God.
 - 1.2.2.1. He acknowledged God's goodness to him (10).
 - 1.2.2.2. God have given him physical, mental, and spiritual strength to endure under the heavy responsibilities and duties that had been his from the time of his late teens until this point when he was in his mid-80's.
 - 1.2.2.3. Even though he was a great man in the world's eyes, he did not think it beneath him to pray on his knees to God.
 - 1.2.2.4. His prayers humbled him, and did not exalt him.
- 1.2.3. He prayed because he wanted to bring before God, his concern about the evil decree of king Darius.
 - 1.2.3.1. He knew that he could cast his burden on God (11).
 - 1.2.3.2. He knew the power of prayer (Dan 2.17-19).
 - 1.2.3.3. He knew that God delighted in prayer.
 - 1.2.3.4. He knew that God answers prayer.
 - 1.2.3.5. His prayers strengthened him, and did not discourage him.
- 1.2.4. He prayed because this was the primary form of worship available to him in a foreign land.
 - 1.2.4.1. Singing Psalms was initially a priestly activity accompanying the sacrifices, and it had been discontinued (at least that accompanied by instruments) with the destruction of the Temple (Ps 137.2).
 - 1.2.4.2. The organized religious ceremonial system of the Jews didn't exist during their time of captivity. They probably did not have, at this time, the concept of synagogues. Since the formalized synagogue form of worship was likely instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah (see, Nehemiah 8.1-18³³¹) as prophets, then it was still about 100 years away.
 - 1.2.4.3. Even so, he probably had limited access to fellow Jewish believers with whom he could form a synagogue-like assembly and engage in worship.
 - 1.2.4.4. He knew that the principal sacrifice which God requires of men is to call upon his name (Gen 4.26), and that this is done primarily through prayer.
 - 1.2.4.5. His prayers honoured God, and did not bring man's inventions into worship.
- 1.2.5. He prayed because he understood prayer to be communion with God.
 - 1.2.5.1. Through prayer he came into the presence of God, whom he loved
 - 1.2.5.2. He believed that in prayer he was speaking directly with the Creator of the universe.
 - 1.2.5.3. He viewed his times of prayer as times of fellowship and friendship.
 - 1.2.5.4. His prayers refreshed him, and did not weary him.
- 1.2.6. He prayed because the king had no right to forbid prayer to the true God and require prayer to himself.
 - 1.2.6.1. Daniel wanted to exercise his right and privilege before God. His prayer was a form of protest against the edict of the king.
 - 1.2.6.2. He demonstrated that he was a citizen of heaven and a son of the Great King, and not bound to man, when the laws of men contradicted God's Law.
 - 1.2.6.3. His prayers demonstrated that he was truly free (Jn 8.36) and not a slave of sin and Satan.
- 1.2.7. He prayed because he was in the habit of praying.
 - 1.2.7.1. He had prayed all his life.
 - 1.2.7.2. How often did he pray?
 - 1.2.7.2.1. He prayed three times a day.
 - 1.2.7.3. Why did he pray three times a day?

³³¹ See the section entitled 'Proclamation', dealing with Nehemiah (Neh 8.7, 8), in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder -- Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 1.2.7.3.1. It was a means of reinforcing a godly discipline.
- 1.2.7.3.2. He followed the example of a worthy saint (Ps 55.17) who prayed morning, noon, and evening.
- 1.2.7.3.3. It may have been a universal practice among devout Jews (Ps 5.2, 3; Ps 119.62, 148; Acts 3.1; Acts 10.3, 9, 30). Jesus may have followed this pattern (Mk 1.35; Mk 6.46, 48).
- 1.2.7.4. His prayers showed that he would not be enslaved by the patterns of this world, but by the patterns of the world to come.
- 1.2.7.5. Based on the examples in Scripture, should the Church make it a requirement for Christians to pray three times a day?
 - 1.2.7.5.1. The concept of praying three times a day was carried into the New Testament Church; for example the *Didache* says: “You should pray in this way three times a day.”³³²
 - 1.2.7.5.2. During the Middle Ages the monasteries made the routine of prayer into a ritual that, for many, became the end rather than a means of worship.
 - 1.2.7.5.3. Muslim’s, trying to out-do the pious Jews and Christians of the early middle ages made their ritual of five daily ‘prayers’ [better ‘superstitious oblation’] a requirement. However:
 - 1.2.7.5.3.1. Unbeliever cannot really pray.
 - 1.2.7.5.3.2. Unbelievers cannot pray in the name of Christ (James 5.14; Jn 14.13, 14) because they do not accept Jesus as Lord.
 - 1.2.7.5.3.3. An unbeliever wouldn’t want to speak to God, who reveals himself in Jesus. Prayer is conversation of a child with his Father.
 - 1.2.7.5.3.4. Unbelievers cannot ask with right motives (James 4.3), since the inclination of their heart is only evil all time (Gen 6.5).
 - 1.2.7.5.3.5. A wicked person, in rebellion against God, cannot speak with God (Prov 15.8, 29).
 - 1.2.7.5.4. When we establish a fixed pattern for prayer and Bible reading it is less likely that we will allow the practice to deteriorate. Even the ‘best’ of us needs regular discipline or we can let God’s invisible presence slip from our conscious minds.
 - 1.2.7.5.5. We should not object to three-times-daily prayer if we are in communion with God.
 - 1.2.7.5.5.1. Why should this be a burden if we are living a life of holiness and dedication to God like Daniel?
 - 1.2.7.5.5.2. It is only when we are consumed by the pleasures and pressures of the world that we find praying to our Lord, Saviour, and friend to be a burden.
 - 1.2.7.5.5.3. We don’t object to eating three times per day, so why should we object to taking spiritual food, in the form of prayer, three times daily?
 - 1.2.7.5.6. While we have examples of three-times-daily prayer in the Bible and it is a good model for us, there does not seem to be an explicit requirement that we follow this pattern—although we would come close to it if we prayed consistently over our meals.
 - 1.2.7.5.6.1. We must be careful not fall into the trap of the Pharisees,

³³² *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Commonly Called the Didache*; www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html
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and dictate rules for behaviour and practice that God does not dictate.

1.2.7.5.6.2. We must be very careful not to have the words of Jesus (quoting Isaiah 29.13 or Ezekiel 33.31) applied to us: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Mk 7.6).

1.2.7.5.7. We are to have an attitude of constant prayer (Eph 6.18; 1 Thess 5.17).

1.3. What was Daniel’s posture or form in prayer?

1.3.1. He prayed in a kneeling posture.

1.3.1.1. Kneeling in prayer, particularly prostrate, is a way to reinforce a humble attitude before God.

1.3.1.2. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars seeking his mercy and grace.

1.3.1.3. It is one of the postures that God’s people take when they pray. The others include standing (Mk 11.25), reclining (Lk 22.14, 17), sitting (Mt 14.19; Mk 14.32, 37, 38), and possibly even lying in bed (Ps 63.6).

1.3.2. He prayed with an open window.

1.3.2.1. The windows would not have been glazed; so ‘open windows’ means that they were not shuttered as they would be at night.

1.3.2.2. He bore witness to the true God:

1.3.2.2.1. Not in an ostentatious manner, for example praying on the street corner (Mt 6.5).

1.3.2.2.2. Rather in a way that would be a witness.

1.3.2.3. How could we do something similar?

1.3.2.3.1. Leave our curtains open when we give a prayer of thanks for our dinner.

1.3.2.3.2. Carry our Bible when going to church.

1.3.2.3.3. Not to show off and declare ourselves to be holier than our neighbours but rather to gently show them that we are Christians.

1.3.3. He prayed facing Jerusalem.

1.3.3.1. Why toward Jerusalem?

1.3.3.1.1. It was a sign of reverence.

1.3.3.1.1.1. It was not a superstitious action, like praying to/through an image or idol.

1.3.3.1.1.2. God had declared that he would make his presence known, on earth, in Jerusalem. Daniel was looking toward where God was (1 Ki 11.32, 36; Dan 9.18).

1.3.3.1.2. Solomon declared that praying toward Jerusalem would be a sign of seeking God’s presence (1 Ki 8.30).

1.3.3.1.3. Even though Daniel was a powerful administrator in Babylon, he testified to his concern for the city of God by remembering Jerusalem, the place where God chose to make his name known (Ps 137.5, 6).

1.3.3.2. What is the spiritual equivalent for us?

1.3.3.2.1. Lifting our eyes or hands heavenward in prayer.

1.4. What did Daniel not do when he learned of the decree against prayer to God?

1.4.1. He didn’t panic.

1.4.1.1. We, in NA, *generally* have not had experiences like Daniel’s. Although, it is becoming more frequent that people are fired for professing Christ as the only Saviour, or God as creator; or for teaching about particular Biblical views such

- as on homosexuality³³³ or about Intelligent Design³³⁴.
- 1.4.1.2. Yet we ‘panic’ over things that are of far less consequence—an inconvenience over a phone bill or a delay in a delivery of a product.
 - 1.4.1.3. We are hardly ever called upon to put our faith on the line as our brothers and sisters in Christ are in other parts of the world—e.g., in Pakistan.
 - 1.4.2. He didn’t file a legal claim, supported by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League or the Alliance Defense Fund.
 - 1.4.2.1. Of course, in his day and situation, there was not such a thing as the JADL or the ADF. The king determined the state religion and the extent to which he would tolerate noncompliance with the state defined religion. The concept of religious rights and religious tolerance is a concept that has arisen in the English-speaking world since 1700 (e.g., after the English Revolution and the Settlement, and has been largely unknown in other parts of the world until recently).
 - 1.4.3. He didn’t go begging before the king.
 - 1.4.3.1. He didn’t use his position or his earned respect as a basis for appeal to the king.
 - 1.4.3.2. He didn’t appeal to the king to have him see how misguided was the law he had passed.
 - 1.4.3.3. Rather he placed his appeal before the Great King, who he knew would do right (Gen 18.25). He trusted God with absolute trust.
 - 1.4.4. We need to maintain a balance when considering what Daniel did and didn’t do.
 - 1.4.4.1. It is not wrong for Christians to use legal, and morally right, means through the courts to defend their Christian beliefs and the right to practice Christian worship. Paul used such means in his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25.10-12).
 - 1.4.4.2. Nor is it wrong for Christians to flee from persecution, since we are not to throw our lives away meaninglessly (Mt 10.23; Mt 24.15-16).
 - 1.4.4.3. However, it is also good when Christians suffer for righteousness’ sake (Col 1.24; Phil 3.10; 2 Tim 1.8; 1 Pt 4.13-16).
 - 1.4.4.4. For example, it isn’t wrong for a Christian to avoid going into a zone where ‘protests’ have been prohibited (e.g., a certain distance from an abortuary) to avoid being put in jail, particularly if they continue the ‘protest’ actions publicly outside the zone. However, it is also not wrong for a Christian who has been conducting the ‘protest’ to ignore the zone restriction (since the civil magistrate had no right to make the law prohibiting the presentation of truth) and accept the consequences and go to jail and refuse to pay bail.
 - 1.4.4.5. Each of us is called to serve God faithfully in whatever situation we find ourselves. Providing guidelines for when to obey and when not to obey the civil magistrate is not simple. However, the following considerations may help to provide principles for faithful action.
 - 1.5. Was Daniel deliberately provoking an attack by his behaviour?
 - 1.5.1. Was he being stupid or belligerent by taking this course of action?
 - 1.5.2. We can make a distinction between doing something different or new deliberately to provoke the enemies of Christ and continuing to do what we have been doing that has recently been outlawed by the state in an attempt to curtail Christianity (Acts 5.29).
 - 1.5.2.1. For example, a church that burns copies of the Qur’an ignoring a local ordinance against open fires, is deliberately (and inappropriately) provoking the enemies of Christ.³³⁵

³³³ www.care2.com/causes/civil-rights/blog/instructor-of-catholicism-let-go-for-teaching-homosexual-acts-are-immoral/

³³⁴ www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/teacher-gets-fired-when-colleague-rats-his-doubts-about-darwinism/

³³⁵ Chad Smith, "Dove World told it can't burn Qurans," *The Gainesville Sun*, 2010-08-19;

www.gainesville.com/article/20100819/ARTICLES/8191045?tc=ar

- 1.5.2.2. Whereas, in contrast, consider a situation in a southern US city where a church has been meeting for 40 years and has used a broadcast system that carries the preaching to an outside seating area. After complaints from residents who had moved to the area recently, the city passed a by-law to restrict noise from 10-12 on Sunday mornings, deliberately to harass the church. It may be appropriate for the church to ignore the by-law and continue to carry on its worship service as it has been.
- 1.5.3. Some might contend that Daniel brought great risks, including to his ability to be an influence for good and potential loss of life, without sufficient reasons.
 - 1.5.3.1. However, Daniel showed that he would have rather have lost his life than compromise the worship of the true God.
 - 1.5.3.2. Truth is more important than life! We must be willing to defend truth even to death (our own death). God gave his son for truth (to fulfill all righteousness) which demonstrates that truth is more important than physical life.
- 1.5.4. Daniel was not tempting God:
 - 1.5.4.1. He was not guilty of showing off or of deliberately challenging authority. His actions were the result of a deep and life-long piety and trust in God his Saviour.
 - 1.5.4.2. Daniel was a man of integrity, who was the same person at home and in public, and before his friends or family and his enemies. This is the way we should all be:
 - 1.5.4.2.1. It is morally right and God honouring.
 - 1.5.4.2.2. It is practically the best policy as we don't have to put on different faces—and become weary trying to remember our different faces.
 - 1.5.4.2.3. It is the root of an effective witness as it flows naturally from our lives as Christians. We can engage with our culture by being ourselves.
 - 1.5.4.3. “Natural, not ostentatious. Daniel didn't change a thing. It's not as if he decided to start praying at an open window in flagrant defiance of the king's decree against it; he had always done that so he just kept doing it. The man he was in normal times outside the glaring spotlight is the same man he was in times of persecution or public scrutiny. No need to turn on proselytizing like a faucet. Just as natural as you please.”³³⁶
- 1.5.5. For Daniel to have stopped his practice of praying in his upper room, with the windows open, three times a day, would have been wrong.
 - 1.5.5.1. He would have been complicit in an hypocrisy.
 - 1.5.5.2. His life of faith was public, and to have moved to secret prayer or to have stopped his prayers would have been a sign of weakness and a lack of trust in the true God.
 - 1.5.5.3. If the king's advisors had not found Daniel praying when they spied on him, they would have challenged him as being faint-hearted and an unbeliever in God.
 - 1.5.5.4. It would have been an insult against God if Daniel had obeyed the decree. We must not change our behaviour or hide our faith in Christ and our Christianity because of what men might command or because of a fear of men.
 - 1.5.5.5. God requires that we not only claim to have faith and that we love him in our hearts, but that we also bear witness through our actions and lives that we love him and trust him. We must not omit duty for fear of suffering.
- 1.5.6. Referring to an earlier instance in Daniel's life, Christopher Wright says, “Daniel's stance is remarkable. On the one hand, knowing that it was God himself who had given

³³⁶ Andrée Seu, “Dungy and Daniel,” *World Magazine* blog, 2010-03-26; online.worldmag.com/tag/tony-dungy/
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Nebuchadnezzar all authority and dominion, he nevertheless did not feel bound to obey Nebuchadnezzar in every particular. Rather, he set limits on the extent of his submission to the state because there were no limits on his submission to God. *Daniel's doctrine of the divine appointment of human authority did not make him a passive pawn, giving uncritical obedience to the particular authority under which he lived. ... Daniel's doctrine of the satanic influence on human powers did not make him withdraw as an escapist from political involvement* [author's emphasis].³³⁷

- 1.5.7. We can compare and contrast the two situations recounted in this book of how the faithful reacted to false decrees of pagan kings which related to false worship.
 - 1.5.7.1. The two situations are with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being compelled to perform a false act of worship, and Daniel being prohibited from performing a true act of worship.
 - 1.5.7.2. The three friends of Daniel were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a sin. Daniel was cast into the lions' den for not omitting a duty.
 - 1.5.7.3. We have in these two accounts, examples of how to deal with sins of *commission* and *omission* in the context of true worship. We are not to do wrong, nor are we to avoid doing right. We are to abhor evil and to adhere to what is good.
 - 1.5.7.4. In both instances God miraculously confirmed this truth by his delivering his saints from the disaster and confirming their faith in him before the most powerful rulers of their day.
2. What did the court administrators do after they had achieved their goal of having the decree about worship enacted? (11-13)
 - 2.1. They spied on Daniel (11).
 - 2.1.1. Daniel was praying in an upper room (10).
 - 2.1.1.1. Houses in the ancient middle east would have had limited exterior access points, based on security considerations. They tended to have inner courts with few exterior windows, especially where they were built together in a contiguous manner.
 - 2.1.1.2. Daniel was not praying in a ground floor room that could be observed from a sidewalk.
 - 2.1.1.3. The room in which Daniel was praying did not have lattices or shutters on the window, or the shutters had been opened. It is possible that the room in which Daniel was praying was on the western side of the city of Susa (or Babylon, depending on where the events of chapter 6 occurred), and possibly even in the wall of the city.
 - 2.1.2. It would have been necessary for the administrators to climb onto a nearby roof (or go outside the city to an observation post) to gain a vantage point from which to observe Daniel's praying.
 - 2.1.2.1. A number of these administrators, as a group, went on a field trip to make their observations of Daniel praying.
 - 2.1.2.2. Their action was clearly contrived as a means of catching Daniel, not a mere chance observation of him at prayer. This shows their pettiness and evil intentions.
 - 2.1.2.3. It is unlikely that they were able to hear what Daniel was saying from their observation post, so they had to assume, based on the consistency of Daniel's character, that his prayers were consistent with those he had offered up over the past six to seven decades.
 - 2.1.3. From this account and example, we can see that the enemies of God's truth and of

³³⁷Christopher J. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 2004), p. 247.

Christianity will go to great lengths in their attempts to bring down God's kingdom and to destroy his people.

2.1.3.1. No matter how circumspectly, diligently, and soberly Christians conduct their lives, they are threatened by the madmen who hate godliness.

2.1.3.2. The enemies of Christ have no compunction against using evil means against God and his people; including deceit, theft, and murder. They follow the paths of their father, the Devil, who used evil means when he tempted Eve by possessing a serpent: lies and denials of God's word.

2.2. They tattled on Daniel (12-13).

2.2.1. What was their approach in bringing the weight of the law down on Daniel?

2.2.1.1. They did not immediately bring their charge against Daniel. Rather, they first reminded the king of his injunction (royal decree).

2.2.1.1.1. They repeated the specific injunction against praying to any god or man other than to/through the king.

2.2.1.1.2. They repeated the time frame in which the decree was to last—thirty days.

2.2.1.1.3. They reminded the king that he himself had signed/sealed the decree by putting it into writing.

2.2.1.2. They laid a trap for the king, as they thought they had for Daniel.

2.2.1.2.1. The king was a dupe and fell into the trap that his administrators laid for him.

2.2.1.2.2. Daniel, in contrast, knew what they were up too (as did David with his enemies; Ps 38.12; Ps 64.5) and did not try to avoid their trap because he trusted that God would protect him and deliver him from their trap, either temporally or everlastingly (at his age, he was probably tired of the wickedness in the governments of men and ready to leave this troubled scene for the peace and rest under God's eternal reign).

2.2.1.3. Once they had reminded the king of his decree, they then sprung the trap and caught the king in it.

2.2.1.3.1. They got the king to reinforce the fact that the decree would stand fast as the official law of the Medes and Persians and could not be revoked or repealed.

2.2.1.4. Only then did they bring an accusation against Daniel.

2.2.1.4.1. Their intention was to leave the king no room to maneuver.

2.2.1.4.2. As we will see from subsequent events (the king's attempts to extricate himself from the situation), they were successful. The only way out for the king would have been to admit to having made a mistake.

2.2.2. How did they describe Daniel when they brought their accusation against him?

2.2.2.1. As an exile from Judah, rather than as appointed head over all of the government.

2.2.2.2. Their insinuation was that as a foreigner he was unfaithful to the king.

2.2.2.2.1. This was a silly charge since many of the administrators would have been from captive peoples. It was the practice of conquerors and emperors in the ancient world to appoint administrators from their captive peoples so as to provide continuity with the peoples they ruled.

2.2.2.2.2. It was also silly, because Daniel had served faithfully in foreign administrations for around 70 years. He was known throughout the Middle East as a wise counsellor to kings and would likely have been known to the leading administrators (and even the king) since

- he had probably been an ambassador from Babylon to Persia.
- 2.2.2.2.3. They were appealing to their base sinful prejudices that men often have against foreigners. It is similar to the way that many in the US and Canada publicize the crimes of (illegal) aliens but seem to minimize the crimes of native-born citizens.
- 2.2.2.2.4. They, in effect, accused the king of stupidity—“See what you have done by appointing a foreigner in your government! He is not willing to be subject to you as we, your faithful citizens, are.”
- 2.2.2.3. They referred to his foreign status in the hope that the king would not be able to excuse Daniel for ignoring the edict. They probably feared that the king might have been willing to excuse or pardon Daniel, as he might have a native, from failing to abide by the rash edict.
- 2.2.3. They then laid their charge against Daniel.
 - 2.2.3.1. They informed the king that not only did Daniel pray to another beside the king, he did it three times a day!
 - 2.2.3.2. The insinuation was that he didn’t just make a mistake by ignoring the decree but that he was deliberately disobedient—going out of his way to disobey. Which is actually the truth, since Daniel had deliberately ignored the decree?
- 2.2.4. We can note the cunning with which the administrators manipulated the situation and entangled the king in the web they have woven. Men are creative in their guile and plotting, especially when it comes to ways to bring down Christians.
 - 2.2.4.1. They followed in the footsteps of their father, the Devil, who cunningly trapped Adam and Eve at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (2 Cor 11.3).
- 3. What was the king’s reaction when he heard that Daniel had disobeyed the law? (14-15)
 - 3.1. He was distressed.
 - 3.1.1. What was the cause of his distress?
 - 3.1.1.1. He respected Daniel and was disappointed to see him destroyed.
 - 3.1.1.2. He had a vestige of a conscience and knew that true justice demanded that Daniel not be punished.
 - 3.1.1.3. He felt like a trapped animal that had nowhere to turn—boxed in by his own folly.
 - 3.1.2. Ultimately, God sent the distress.
 - 3.1.2.1. The other kings mentioned in the book of Daniel, to this point, were also distressed (Dan 2.1; Dan 5.6, 9).
 - 3.1.2.2. God uses distress to awaken men to his eternal dominion, and to call them to repentance.
 - 3.1.2.3. God uses distress as punishment and to carry out his vengeance on those who choose to ignore his almighty power.
 - 3.1.3. The situation is a warning to those in power, to be:
 - 3.1.3.1. Cautious as to the kinds and character of advisors they appoint.
 - 3.1.3.2. Cautious of their advisors cunning and conniving.
 - 3.1.3.3. There are numerous examples in history of wicked, cunning and conniving, advisors, including: Tomás de Torquemada, confessor to Isabella I of Castile; Cardinal Richelieu in Louis XIII’s court; and Grigori Rasputin, the Mad Monk, advisor to Russian Emperor Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra. It is a sad observation that many of the most wicked men in history (including these advisors) have been in the Church hierarchy.
 - 3.1.3.4. One writer has said, “Grand Viziers were always scheming megalomaniacs. It was probably in the job description: ‘Are you a devious, plotting, unreliable

- madman? Ah, good, then you can be my most trusted advisor.”³³⁸
- 3.2. He tried to rescue Daniel from the punishment.
 - 3.2.1. He tried to find ways to get around the law.
 - 3.2.2. He worked hard at finding a counter scheme until sunset.
 - 3.2.3. He knew that he had done something terrible and was trying to undo it.
 - 3.3. Why was he unable to rescue Daniel? Why didn't he just rescind the law?
 - 3.3.1. The claim of his advisors was that he was bound by his own laws and traditions.
 - 3.3.2. However, it was not because the law really could not be rescinded.
 - 3.3.2.1. No human law is really immutable. No human law has the power or place of God's immutable laws.
 - 3.3.2.2. He really didn't live by the 'rule of law' and in other circumstances would have changed laws.
 - 3.3.3. The primary reason was his fear of men.
 - 3.3.3.1. He feared looking weak in front of his subjects.
 - 3.3.3.2. He feared the potential fallout if he rescinded the law.
 - 3.3.3.2.1. There was the potential that men would no longer respect the laws of the land and believe that they could ignore law and go unpunished.
 - 3.3.3.2.2. If he allowed one sign of weakness to appear, his subjects might rise up in rebellion against him and his dominion.
 - 3.3.3.2.3. Rescinding one law might have led to a conspiracy against his reign and he would be deposed or assassinated.
 - 3.3.4. A second reason was that even though he respected Daniel, he did not care enough about him to protect Daniel's life by changing his mind.
 - 3.3.4.1. The death of one man, even that of a respected and honest counsellor, was inconsequential when compared with the potential fall-out that he believed might occur if he changed his mind.
 - 3.3.4.2. Offending God was of less consequence to him than offending men.
 - 3.3.5. A third reason may be that his advisors saw his equivocation and forcefully reminded him of their traditions.
 - 3.3.5.1. They frightened him and so dissuaded him from making any changes in the law.
 - 3.3.5.2. Ironically, if it had been another law being cancelled, for example relieving them of a tax burden, or increasing their powers and possessions, they would have been in favour of the change in law. The advisors were hypocrites who were only interested in the supposed 'rule of law' when it served their purposes.
 - 3.3.6. While thinking he was being strong, he was actually being weak by showing, through capitulation to men, his unwillingness to do what was right.
 - 3.3.6.1. Herod was sorry over his vow that condemned John the Baptist to death (Mk 6.26), but not sorry enough to suggest an alternative to Herodias's daughter.
 - 3.3.6.2. This same form of weakness is seen in Pilate who half-heartedly attempted to release Jesus but was terrified of the people and their threats (Jn 19.12).
 - 3.4. Darius was confronted with the problem of unintended consequences:
 - 3.4.1. When men create laws there are often unforeseen and unintended consequences which they in turn deal with by making more laws rather than rescinding the former law. The result is an endless spiral of increasingly complex and contradictory laws. Western society (in particular in the EU and US) is so overregulated that it is practically impossible for a person to obey all the laws consistently—obeying one law will likely lead to a breach of another.
 - 3.4.2. Rulers need to move slowly when making laws and consider the short-term and long-

³³⁸ Terry Pratchett, *Interesting Times*, (HarperTorch, 1998).

- term ramifications of what they propose to enact. They often make laws too hastily, in reactionary mode, and do not think through all (or even a limited sub-set) of the potential consequences of their legislation.
- 3.4.3. God delivers his just vengeance on those rulers who cannot restrain their desire to display power through law making and forget their rank and station before God. When men attempt to build towers to Heaven the towers come crashing down on their own heads.
- 3.4.4. We will consider this topic further in our applied lessons, below.
4. After attempting to rescue Daniel, what did the king finally do? (16-17)
- 4.1. He *sentenced* Daniel to death.
- 4.1.1. The king finally gave the command to have Daniel brought forward and cast into the lions' den.
- 4.1.2. He sentenced him to the death included as a threatened punishment in the edict—a deliberately painful death.
- 4.1.3. There are numerous painful ways to die, including: crucifixion with drawn-out asphyxiation, drowned with choking, burned alive, and being mauled alive by animals. Other forms of death seem that they might be less painful because they are quicker, such as being shot, electrocuted, guillotined, or killed in a head-on automobile collision.
- 4.1.4. Of course, it is impossible to ask anyone to experimentally compare the different means of death as people generally die only once (Lazarus and other people who were resurrected being exceptions and near-death survivors being another class).
- 4.1.5. Regardless, the ruthless and cruel ancient world empires concocted painful ways to kill their enemies and criminals—such as the crucifixion of Christ, throwing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into a fiery furnace and throwing Daniel into the den of lions. Their intent was to inflict pain—punishment was not only intended to be an act of justice and to warn others, it was often executed out of blood lust. There is in every one of us a tipping point where we no longer are squeamish about causing pain to others and want to see it happen. For example, it could be a gentle mother who is faced with the rapist-murderer of her eight-year-old daughter.
- 4.1.6. Why were lions used in the punishment and not fire as under Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3.11)?
- 4.1.6.1. It is possible that since fire was sacred to the Zoroastrians of Persia that they did not use fire as a means of punishment. Although there is some evidence that Cyrus and the Medes were followers of Mithra rather than Zarathushtra.³³⁹
- 4.1.6.2. Herodotus (quoted by Xenophon) apparently said: “Zoroastrianism permits no idol-worship [he would have been speaking of graven images] and no temples, fire-altars only being used. These were served by Atharvans or fire-priests, who fed the fire with costly wood and poured into it libations of haomajuce, taking care to cover their mouths with a cloth (paiti-dhana) to keep the sacred fire from being polluted by their breath.”³⁴⁰
- 4.2. He *sealed* Daniel's destiny.
- 4.2.1. We are not told how the den of lions was constructed.
- 4.2.1.1. It may have been a pit in the floor with the lions in the pit. This would be like the pit under Jabba the Hutt's lair into which Luke Skywalker was dropped when the floor opened up.
- 4.2.1.2. It may have been a cave with bars across it. If the den was in Babylon, this is less likely as the area around ancient Babylon, in modern Iraq, is relatively flat.

³³⁹ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 42.

³⁴⁰ James Orr, *et al*, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), 1939; www.internationalstandardbible.com/P/persian-religion-%28ancient%29.html

However, if it was in Susa [near the town of Shush in modern Iran], the city was located in a valley with nearby low hills.

- 4.2.1.3. It may have been a cage, much like in a modern zoo.
- 4.2.2. Whatever the form of the structure in which the lions were kept, it seems that it had an opening in the top through which Daniel was thrown (24).
- 4.2.3. A stone was laid over the opening and the king sealed the placed stone.
 - 4.2.3.1. The seal was probably made of wet clay around the stone (or with a connecting string across the gap) into which the signets were pressed.
 - 4.2.3.2. Anyone would have been able to see if the stone had been moved as the clay would have been disturbed and the impression of the signets destroyed.
 - 4.2.3.3. The king and his nobles would have pressed their signets into the clay.
 - 4.2.3.3.1. The NIV has ‘signet ring’ at this point. It is probably a mistaken translation.
 - 4.2.3.3.2. The rings would have left barely discernible impressions in the clay.
 - 4.2.3.3.3. The signets used at this time, in ancient Mesopotamia, included engraved semi-precious stones, but were also cylinders of precious metal or wood or hollow tubes (e.g., made out of bone) with an engraved name, family crest (symbol), or scene.
 - 4.2.3.3.4. The signets used in this case were probably rolled along the clay.



Ancient Near Eastern signet.



Old Babylonian contract sealed with seven seals (ANEP #239).

4.2.3.4. The sealing had two primary purposes:

4.2.3.4.1. To signify the official nature of the exaction of punishment.

4.2.3.4.2. To ensure that Daniel could not escape and that no one attempted to help him, if there was any possibility of his surviving the attack of the lions.

4.2.3.5. Daniel prefigures Christ in a way, not necessarily as formal type. Jesus was cast into the lions' den (Satan is likened to a lion; 1 Pt 5.8). A stone was placed on his grave so that no one could help him in any way, including making the claim that he had risen from the grave (Mt 27.64-66).

4.2.3.6. Men had 'spoken', Daniel was beyond the help of men and the gods!

4.3. He *summoned* Daniel's Deity.

4.3.1. Darius knew that Daniel's only help could come from the true God, and he invoked Daniel's God for Daniel's safety.

4.3.2. This passage is usually translated in the subjunctive mood, 'may your God ...', and the king may have really wished for Daniel's rescue, if for no other reason than that he appreciated Daniel's administrative abilities and honesty.

4.3.2.1. Ironically, it is an indirect invocation to the true God—which Darius had declared to be unlawful.

4.3.3. However, it could also be translated as a declarative: 'your God will'.

4.3.3.1. It is possible that he had heard of the rescue of Daniel's three friends (approximately 54 years before) and expected that God would rescue Daniel in the same way.

4.3.3.2. Daniel's confidence may have also impressed Darius. Darius knew that Daniel had gone ahead and prayed to God in spite of knowing about the threat against the life of anyone who prayed to anyone other than the king.

4.3.4. Darius knew, without a question that:

4.3.4.1. There was a God greater than all his pagan gods. Ultimately all men know that there is the true God (Rom 1.19), although they deny him and suppress the truth of his existence and near presence.

4.3.4.2. For all his bluster and pretending to be a god by accepting worship, he was not his own master. He knew that he was accountable to the true God who holds the life and death of all mankind in his hand.

4.3.4.3. The advisors had an evil intent and God would call them to account in some way, either temporally or at the final judgement. All men know that it is appointed unto men to die once and to then they are required to give account of

themselves to God.

5. How did sentencing Daniel to death affect Darius? (18)
 - 5.1. *Starving* – He had such a ‘pit’ in his stomach that he could not eat and endured a forced fast.
 - 5.1.1. The irony is strong here. The monarch of one of the greatest kingdoms on earth was fasting over the wellbeing of a servant.
 - 5.2. *Sober* – He dismissed all entertainment for the evening.
 - 5.2.1. The Jewish writers often used euphemisms for sins. In this case diversions or entertainment is a translation for what would normally have included debauched consorting with dancing girls and concubines.
 - 5.3. *Sleepless* – He was wracked with worry and could not sleep.
 - 5.3.1. The sleeplessness was sent by God.
 - 5.3.2. A similar example is the sleepless night spent by Ahasuerus (Est 6.1) after he had agreed to Haman’s plans (which were similarly conniving as those of the advisors of Darius).
 - 5.3.3. In contrast God gives his faithful—those who trust in him—their rest in confidence (Ps 4.8; Ps 127.2).
 - 5.4. *Stupid* – He felt stupid, and understood how he had been duped by his advisors.
 - 5.4.1. He likely kept saying “How could I have been such a fool? Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!”
 - 5.5. *Senseless* – He grieved over the loss of a counsellor whom he held in high esteem.
 - 5.5.1. He was likely ‘kicking himself’ for throwing away a friend.
 - 5.5.2. He likely cursed his advisors and was angry with them for making him lose such a valued servant as Daniel.
 - 5.6. *Sinner* – He saw the ugliness of his sin.
 - 5.6.1. His conscience screamed at him. However, he had no idea how to deal with his sin. He had remorse because of his sin, but it did not lead to repentance.
 - 5.6.2. While he cried over his fault, he did not attempt to correct it, or know how to.
 - 5.6.3. God uses events and a burning conscience to make people pay attention to his sovereignty. No person—from king to slave—is immune from God’s dealings. However, without a messenger to lead him to Christ he was left in guilt, fear, and anxiety. It is ironic that the one who could have directed him to a solution had been delivered up as a supper for lions.
 - 5.7. *Slave* – The real slave in the ‘lions’ den’ is Darius. He no longer is at liberty (a liberty of conscience or of action) and is bound to his misery.
 - 5.7.1. Those who are attached to the counsels of the ungodly become bound by the chains of Hell.
6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (10-18)
 - 6.1. *Uninhibited Confession*
 - 6.1.1. We cannot separate our profession of faith from its outward confession.
 - 6.1.1.1. Some would render ‘cannot’ as ‘should not’. However, if we really love the Lord, we *cannot* avoid making our profession visible through the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5.22, 23).
 - 6.1.2. An outward confession of faith includes, but is not limited to:
 - 6.1.2.1. *Regularity in worship*
 - 6.1.2.1.1. Our private and public worship should be disciplined as was Daniel’s; whom we saw prayed faithfully three times per day.
 - 6.1.2.1.2. It should not be a hardship for those who have been given an everlasting inheritance to attend the stated services of the congregation, but rather a joy to fellowship with God and his people.
 - 6.1.2.2. *Righteousness in walk*
 - 6.1.2.2.1. The holiness of our lives should be so visible that our co-workers

and neighbours know that we have been taught by Christ and walk with him.

6.1.2.2.2. Daniel was useful to kings because he was first faithful to God.

6.1.2.3. *Real in witness*

6.1.2.3.1. At the heart of having a real witness for God is true and Spirit-filled worship of our Creator.

6.1.2.3.1.1. Observing proper worship is more important than continuing life.

6.1.2.3.1.2. Most Christians do not believe and heed this.

6.1.2.3.1.3. Daniel was willing to submit to an instant death, rather than compromise faithfulness in worship.

6.1.2.3.1.4. Many in the Church today view worship as a mere ritual that is subject to their whim and can be dispensed or disposed of according to their will.

6.1.2.3.2. If we took true and proper worship more seriously our witness would be more sincere.

6.2. *Urgent Call*

6.2.1. Daniel called on God in prayer when the circumstances were urgent (v. 11; Dan 2.17-19).

6.2.2. However, he was not like many who turn to ‘prayer’ *only* when the circumstances are urgent (e.g., in a plummeting plane or storm-tossed ship). As we have seen, he had been praying regularly for over 80 years. He was a man of prayer first and then a man of action.

6.2.3. His urgent call to God was more than a superstitious reaction to uncontrollable events because he believe in the importance of prayer. Like Daniel, we should pray because:

6.2.3.1. We worship God through prayer.

6.2.3.2. We want to thank God for all his goodness to us.

6.2.3.3. We desire to have communion with him.

6.2.3.4. We know that God can deal with any situation that confronts us.

6.3. *Unintended Consequences*

6.3.1. Unintended consequences are outcomes that are not limited to the results originally intended by a particular action.³⁴¹ The unintended results are often unforeseen, but they are the likely results of the action, and could be predicted, if basic logic and a proper understanding of human nature are applied. For example, some historians have speculated that if the Treaty of Versailles had not imposed such humiliating conditions on Germany, Hitler would not have come to power and World War II would not have occurred.

6.3.2. Unintended consequences often far outweigh the intended effect. For example, cane toads introduced into Australia to control insect pests failed to control the pests and instead became a greater pest in their own right.

6.3.3. Possible causes of unintended consequences include:

6.3.3.1. System complexity and unpredictable interactions—being unable to model the system, such as in the ‘butterfly effect’.

6.3.3.2. Error and system failure—not the direct result of stupidity but the inherent consequences of living in a sin-stained universe that is subject to decay.

6.3.3.3. Self-deception—believing what is not true; starting from the wrong premise.

6.3.3.4. Ignorance and human stupidity—incomplete analysis and faulty logic causing wrong conclusions.

6.3.3.5. Failure to understand human nature correctly—creating perverse incentives; you get the behaviour you reward.

³⁴¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unintended_consequence

- 6.3.3.6. Short-term interest taking precedence over long-term interests—sacrificing the future for present.
- 6.3.3.7. Values clash—basic commitments to worldviews that result in unfavourable outcomes.
- 6.3.4. Examples of unintended consequences, include the following (it was hard to resist including many examples as they are so ‘delicious’ for showing the stupidity of mostly left-leaning legislators and why legislators need to think very carefully before putting in place new laws):
 - 6.3.4.1. The US laws attempting to enforce ethical behaviour in companies (Sarbanes-Oxley) and laws governing futures trading and other practices on ‘Wall Street’ do not really control illegal or imprudent behaviour and only cause skewing in the market (e.g., higher costs).
 - 6.3.4.2. Rent-control and minimum-wage laws end up hurting the people they are supposed to help because they make dwelling units and jobs scarcer, and in the medium-to-long term more expensive.
 - 6.3.4.3. The US Supreme Court’s (January 1973) attempted to force racial integration through busing students to other public schools. The result was that many US cities, such as Memphis, are far *more* segregated today than they were in 1972 and good schools were destroyed in the process of ‘desegregation’ as whites fled the cities. In Memphis, for example, Frederic Douglass HS was shut as its enrolment plummeted after the black kids were bused to ‘white’ schools but no white kids were bused to the school (parents quickly moved their kids to private schools or moved out of the city). The school became a storage facility and a magnet for crime. Eventually it had to be levelled. In 2008 a new school finally opened on the site—after 30 years of damage to families and society.
 - 6.3.4.4. A recent example in Toronto was taxing the use of plastic grocery bags (at 5 cents) to discourage their use (some cities and countries, such as San Francisco and China, have outlawed them). It sounds commendable. However, recent studies show the reusable grocery bags quickly become coated with bacteria, molds, and yeast and grocery store clerks handling the bags transmit the contaminants to other bags.³⁴² The extra chemicals (e.g., bleach) required to clean the bags are probably polluting rivers and lakes. In addition, lead used in the paint on reusable bags appears to be a problem.³⁴³ We fill-up landfills with plastic bags or poison grocery store patrons and our lakes! This is a typical example of ‘knee-jerk’, feel-good regulation for which the proponents have not anticipated the consequences.
 - 6.3.4.5. The tax on plastic grocery bags in Hong Kong increased the amount of plastic used to make bags by 25%. Part of this increase was due to the fact that people used to use the grocery bags for disposing of garbage. Instead they purchased more (thicker) plastic garbage bags.³⁴⁴
 - 6.3.4.6. The ‘detergent’-based dispersant used on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico might have been longer lasting and have more environmental effects than the oil that escaped from the BP well.³⁴⁵
 - 6.3.4.7. “San Francisco's big push for low-flow toilets has turned into a multimillion-dollar plumbing stink.” The low flow toilets do not provide enough water to

³⁴² Karen Hawthorne, “Back to plastic? Reusable grocery bags may cause food poisoning.” *National Post*, 2009-05-20; network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/theappetizer/archive/2009/05/20/back-to-plastic-reusable-grocery-bags-may-pose-public-health-risk.aspx See also: Reusable Grocery Bags Contaminated With E. Coli, Other Bacteria, 2010-06-24; www.physorg.com/news196621909.html

³⁴³ Ingrid Schlueter, *Reusable Grocery Bags Warning*, 2011-01-05; www.crosstalkblog.com/2011/01/reusable-grocery-bags-warning/

³⁴⁴ Steve Toloken, “Consumers buy heavier bags; plastics use rises after Hong Kong taxes bags,” *Plastics News*, 2011-08-05; www.plasticsnews.com/headlines2.html?id=22775&channel=110

³⁴⁵ Oil dispersant lingers in Gulf, *Futurity* 2011-01-27; www.futurity.org/earth-environment/oil-dispersant-lingers-in-gulf/

move the sludge through the sewer system. As a result, the city has had to spend over \$100 million upgrading the sewage system and has had to pour millions of pounds of bleach into the sewers to control the odours associated with the sludge.³⁴⁶ It might have been better to spend the money on a desalination plant to provide more water for the city.

- 6.3.4.8. Another one from San Francisco (there must be something in the water out there!): The city passed a law called the “Healthy Meal Incentives Ordinance” (that went into effect 2011-12-01) banning fast food retailers from including a free toy with a meal. It was specifically targeting McDonald’s Happy Meals. Their thinking was that the free toy was an inducement for parents to buy an unhealthy high calorie meal for their children. In order to comply with the law, McDonald’s stores in San Francisco now charge ten cents extra for the Happy Meals (i.e., they are not giving away the toy, but charging for it), and the extra ten cents is donated to the Ronald McDonald House at a San Francisco hospital.³⁴⁷ As a result, people will feel good about buying Happy Meals, as they are contributing to a good cause. The San Francisco by-law will likely not reduce the number of ‘unhealthy’ meals sold but rather may, with McDonald’s response, actually increase the number.
- 6.3.4.9. The US requirement that automobile fuel must have a specified percentage of ethanol affected the price of corn to such an extent that food prices increased (particularly in Mexico which uses a lot of corn for food), adversely affecting the poor. Al Gore who was a supporter of this initiative has since said it was a mistake and bad policy.³⁴⁸ Ya’ think?
- 6.3.4.10. “In 2010 the Department of Transportation said it would fine airlines \$27,500 for every passenger stuck on a tarmac for more than three hours. ... The Dartmouth and MIT researchers compared passenger delays in 2007 with hypothetical scenarios if the rule had been in effect. ... [T]he study found that it has also significantly increased flight cancellations. Passengers must then rebook ... For each passenger-minute of tarmac time saved, the study estimates that the rule costs three passenger-minutes in delays—usually for the same passengers the rule was intended to help.”³⁴⁹
- 6.3.4.11. The McGuinty government in Ontario banned incandescent bulbs in favour of the more energy-efficient CFL bulbs. However, each CFL bulb contains mercury, which can leak out if the bulbs are broken or disposed of incorrectly. The disposal of CFL bulbs is treated as a hazardous waste.
- 6.3.4.12. Standardized testing of students at various grade levels encourages teachers to cheat (e.g., Chicago³⁵⁰, Ontario in 2010³⁵¹) so that their students get higher marks, so that they (the teachers) look good.
- 6.3.4.13. Commenting on a “recent chocolate milk ban in the Fairfax County, Va., school system and elsewhere around the country” in which school administrators and government officials play substitute parents (*in loco parentis*), Jen Singer said,

³⁴⁶ Phillip Matier and Andrew Ross, “Low-flow toilets cause a stink in SF,” San Francisco Chronicle, 2011-02-28; www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=%2Fc%2Fa%2F2011%2F02%2F28%2FBAVP1HUSUD.DTL

³⁴⁷ Justin Rohrlach, “McDonald’s Scores Magnificent Win in Happy Meal Debacle,” *Minyanville*, 2011-12-01; www.minyanville.com/businessmarkets/articles/happy-meal-ban-mcdonald2527s-happy-meal/12/1/2011/id/38178?page=full

³⁴⁸ “I made a mistake”: Al Gore’s U-turn on corn ethanol as he admits the food-vs-fuel competition is real,” *Daily Mail Reporter*, 2010-11-23; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1332231/Al-Gores-U-turn-corn-ethanol-I-mistake.html; see also: “Al Gore’s Ethanol Epiphany,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2010-11-27; online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703572404575634753486416076.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEADTop

³⁴⁹ “Stranded at the Airport - A rule to stop tarmac delays leads to more flight cancellations,” *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 6, 2016-01-06; www.wsj.com/articles/stranded-at-the-airport-1452125387

³⁵⁰ Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics* (William Morrow, New York, NY, 2005), pp. 25-37

³⁵¹ Adam Radwanski, Caroline Alphonso and Karen Howlett, “Ontario Premier questions safeguards on standardized testing,” *Globe and Mail*, 2010-09-21; www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario/ontario-premier-questions-safeguards-on-standardized-testing/article1717613/

“Ditching chocolate milk to cut down on our children's sugar intake might be the right sentiment, but it's the wrong solution. ... In fact, the Washington Post reports that removing flavored milk from schools reduces children's milk consumption by 37%. And for many kids, school is the only place they drink any milk all week long. Take it away, and they don't get those nutrients anywhere.”³⁵² Another study demonstrated the same thing.³⁵³

6.3.4.14. Researchers at Cincinnati’s Children's Hospital Medical Center, noted that overly strict safety standards have had “unintended consequences” and make the equipment uninteresting for children. “Safety guidelines, which are admittedly important, can defeat the very purpose of the playground: rather than promoting physical activity, they are dampening it.”³⁵⁴

6.3.4.15. Laws against using texting while driving appear to *increase*, rather than decrease, the incident of accidents.³⁵⁵ People are going to text regardless of the law. Formerly they would keep their mobile device on their steering wheel while driving. After the law, they appear to put the device on their laps and thus look down more than before. There are other ways to deal with this problem—than creating laws—such as insurance companies changing their policies so that they will not cover costs if a person is using a mobile electronic device while driving is in an accident, or using suasion.

6.3.5. The problems that arise from unintended consequences, and the example from Darius who rushed to make a law and suffered from the unintended consequences, provides a warning for all kings and rulers:

6.3.5.1. Do no harm!

6.3.5.1.1. Given an existing problem, it may be better to do nothing than to do something that risks causing more harm than good.

6.3.5.1.2. Sometimes the cure is worse than the sickness.³⁵⁶

6.3.5.2. Make few laws! These laws should be:

6.3.5.2.1. *Derivative* – Founded explicitly on God’s Law as stated in the Bible, and a direct application of one, or more, of the Ten Commandments.

6.3.5.2.2. *Consistent* – Not contrary or contradictory to God’s Law.

6.3.5.2.3. *Subordinate* – Not usurping or trumping God’s Law.

6.3.5.2.4. *Essential* – Not covered by the principles of a higher law (e.g., ‘you shall not steal’) or the collective applied interpretation of common law.

6.3.5.2.5. *Appropriate*. In areas where God has given the right to governments to enact legislation (e.g., criminal law; but not zoning or forcing stores to close on days other than the Sabbath, or prohibiting the purchase of private health care services).

6.3.5.2.6. *Deliberated* – Having been thought through with sufficient time and debate, so that unintended consequences can be avoided.

6.3.5.2.7. *Enforceable* – Dealing with explicit outward actions and not with intention or motives (e.g., ‘hate crimes’³⁵⁷ or suspected ‘prejudices’).

³⁵² Jen Singer, “The Unwise War Against Chocolate Milk: Schools that ban it find that kids drink less milk, period,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2011-04-19;

online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704004004576270773639365188.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEADTop

³⁵³ “Surprising consequences of banning chocolate milk,” *Science Daily*, 2014-04-16;

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/04/140416172247.htm

³⁵⁴ Alice G. Walton, “New Playgrounds Are Safe—and That’s Why Nobody Uses Them.” *The Atlantic*, 2012-02-01, www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/02/new-playgrounds-are-safe-and-thats-why-nobody-uses-them/252108/

³⁵⁵ D.C. Innes, “Don’t mess with texting,” *World Magazine*, 2011-02-09; online.worldmag.com/2011/02/09/dont-mess-with-texting/

³⁵⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primum_non_nocere

³⁵⁷ ‘Hate crimes’ legislation is effectively unenforceable because it isn’t possible for human judges to determine real motives. For an example, see: Richard Weir, “Lawyer: Lesbians’ assault on gay man can’t be hate crime,” *Boston Herald* (2012-02-25); www.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view/20220225lawyer_lesbians_assault_on_gay_man_cant_be_hate_crime/srv=home&position=2

- 6.3.5.3. A just and prosperous society can only exist when law is:
 - 6.3.5.3.1. Based on God's law. All other systems of law are inherently unjust, being derived from sinful human wills.
 - 6.3.5.3.2. Summarized in a constitution that is a permanent and unchangeable expression of God's Law.
 - 6.3.5.3.3. Stable and not subject to arbitrary whims and changing fads. Where laws can change from one regime to the next people live in uncertainty about their lives, livelihoods, and liberties.
 - 6.3.5.3.4. Watched vigilantly to ensure that it is not abused.
 - 6.3.5.3.5. Surrounded by prayer. Christians have an obligation to pray for kings and those in authority over us. We are to ask God that he would give wisdom to our rulers so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Tim 2.2).

Salvation II (Dan 6.19-23)

1. What occurred at dawn?
 - 1.1. *Arising* – The king was unable to sleep (18) and arose early to go out to the lions' den.
 - 1.1.1. Why did he wait until dawn, and not go out sooner?
 - 1.1.1.1. It might have been difficult to get sufficient light to see into the lions' den.
 - 1.1.1.2. It may be that he was struggling with what to do. When the new day began his thinking may have become clearer and he made up his mind to act.
 - 1.1.1.3. He may have felt that since the legal penalty had been carried out he had to wait until the next day to see what the consequences were.
 - 1.2. *Anticipation* – He went in haste to see if Daniel had survived.
 - 1.2.1. It is striking that the king of this great empire was concerned about the welfare of a government administrator who was from a captive people.
 - 1.2.2. His conscience, curiosity, and concern overcame any reservations he had about how his administrators would react to his enquiring into the wellbeing of Daniel.
 - 1.3. *Anguish* – He called out for Daniel in an anguished voice.
 - 1.3.1. He probably called through an opening covered with iron bars, at the top of the den, out through which Daniel would be lifted (23).
 - 1.3.2. There was a combination of despair and expectation, hopelessness but also hope in his calling into the den.
 - 1.3.3. From a human perspective, it was impossible that Daniel would have survived. However, Darius in the deepest part of his being knew that there is a true God and he hoped that God had acted on behalf of Daniel.
 - 1.4. *Ascertainment* – He went to learn with certainty what had happened to Daniel.
 - 1.4.1. If Daniel had been killed and eaten by the lions, Darius would probably have been upset for a few hours or a few days. However with time, he would have forgotten about Daniel and gone on with his debauched and tyrannous life.
 - 1.4.2. However, on this day he could not let the matter rest until he knew for certain the outcome—either for bad or good—of the events of the previous day.
 2. How does Darius refer to God?
 - 2.1. "Living God"
 - 2.2. This expression is used 28 times in the ESV (NIV, NASB) [30 times in the NKJV (KJV)].
 - 2.3. In the OT, it is used by Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea, etc. In the NT it is used by Christ and the apostles. This is the only place (including verse 26) in the Bible where a pagan uses the expression.
 - 2.4. What does the expression mean?
 - 2.4.1. God who is alive in himself.
 - 2.4.2. God who gives and preserves life.

- 2.4.3. What does it mean to be living or alive?
 - 2.4.3.1. ‘Life’ is not easy to define.
 - 2.4.3.2. Dictionary and encyclopaedia definitions include statements such as ‘exhibiting motion’ that is not inanimate, ‘full of vigour’, ‘marked by alertness or energy’, ‘being able to communicate’, ‘being conscious’, ‘having self-sustaining processes’, ‘having a nonmaterial vitalizing principle’ (i.e., a soul), and ‘a complex arrangement of matter’ (materialism).
 - 2.4.3.3. However, the word ‘living’ is applied to inanimate entities such as concepts—for example we say ‘living language’. Motion, *per se* does not mean life is present since automobiles have motion but we don’t usually refer to them as being alive. The presence of energy is not a necessary condition since human spirits, angels, and God are alive and yet are not marked by physical energy. The ability to communicate doesn’t necessarily imply the presence of life, since computers are said to communicate with one another. Also, a self-sustaining process does not guarantee the presence of life since animals and humans die and angels living in an everlasting existence are not subject to ‘processes’ (at least as we know them).
 - 2.4.3.4. We generally seem to just know when something is alive. However at the edges it is sometimes difficult to determine. For example are plants ... seeds ... or viruses alive? And, is a person alive who is in an extreme ‘vegetative state’, on life support, with no natural heart beat and no brain waves? A virus may not be alive (being replicators that do not metabolize) but a person with no vital signs is alive in a different way, in that a spirit is alive.
 - 2.4.3.5. Since the Bible refers to God, who is spirit (Jn 4.24), as alive we will not accept the materialist or purely biological definitions of life.
 - 2.4.3.5.1. Life can exist as a spirit without a material component; e.g., God and angels.
 - 2.4.3.5.2. Matter cannot generate life—the supposed source of life through evolution is a myth; spirit however can create matter—God created all matter.
 - 2.4.3.5.3. Life in the physical realm is an animating principle, a spirit, provided by God. There is a difference between angelic, human, and animal spirits—e.g., human spirits are everlasting from their point of creation and have rational capacities which animal spirits do not.
 - 2.4.3.5.4. The material dimension of living beings cannot exist without the spirit life; death occurs when the spiritual animating principle is removed.
 - 2.4.3.5.5. Spirit life can be joined intimately with a physical dimension; e.g., man became a living soul after God breathed into the body he had created (Gen 2.7).
 - 2.4.3.5.6. Body and spirit can interact (e.g., in the brain). However, a brain is not required for memory or thought (e.g., in angels).
 - 2.4.3.6. God is the archetypal life, as a being who is an infinite, eternal spirit and who is rational and wise, emotive and loving, creative and all powerful, and holy and just.
- 2.5. Why is it significant that Darius uses the expression ‘living God’ to refer to God.
 - 2.5.1. He is acknowledging a truth that all men know innately—being created as image-bearers of God—that since God is *the* living God he can be the only God.
 - 2.5.1.1. By definition there can only be one God.
 - 2.5.1.1.1. Following Anselm’s ontological argument, it is impossible to have more than one “being than which nothing greater can be conceived”.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Anselm, *Proslogium*, Chapter 2.

- 2.5.1.1.2. It makes no sense to speak of Gods since there can be no equal to God (Is 46.5).
 - 2.5.1.1.3. This, of course, does not exclude the existence of the Trinity. It is not illogical to say that there are three persons in the one being; it is just incomprehensible.
 - 2.5.2. He is acknowledging that the gods of the Persian pantheon (probably from Zoroastrianism, founded c630 BC, with gods such as: Ahura Mazda, the god of light and wisdom; Zurvan Akarana, the god of infinite time; Vayu, the god of the wind; and Tishtrya, the god of water) are not really gods. Since God is the living God, all other gods are but imaginary deities and mythological pretenders.
 - 2.5.2.1. God will not countenance idols (Ex 20.3; Is 42.8).
 - 2.5.2.2. God, of necessity, must be exalted over everything created and manmade god.
 - 2.6. Does this statement imply that Darius believed in the true God?
 - 2.6.1. Yes and No.
 - 2.6.2. Yes, he believed in the true God since all men know that there is but one God and they believe in him even if they suppress the truth and try to deny him.
 - 2.6.3. No, belief in the existence of God is not trust in him and respect for him. As James tells us, the demons know that God is the living God (James 2.19), but that does not change them from being demons.
- 3. How does Darius refer to Daniel?
 - 3.1. As the servant of the living God.
 - 3.1.1. Not as a servant of a manmade idol, a dead god, or human pretentiously acting as a god.
 - 3.1.2. The implication is that Daniel ultimately served God and even though he was an administrator in Darius' court, he wasn't Darius' servant.
 - 3.1.3. Servants of God are proud to be known by this title (Titus 1.1; James 1.1; 2 Pt 1.1; Jude 1; Rev 1.1).
 - 3.1.4. Servants of God are not the servants of men (Lk 16.13; Rom 6.22).
 - 3.1.5. The servants of God are the only truly free men on earth.
 - 3.2. Since Daniel was a servant of the living God, then he was a true servant (or worshiper) not a pretender like the pagan priests.
 - 3.2.1. Every priest (rabbi, imam, brahman, lama, flamen, daduchus, etc.) of every false religion is a charlatan—living a lie.
 - 3.2.2. They are not *holy* men, but evil—deceiving their adherents by the millions.
 - 3.2.3. Many of the other advisors of Darius—those who held an office associated with a religious rite—were indicted as hypocrites.
- 4. What is implied by his question to Daniel?
 - 4.1. Darius' question might show that he had doubts about God's ability to rescue Daniel.
 - 4.2. It may, alternatively, indicate a belief that God has the power to rescue a man from the mouth of lions but he was wondering if God had acted specifically to preserve Daniel.
 - 4.3. The fact that he cries out to Daniel indicates that he expected Daniel to be present. One does not speak seriously to a non-existent being.
 - 4.4. We must believe that:
 - 4.4.1. God has the power to protect his people from any danger and to prolong their life, as he wills.
 - 4.4.2. When he permits his people to suffer at the hands of evil men it is not an indication that his power is limited, but rather that he has other, more glorious, plans for his people.
- 5. To whom does Daniel credit his rescue?
 - 5.1. God
 - 5.1.1. The seal on the entrance to the lions' den would have been unbroken. Darius knew that

no one had helped Daniel.

5.1.2. The preservation of Daniel could only be explained by divine intervention.

5.1.3. Ultimately Daniel credits God with saving his life.

5.2. Angel

5.2.1. He credits an angel with being the agent of God. The angel shut the mouths of the lions.

5.2.2. Who was the angel?

5.2.2.1. The word ‘ܐܢܓܠ’ in Aramaic is translated as ‘angel’. The word can also be translated as “messenger of God”.

5.2.2.2. We are not told who the angel was—i.e., he is not named, as for example when the angel Gabriel appeared to Joseph and Mary.

5.2.2.3. It is also possible that the angel was a Michael referred to later in Daniel (Dan 10.13, 21; Dan 12.1).

5.2.2.4. It is possible that it was the same person who appeared to, and protected, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan 3.25).

5.2.2.5. The ‘angel’ may have been Christ himself, in pre-incarnate form, who came to encourage and protect Daniel.

5.2.3. God’s sending the angel to protect Daniel confirmed Daniel’s innocence before God, and thus before Darius. Daniel had broken a ‘law’ that Darius had no right creating.

5.3. Himself

5.3.1. Daniel credits his salvation from the lions to his own innocence.

5.3.2. Is Daniel declaring a measure of self-righteousness?

5.3.2.1. He is not claiming an innate righteousness. He knows that he is, along with all men, a sinner.

5.3.2.2. He is referring to the specific ‘sin’ with which he was charged by the administrators before Darius. He is claiming to be innocent of that particular ‘sin’ before God and therefore before the king.

5.3.2.2.1. It might appear that Daniel had violated the king’s decree, and should have confessed his ‘sin’ of despising Darius’s sovereignty. However, Daniel is bound by a higher law.

5.3.2.2.2. It is a sin before God to worship anything other than God himself, and Daniel would not worship the king of the Persians when he claimed himself to be a god who was to be worshiped.

5.3.2.2.3. God’s Law takes precedence over man’s law (Acts 4.19; Acts 5.29) so he did not actually break man’s law, particularly when a human law is illegal before God. The order of our obedience must be: “Fear God, honor the king” (1 Pt 2.17).

5.3.2.2.4. If we reverse the order, obeying earthly rulers and rejecting God’s Law, we pervert the natural order of the universe, usurp God’s authority, and attempt to dethrone him.

5.3.2.2.5. Daniel could not obey the king’s decree without denying God of his rights.

5.3.2.2.6. Since Daniel obeyed God, and refused to worship a man, he was innocent of having participated in false worship.

5.3.2.2.7. Therefore he was innocent of breaking not only God’s Law, but also of breaking man’s law.

5.3.2.3. Calvin sums it up well: “The conclusion is, he was the advocate of a pious and holy cause, and prepared to undergo death, not for any foolish imagination, nor by any rash impulse, nor any blind zeal, but because he was assured of his being a worshipper of the one God. His being the defender of the cause of piety and holiness was, as he asserts, the reason of his preservation.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.xii.xx.html
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- 5.4. The Bible recognizes the concept of a hierarchy of causation.
 - 5.4.1. Primary and secondary causation are often treated as coextensive in the Bible. For example God and Satan are both credited with inciting David to take a census (2 Sam 24.1; 1 Chron 21.1)—God sovereignly decreed and permitted Satan to tempt David to accomplish his purposes (see also, Gen 50.20; Job 1.12 with 2.3; Mk 14.21; Jn 13.27; Acts 2.23).
 - 5.4.2. We could analyze this situation using Aristotle’s modes of causation (material, formal, efficient, and final) but simply need to see that all causes—the Divine, angelic (or Satanic), and human—often converge in the actions of men and this in no way undermines God’s sovereignty or removes man’s responsibility for his actions.
- 5.5. God performed, what we would call, a miracle by shutting the mouths of the lions.
 - 5.5.1. We often think of miracles as being something that are supernatural (i.e., above the ‘laws’ of nature or everyday occurrences). In this case we see God performing a miracle but it doesn’t have an element of the spectacular (from our perspective), that walking on water or stopping the revolution of earth has. Nevertheless it was a miracle because hungry lions would normally consume a man with no hesitation (Dan 6.24).
 - 5.5.2. What ironies do we find in this miracle?
 - 5.5.2.1. The ‘lions’ (the court administrators) opened their mouths against Daniel but the lions shut their mouths.
 - 5.5.2.2. Men find it hard to believe that this event actually occurred. They would claim that this account is a fairy tale or that if Daniel was really put into a lions’ den, he frightened off the lions through the night or hid in a small alcove in the den, etc. Yet these same people who claim that this account is a myth believe in myths beyond credulity—they choke on a gnat but swallow an camel (Mt 23.24):
 - 5.5.2.2.1. A chemical stew in a primordial pond of amino acids bound to a clay superstructure generated life.
 - 5.5.2.2.2. A lemur-like creature is the common ancestor of apes and man.
 - 5.5.2.2.3. The alignment of the stars and planets controls human destinies (consider the foolishness of Canada issuing stamps in 2011 to commemorate four symbols of the zodiac).
 - 5.5.2.2.4. Increasing the minimum-wage will provide more income for the poorest people in society.³⁶⁰
 - 5.5.2.2.5. Etc. etc.
- 6. How did Daniel respond to Darius? What was the manner of his response? (21-22)
 - 6.1. *Respectful* – He responded to the king with words of respect. “O king, live forever!”
 - 6.1.1. This is the first (only) time that Daniel records his having used this expression. Prior to this others have used the expression with respect to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2.4; Dan 3.9), Belshazzar (Dan 5.10), and Darius (Dan 6.6).
 - 6.1.2. We have noted in the past that the expression was likely not used literally (i.e., expecting or hoping that the king would not see death), but was used to suggest that the king would have a long and prosperous life or that his glory or dynasty would continue into the ages.
 - 6.1.3. We have also noted that the sycophants in the kings’ courts were not sincere in their desire, but merely mouthing platitudes.
 - 6.1.4. Daniel, in contrast, was sincere. He desired that the king’s welfare be advanced. This is an amazing reaction when you consider what he had just been through at the command of the king.
 - 6.2. *Restrained* – He does not reproach the king for having cast him into the lions’ den. He doesn’t flare up in anger and accuse the king of being stupid, unfair, or unkind.
 - 6.2.1. Instead we see in him gentleness and moderation. He simply explains how he had been

³⁶⁰ “How to Keep More Kids on the Streets,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2012-03-13;
online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203458604577263033966950776.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

- preserved from the mouths of the lions.
- 6.2.2. Why does he act this way?
- 6.2.2.1. He believed in the principle of turning the other cheek (Mt 5.39).
- 6.2.2.2. He knew that to answer with kindness will turn away anger (Prov 15.1).
- 6.2.2.3. To show a forgiving spirit (Mt 18.21, 22).
- 6.2.2.4. He believed that all things were working for his good and for God's glory (Rom 8.28; 1 Cor 10.31).
- 6.2.2.5. He wanted to be a witness to God and his Kingdom (1 Pt 3.14-17).
- 6.3. *Rebuking* – He circumspectly rebukes the king.
- 6.3.1. How does he rebuke the king?
- 6.3.1.1. Stating that he is innocent—with the implication that the king had been unjust by sentencing an innocent man to death.
- 6.3.1.2. Confirming that God had preserved him—with the implication that God overruled Darius.
- 6.3.1.3. Claiming that God is the living God, who actively interceded on behalf of Daniel by sending the angel—with the implication that Darius' gods are dead and worthless.
- 6.3.1.4. Extolling God as all powerful, who can shut the mouths of lions—with the implication that Darius' gods are powerless phantoms.
7. What were the immediate results of Darius' discovery of Daniel's preservation? (23)
- 7.1. *Rejoicing* – The king rejoiced that Daniel was still alive.
- 7.1.1. We do not need to be cynical about his joy. We don't have to read into this a selfish motive such as his being thankful that he would not have to find another counsellor.
- 7.1.2. He was truly glad that Daniel had not been harmed. Daniel had earned his respect and, to the extent possible, love. Darius really was pleased that a good and faithful man had not met with his demise.
- 7.1.3. For Darius, it would have been a humbling experience to realize that he had cared about a subject to the extent that he rejoiced that his own word of command had been thwarted.
- 7.2. *Removal* – Daniel was lifted out of the lions' den.
- 7.2.1. Daniel had been thrown into the lions' den. The distance to the floor of the den was likely sufficient that a person would normally be injured from the fall, since the den had to be deep enough that the lions could not jump out of the opening. To remove him from the den, servants likely lowered ropes to him and pulled him from the den (Jer 38.11-13).
- 7.2.2. The requirements of the law had been fully met and Daniel could now be raised back to life. In a minor way Daniel represents Christ in this experience. Jesus had been unjustly condemned to death, preserved by the Father (Ps 16.10; Ps 86.13; Acts 2.31; Acts 13.35), and raised from the pit to new life (Ps 30.3; Ps 103.4).
- 7.3. *Recommendation* – The evidence of his not being harmed displayed his faith in God and recommended God as the only truly living God.
- 7.3.1. The fact that there were no wounds on him was a symbol of his innocence before God and the king.
- 7.3.2. We can picture the advisors to the king surrounding him as the advisors had surrounded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego after they had come out from the fiery brick kiln (Dan 3.27)—touching him and looking for any signs of wounds.
- 7.3.3. We don't know what Daniel said to them, but if he said anything, it was likely to proclaim the greatness of the one true God.
8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (19-23)
- 8.1. *Sinners' Snare* – Sin leads to grief. We all know this, we just don't believe it as we should.
- 8.1.1. Darius' false view of himself and his pride led him into the snare set by his advisors.
- 8.1.2. Kings and rulers are not immune from acting foolishly, and the more they are flattered

by their retainers, the more likely they are to fall into serious sin.

- 8.1.3. We need to pray for kings and for those who rule over us that they will be kept from the snare of pride. We also need to remember that we are not immune, lest we fall.

8.2. *Sovereign's Supremacy* – The living God rules and nothing is too hard for him. We all know this, we just don't believe it as we should.

- 8.2.1. As Daniel was being thrown into the lions' den was he reflecting on these truths?

8.2.1.1. That all things work together for good for God's people (Rom 8.28).

8.2.1.2. That we are to thank God in whatever circumstances we find ourselves (1 Thess 5.17-18).

8.2.1.3. That we are to be content in whatever situation God places us (Phil 4.11).

8.2.1.4. That God can rescue from the mouths of lions (Ps 22.21).

I believe that Daniel was a bit fearful of what might happen to him in the pit (a natural response in these circumstances). But, I also believe that he was trusting in God and did not panic. He believed that if it was God's will, he would remove him from this space-time realm and take him to the alternate and ultimate reality, with himself (Job 19.25). He also believed that if God so decided, he could provide a means of escape from the pending doom.

- 8.2.2. It is easier for us to look back in hind sight and to believe these truths. Do we believe them now and will we believe them as we are suffering at the hands of wicked men?

- 8.2.3. We have seen in the book of Daniel, thus far, a number of miracles, including the revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the preservation of the three in the fiery furnace, and the preservation of Daniel from the lions. These passages teach us to believe in miracles.

8.2.3.1. There is nothing that is impossible for God (Mt 19.26; Lk 1.37)—dismissing of course, the silly logically impossible conundrums like God creating a stone too large for him to lift or uncreating himself.

8.2.3.2. Restraining lions is nothing compared with calming storms, stopping the revolution of the earth for a number of hours, raising the dead, or creating a universe. A God who can do these things can protect us from the roaring lion, the Devil (1 Peter 5.8) and from all his fiery darts in the form of attacks from wicked men.

8.2.3.3. This, of course, does not mean that we are to *expect* that he will perform the same kind, or similar, miracles on our behalf. God's providential preservation of us, every day, is unique to the circumstances that he has planned for our lives.

8.2.3.4. We must give up our trembling like leaves before a gale and trust God in every situation.

8.3. *Saints' Salvation* – God saved Daniel from destruction because he was a righteous man—he was a true believer in God and a true worshipper of God. We have a temporal example symbolizing an eternal truth.

- 8.3.1. Daniel stated, that he was safely preserved, because he trusted in God. Daniel stopped the mouths of lions through faith (Heb 11.33).

8.3.2. The saints who trust in God can also say that God will preserve them. However, our focus should be on the everlasting salvation that is represented by the example of Daniel. We will all have to die at some point (unless Christ returns before the time we would normally expect to die). God has appointed a time of our deaths (Heb 9.27) so we must not expect everlasting preservation in this life. We can however expect and believe that God will preserve us in an everlasting existence.

8.3.3. One of the great essentials of Christian life is faith (1 Cor 13.13) and that faith should be focused on Christ and the salvation he provides to us.

8.3.4. As Daniel's trust was not in vain, so yours will not be either (Jn 10.29; Jn 14.3). We can, and should, and will, trust God until the end.

Satisfaction (Dan 6.24-28)

1. What was the verdict for the counsellors of the king?
 - 1.1. They were determined to have acted with malice by bringing an accusation against Daniel.
 - 1.2. Why was their action considered to be a malicious accusation?
 - 1.2.1. It was not really a false (as the NIV has it) accusation, since what they had said about Daniel ignoring the king's decree was technically correct (13).
 - 1.2.2. Rather the problem was that the counsellors of the king had acted with deliberate malice and had manufactured a situation so that they could accuse Daniel of insubordination.
 - 1.2.3. Their goal was character assassination and murder.
 - 1.3. What does the verdict demonstrate?
 - 1.3.1. Justice prevails. The truth will eventually, and always, become known.
 - 1.3.2. We may not always believe this when we see the wicked getting away with their evil.
 - 1.3.3. However, many (most) times in this life evil catches up with its perpetrators. For example:
 - 1.3.3.1. A CEO who has been abusive of his employees gets caught in an indiscretion (padding an expense account after a liaison, or charged with sexual harassment).
 - 1.3.3.2. A murderous gang leader ends up on a slab in the morgue.
 - 1.3.3.3. A tax cheat has his car stolen and it is ruined by drunken joy-riders.
 - 1.3.3.4. A man who lives a debauched life ends up with an incurable STD.
 - 1.3.4. And we know that ultimately, on the Day of Judgement, God will repay all injustices and vindicate his people (Dt 32.36; Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30).
 - 1.4. Why is it important that the text says, "at the king's command", before mentioning the malicious intent of the counsellors?
 - 1.4.1. It tells us that the king was the one who identified the real crime, gave the verdict, and delivered the sentence.
 - 1.4.2. We would not have heard Daniel saying something like, "You see, O king, I wasn't the one who was at fault, it was these ingrates!"
 - 1.4.3. Daniel did not bring a charge against the men, nor did he gloat at their situation.
 - 1.4.4. Daniel left matters in God's hands, and God's agent, the king, brought about vindication for Daniel.
2. How did Darius deal with the men who had falsely accused Daniel?
 - 2.1. He punished them with the exact same punishment they had planned for Daniel.
 - 2.1.1. They were cast into the lions' den to be consumed by the lions.
 - 2.1.2. They were thrown through the opening in the roof, through which Daniel had been drawn out.
 - 2.1.2.1. There is an element of irony in this. The opening had been the way of rescue for Daniel—as a portal to new life—but it became for them the way of death.
 - 2.1.2.2. Without suggesting that this section should be taken allegorically, we can see an application to the death of Christ. For us his death is our doorway to salvation and eternal life; for the reprobate, Christ's resurrection is the gateway to Hell.
 - 2.1.3. Daniel's accusers had been able to persuade Darius to make a decree against Daniel but, ironically, when it came to preserving their own lives they were unable to dissuade the king from eliminating them.
 - 2.2. How quickly did these men perish?
 - 2.2.1. Their demise was almost instantaneous—being torn apart before their bodies reached the floor of the den.
 - 2.2.2. Why are we told this?
 - 2.2.2.1. The lions were obviously very hungry. They had not been able to dine upon Daniel and had probably paced all night salivating for their supper.
 - 2.2.2.1.1. God silences any spurious suggestion that the reason Daniel was preserved was because the lions had had a large meal before he was

- thrown into the den.
- 2.2.2.1.2. The lions were so hungry that they consumed all the accusers and their families. They would have consumed Daniel without delay if it had not been for God's holding back their ravenous jaws.
- 2.2.2.2. We are told about the 'instantaneous' death of the accusers to remind us of the greatness of God. As with all things in the universe, their death brought glory to God in multiple ways—here by declaring his greatness and, as we will see, by declaring his justice.
- 2.3. What Scriptural principles are applied in the death of Daniel's accusers?
 - 2.3.1. The death penalty for (attempted) manslaughter/murder (Gen 9.6; Ex 21.12, 14).
 - 2.3.2. Those who dig a pit fall into it, and the snares that they lay will come back on their own heads (Ps 9.16; Ps 57.6; Ps 141.9-10).
 - 2.3.2.1. Haman's similar fate is an illustration of this principle (Est 7.9-10).
 - 2.3.3. God receives glory through executing divine justice against all those who oppose his people (Dt 32.35-36; Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30-31).
- 2.4. Who was included in the punishment?
 - 2.4.1. Probably not all 120 (Dan 6.1) satraps, but rather a subset who had been the outspoken accusers and plotters against Daniel—likely some of the ones serving locally or nearby and not those in distant territories.
 - 2.4.2. The accusers and their wives and children were killed together.
 - 2.4.3. Why were their wives and children included with them in the punishment?
 - 2.4.3.1. Reference is made by the ancient historians (e.g., Herodotus) to a Persian custom to execute the family members of the condemned.³⁶¹
 - 2.4.3.2. Regardless of the particular Persian practice or law, it is likely the case that the family members (at least the wives and older children) were complicit in the assassination attempt against Daniel.
 - 2.4.3.2.1. Achan's family, who likely knew of his having hidden the stolen goods, were condemned to death along with Achan (Josh 7.24-25).
 - 2.4.3.2.2. The wife and sons of Haman, who participated in the plot against Mordecai (Est 5.11-14), were executed by the Jews (Est 9.10).
 - 2.4.3.3. The general, a Biblical principle is that a person should not be punished for the individual sins of another (Dt 24.16).
 - 2.4.3.3.1. However, Darius would not have been following Biblical Law as his pagan empire and regime rejected God's Law as their standard. If he was unjust in executing the family members, his injustice stemmed from his being a pagan.
 - 2.4.3.3.2. However, Darius may have done the right thing if the family members of the advisors were co-conspirators in the crime against Daniel.
 - 2.4.3.3.3. Also, there may be an application of the covenantal (federal) principle here, with the families being punished along with the head of these households. Examples of this principle can be found in our being guilty of Adam's sin in the Garden (Rom 5.17; 1 Cor 15.22), the people of Judah being held accountable for David's sin of pride in taking a census (2 Samuel 24.15), and Israel being subject to punishment at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, for its leaders' sins (Mt 24.21).
- 3. What was Darius moved to do after Daniel had spent the night in a lions' den? (25-27)
 - 3.1. To issue a decree.
 - 3.2. Why?
 - 3.2.1. To honour the great God.

³⁶¹ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 139.

- 3.2.1.1. He was impressed by the protection of Daniel and wished to honour God who had protected him. This does not mean that Darius was a converted man or that he gave exclusive allegiance to God.
- 3.2.1.2. His honouring the true God would not have been exclusive. His syncretistic religion would have allowed room for multiple deities, and honouring another god was not exceptional but common.
- 3.2.2. To let men in his kingdom know of the miraculous event that had occurred in his kingdom.
 - 3.2.2.1. His broadcasting the news of the miracle could be treated in the same class as the dissemination of other news, such as about a military victory or a recovery from a serious illness.
- 3.2.3. To give good news, about the living God who had performed the miracle.
 - 3.2.3.1. We could be cynical and say that his greeting ('peace be multiplied to you' or 'may you prosper greatly') to his people was nothing more than a mere gratuitous formality.
 - 3.2.3.2. On the other hand, we could take the view that his relief at seeing the protection of Daniel caused a softening in him and he experienced a genuine, if momentary, concern for his people, and that he really did wish for their peace and prosperity among his subjects. God's general grace extends to all men so that at times they love others and display a concern for their wellbeing.
- 3.3. To whom did he wish the decree promulgated?
 - 3.3.1. The ESV has (25) "dwell in all the earth", whereas the NIV has "throughout the land". The Aramaic word used here (ܐܪܥܐ) is similar to the Hebrew (אֶרֶץ) and can be translated as either 'earth' (meaning the 'world' or 'known world') or 'land' (meaning 'geographic territory') depending on the context.
 - 3.3.2. Darius adds a definitional qualifier (26) "in every part of my kingdom/royal dominion".
 - 3.3.3. The NIV is probably more accurate, in this instance, and Darius directed his decree to all the people in his empire rather than to all the people on earth (as Nebuchadnezzar had done, 4.1).
- 4. What is the content of his decree? (26-27)
 - 4.1. The content of his decree is about God.
 - 4.2. What attributes of God does Darius mention or infer? At least the following attributes of God are included in Darius' decree:
 - 4.2.1. *Powerful* – He is the One that all men must fear and reverence.
 - 4.2.1.1. It is his pure and ultimate power that we must fear and reverence. C. S. Lewis, in the *Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe*, has Mr. Beaver speak about Aslan, "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; ... 'Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'"³⁶² God is so powerful he isn't 'safe'. But he is very good. Men think of God as a cuddly Santa Claus or teddy bear. They have no idea what it means for God to be powerful. Toying with God is far worse than playing with high voltage power lines.
 - 4.2.1.2. We must also fear his holiness and his hatred of evil.
 - 4.2.1.3. In contrast man (even King Darius) is a puny bug (or as the Psalmist says, a worm; 22.6).
 - 4.2.1.4. The gods of the Persian pantheon were as powerless as ink scrawls by a three-year-old on a megalith.
 - 4.2.2. *Personal* – He is the living God and a 'he' not an 'it'.
 - 4.2.2.1. He is not a thing like a rock or an animal, but a person.

³⁶² C. S. Lewis, in the *Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), p. 75.
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- 4.2.2.2. God not only lives but has life in himself—he is self-existent³⁶³—and is the source of all life, since no life can come into existence without him or continue to exist independent of him.
- 4.2.2.3. Associated with personality are rationality, volition, and emotion. We can conclude this about God, not by projecting human attributes onto God, but because he declares this about himself. Nor is it that God uses anthropomorphisms to speak about himself (e.g., with respect to ‘love’ and ‘thoughts’, etc.). Rather, God himself is ultimate rationality, self-will and emotion (e.g., love). We know what these things are expressed in us, even if only shadows of ultimate reality, because we are created in God’s image.
- 4.2.2.4. The gods of the Persian pantheon were impersonal forces like light and wind.
- 4.2.3. *Perpetual* – He endures forever or is eternal.
 - 4.2.3.1. His eternalness is in a special class (he is unique) because he didn’t come into existence, and he never ceases to exist. In contrast, created persons (angels and mankind) only have everlasting existence *once* created.
 - 4.2.3.2. Also, God’s eternalness is probably in a distinct class from our everlastingness. We exist *within* eternity; he is the essence of eternity—our everlasting existence is derived whereas his eternalness is original.
 - 4.2.3.3. The gods of the Persian pantheon were made by men and the idea of their existence has largely evaporated and will cease to exist at the end of time (when there will be no more memory of them).
- 4.2.4. *Potentate* – He is the ultimate potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - 4.2.4.1. The creator of the universe is the ruler of the universe.
 - 4.2.4.2. He governs through his providence every action of every created thing (atoms, animals, *anthropos*, and angels) and every thought of every rational creature. This truly is beyond our comprehension. But just because we don’t understand it, does not give us a right to dismiss it or question it (Rom 9.20).
 - 4.2.4.3. Darius, who ruled a vast empire of 120 provinces and had kings among his satraps was, compared with God, no more significant than a grade 3 student leading a group of kindergarten students across a playground.
- 4.2.5. *Permanent* – His kingdom is indestructible [see the notes, above, on 2.44, for applicable Scripture references].
 - 4.2.5.1. It cannot decay.
 - 4.2.5.2. There is no danger of its destruction or overthrow.
 - 4.2.5.3. No one can remove any of its subjects.
 - 4.2.5.4. No succession or revolution is possible in this Kingdom.
 - 4.2.5.5. In contrast, the kingdom of Darius is nothing more than a few dust-filled ruins and a few clay tablets with chicken-scratch writing.
- 4.2.6. *Perceivable* – God communicates in signs and wonders in heaven and earth.
 - 4.2.6.1. Can the finite comprehend the infinite? Can God be known at all? Philosophers and theologians have speculated on, and debated, this topic for centuries. Some have concluded that God cannot be known, or known only indirectly (e.g., through the effect of his actions).
 - 4.2.6.2. The Bible teaches that God can be known (Jn 17.3). However, what we know about God is limited because of our finiteness. We cannot know everything about God but what we can know about him is true.
 - 4.2.6.3. What we know about God can be true because he has chosen to reveal himself to his creatures in a variety of ways (Heb 1.1-2). One of the ways he has chosen to reveal himself is through signs and wonders like the miracle of protecting Daniel from the lions.

³⁶³ Self-existence (*aseity*) is existence that is self-caused, derived from self, and having no other source.

- 4.2.6.4. Other ways he has revealed himself include: through creation (Ps 19.1), by dreams and visions, directly speaking to men, communicating through prophets, through his Son, by the written word (the Bible), and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- 4.2.6.5. Darius calls God, the God of Daniel. He may have been thinking of God as the tribal god of Daniel or even as the personal invention of Daniel. But the expression is valid (Gen 26.4). What it means is: that God had revealed himself to Daniel and he was the God whom Daniel worshiped.
- 4.2.6.6. The gods of the pagans are known only to our physical senses (like, we taste salt or feel sandpaper) or in our imaginations (like, we know Cinderella from Perrault's story or the various musical and movie adaptations).
- 4.2.7. *Protector* – He saves, delivers, and rescues, as he did Daniel.
 - 4.2.7.1. God saves his people from physical disaster. He does this constantly, all day long. We do not realize the extent to which God is directly, and through his angelic messengers, protecting us (Ps 91.11-12). In addressing this area, Andrée Seu said: 'It occurred to me as I was driving ... that God is busy all the time for me, firing off a thousand orders to his angels for every one puny prayer request I think to ask Him for: "Keep that car from swerving into her." "Send her a red light to avoid that accident three miles ahead." "Hold that rickety bridge up." The favor I found with that car rental agency and with the prison C.O. and with the stranger I asked for directions—these are all His busy graces toward me and His running interference for me, all while I grumbled at His inactivity because I didn't see the answer to one puny prayer request.'³⁶⁴
 - 4.2.7.2. When Paul says "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17.28) he not only meant that we were created by God, but that God continually provides our instant-by-instant sustenance (Col 1.17).
 - 4.2.7.3. God also protects us from spiritual dangers and moral depravity (1 Pt 5.8-10).
 - 4.2.7.4. And ultimately, he protects us from everlasting disaster by providing salvation through Christ.
 - 4.2.7.5. About the only thing you can do with a carved idol is use it as a form over which to drape your wet coat so that it will dry out. An idol cannot provide salvation from anything.
- 4.3. The decree of Darius reminds us of the words of Daniel when he was interpreting the vision that Nebuchadnezzar had of the great image made out of metals and clay (Dan 2.44).
 - 4.3.1. When we looked at that verse we determined that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is:
 - 4.3.1.1. Principality – A universal Kingdom with a king, territory, subjects, laws, and administration
 - 4.3.1.2. Present – An ongoing 'now'
 - 4.3.1.3. Personal – Divine
 - 4.3.1.4. Permanent – Indestructible
 - 4.3.1.5. Protected – Owned by God
 - 4.3.1.6. Powerful – All-powerful
 - 4.3.1.7. Perpetual – Eternal.Six of the seven attributes are essentially the same in both accounts (Dan 2.44 and Dan 6.26-27). In Dan 2.44 the idea of God's being eternally present is included. In Dan 6.26-27 we have the addition of God being perceivable.
 - 4.3.2. Why would the two accounts be so similar?
 - 4.3.2.1. It is possible that Darius was aware of Daniel's revelation to Nebuchadnezzar. It is also possible that the decree of Darius was composed by Daniel. If so, we would expect that both messages (even though separated by over half a century)

³⁶⁴ Andrée Seu, "Magoo and me," *World Magazine* blog, 2010-08-31; online.worldmag.com/2010/08/31/magoo-and-me/
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- would be consistent.
- 4.3.2.2. We can conclude that the HS wished to focus the ancient pagan world on particular attributes of the Godhead. These attributes of God are the same ones that our world needs to hear today, as it plunges rapidly into a deepening paganism.
 - 4.3.3. The combined message of the two accounts is the same message our age desperately needs to hear and earnestly heed. God is:
 - 4.3.3.1. *Personal* – God is a living person, not a force (like in *Star Wars*).
 - 4.3.3.2. *Perpetual* – He exists in an eternal ‘now’.
 - 4.3.3.3. *Powerful* – He is the all-powerful One who created the universe by speaking.
 - 4.3.3.4. *Present* – He is present and active in governing the universe; not a distant, disengaged god; men are to acknowledge his presence through worship.
 - 4.3.3.5. *Potentate* – He is the governor over all rulers of this world; rulers are to serve the true God only and to obey and enforce his laws.
 - 4.3.3.6. *Permanent* – His reign, established in Christ, is indestructible; all men are to give allegiance to Christ as God.
 - 4.3.3.7. *Perceivable* – He reveals himself and his will and Law to men through the Bible, as well as through other forms of revelation (e.g., in nature, through innate knowledge, signs and wonders).
 - 4.3.3.8. *Protector* – He saves, delivers, and rescues men from sin and the consequences of sin.
 - 4.3.4. If men would constantly acknowledged the true God and heed these points they would:
 - 4.3.4.1. Acknowledge God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one God.
 - 4.3.4.2. Exclude all fictitious gods and despise all false religions and superstitions.
 - 4.3.4.3. Take seriously the Ten Commandments.
 - 4.3.4.4. Repent of their sins.
 - 4.3.4.5. Live for the glory of God.
5. What does this decree tell us about Darius?
- 5.1. He was in awe of God, but this does not necessarily imply that he manifested a true repentance.
 - 5.2. As a pagan he could say, and even believe, the elements of his decree, because all men know that the true God exists and they know of his invisible attributes (Rom 1.19-20).
 - 5.3. He had belief but not faith—an academic belief but not a trusting faith. For example, someone could believe that Jesus lived, like Caesar, but not trust in him as saviour.
 - 5.4. He believed that God could work miracles; but mighty miracles do not lead people to confess the true God as the only God.
 - 5.5. Calvin says that “God extorted a confession from him.” But he did not rise above his polytheism. He viewed God as a powerful god, but still just another god—not the true God, just a better god.
 - 5.6. He was steeped in idolatry that was so deeply rooted that it was not easy to overcome. Facts about God were not sufficient to convince him of the foolishness of his superstitions, it would require the power of the Holy Spirit to change his heart.
 - 5.7. He didn’t go far enough. It is not sufficient that men don’t openly despise God, they need to reject all false gods and worship only the true God. He should have gone further in his decree and commanded all men to repent of their idolatry and wickedness and to embrace God as the one and only God and his promised Messiah as the only saviour of mankind.
6. What, in essence, using modern terminology, did Darius do by issuing this decree?
- 6.1. He officially endorsed the public exercise of Christianity (the OT equivalent—looking forward to the coming Messiah).
 - 6.1.1. He officially endorsed the worship of the LORD (Jehovah/Yahweh) throughout the entire realm of ancient Persia.

- 6.1.2. The concept of the separation of religion and the state (or government function), is largely a modern (post Kantian, post Jeffersonian) concept. The idea that a state can be secular (i.e., non-religious) is a fallacious concept. There cannot be a true separation of religion and state—it is an impossibility because man is by nature a religious being. Therefore, the state will, explicitly or implicitly, endorse religion. This endorsement will be (and can only be) in one of the following forms:
- 6.1.2.1. Endorsement of Christianity to the exclusion of all other religions. For example, at the time of the English civil war (1642–1651) and the Covenanters—the *Solemn League and Covenant* (1643): “All with one voice approve and embrace the same, as the most powerful mean, by the blessing of GOD, for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his majesty’s throne to all ages and generations.”³⁶⁵
 - 6.1.2.2. Endorsement of another formally organized religion to the exclusion of all other religions. For example, in Saudi Arabia Islam is the only officially permitted religion.
 - 6.1.2.3. Endorsement of an informal religion, to the official or *de facto* exclusion of all other religions. For example, in North Korea where all religions are banned except a form of emperor worship.
 - 6.1.2.4. Endorsement of an official position of religious pluralism. For example, in the US (and much of the West today) in which religious toleration is supposed to permit the free exercise of any religion. However, in practice secular humanism is the *de facto* religion of the state, other false religions are tolerated to an extent, and Christianity is being driven out.
- 6.2. Should the civil magistrate endorse Christianity?
- 6.2.1. The simple answer is ‘yes’, since all men must reverence the true God (and only the true God) as he is revealed through Christ (Ps 2.1-12; Ps 89.27; Col 1.18; Phil 2.9-11; 1 Pt 3.22).
 - 6.2.1.1. “The civil magistrate ... hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. ...”³⁶⁶
 - 6.2.1.2. For example, the laws of every nation must require the observance of, and be consistent with, God’s Law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments.³⁶⁷
 - 6.2.2. However, the situation, as we have observed elsewhere³⁶⁸, is complex. We will note at this point only a few considerations:
 - 6.2.2.1. While we desire to see Christianity established, to the exclusion of all other religions, history teaches that it is not possible in this fallen world.
 - 6.2.2.2. Due to enduring sin, there are dangers associated with any hegemony, even when the leaders are explicitly Christian:
 - 6.2.2.2.1. Would, or should, tolerance allow for the ‘right’ to private beliefs?
 - 6.2.2.2.2. How would we deal with dissent, particularly in a democratic society?
 - 6.2.2.2.3. How would the exercise of false religion be dealt with, without resorting to persecution (i.e., an inquisition)?
 - 6.2.2.2.4. Would punishment (including corporal or capital) be carried out for the

³⁶⁵ www.covenanter.org/Westminster/solemnleague.htm

³⁶⁶ “Of the Civil Magistrate,” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 23, para. 3.

³⁶⁷ See: “Appendix H – The Law of God, the Standard for National Laws” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

³⁶⁸ See: “Appendix F – Relationship Between Church and State (Considerations)”, “Appendix E – The Role of the Civil Magistrate with Respect to the Church (Considerations)”, and “Appendix G – The God-Ordained Role for Government” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

exercise of false religious practices?

6.2.2.2.4.1. We should be careful how we respond to such a question.

6.2.2.2.4.2. We have been influenced by prevailing, inconsistent, views in our society.

6.2.2.2.4.3. For example, most people would think it was a criminal offence requiring punishment if someone sacrificed a virgin maiden to his god, or if an Islamic terrorist slaughtered everyone in a subway car. Why, in principle, are these actions any more evil than blaspheming the only true God. Is the slaughter of human life really more significant than abusing God? By whose standard?

6.2.2.2.5. How can inconsistencies be avoided (e.g., Cromwell permitted Jews to return to England in 1656, after 366 years³⁶⁹ [allegedly because of a need for their financial assistance] but was outspokenly anti-Roman Catholic and probably would have been adamantly against Turks [Muslims] exercising their religion in England)?

6.2.2.2.6. How can the government avoid the tendency of false professions when a religious test is in place?

6.2.2.3. Religious toleration turns quickly (within, at most, a few generations) into pluralism that then turns against Christianity. It is impossible for pluralism to long endure because if men are not for Christ, they will be against him (Lk 11.23).

6.2.2.4. We should, however, do what we can, through legitimate (e.g., morally right and legal) means to hold back the continual pressure of the state to slide into evil (e.g., by voting for Christians who have a proper understanding of God's defined role for the state, proclaiming prophetically to those in authority over us, and praying for our rulers).

6.2.2.5. We should be longing for the hastening of the everlasting eschatological reign of Jesus Christ, rather than for a *temporal* substitute (Mt 6.10; Rev 22.20), as do almost all premillennialists and many postmillennialists.

7. How does this section end? (28)

7.1. Commendation of Daniel

7.1.1. Daniel prospered—he was blessed with much success throughout his long life showing that God was pleased to extend his usefulness. This is a commendation and recognition of his faithful service for God and king.

7.1.2. He had been through a great trial in which God had tested him and he came through it with his faith and trust secure. The statement about his prospering is a short equivalent to the end of the book of Job in which Job is blessed with prosperity after enduring significant trials and the testing of his faith.

7.1.3. It is possible, as suggested by Calvin,³⁷⁰ that there is a *double entendre* implied in the word 'prospered'. He says that the root word צָלַח can include the idea of 'to pass over'³⁷¹ (as in, 'to cross a river') and here is translated metaphorically as 'prospered'. So there may be significance in the choice of words to show that Daniel had passed from obscurity to recognition with the change of regime.

7.1.3.1. As we noted when we considered chapter 5, Daniel's involvement in administrative matters may have ended when Evil-Merodach became king. He may have been dismissed or may have retired to a life of quiet study and reflection, waiting for the 70 years of captivity to come to an end (as prophesied

³⁶⁹ Edward I expelled Jews from England in 1290 AD.

³⁷⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.xii.xxvi.html

³⁷¹ Benajamin Davidson gives this meaning, although it is not given in Brown, Driver, & Briggs or Holladay.

by Jeremiah 25.11; Daniel 9.1).

7.1.3.2. Daniel, not being present and active in the court setting, was quickly forgotten.

7.1.3.3. It is as if he *passed over* from being inconspicuous to being illustrious as one kingdom *passed over* from prosperity to destruction.

7.1.3.4. However, Daniel had no interest in material rewards or earthly recognition (Dan 5.17). He was waiting for his everlasting reward. He would undoubtedly have sung the words of Psalm 84.10 with experiential sincerity.

7.2. Constancy of Daniel

7.2.1. Daniel lived (and served) through the reigns of a number of kings, from 605 BC to at least 539 BC (the fall of Babylon).

7.2.1.1. He was at least 80 years old at the time Cyrus became king and was still serving as a key administrator in the government of his day. He lived, and served, during the entire period of the Jewish Captivity and was blessed with the opportunity to see the dawning of a new era (Is 44.28; Is 45:1).

7.2.1.2. In total, he lived through a portion of the reigns of seven different Babylonian and Persian kings: Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC); Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach) (561-560 BC); Neriglissar (or Nergal-shar-usur, or Nergal-sharezer) (559-555 BC); Labashi-Marduk (555 BC); Nabonidus (555-539 BC); Belshazzar (549-539 BC) as coregent with his father; Darius/Cyrus (539-530 BC).

7.2.1.3. He saw the rise, reign, and ruin of the greatest pagan kingdoms in history and the dawning of new hope for Israel as they looked toward the Messianic age.

7.2.2. Daniel had significant influence in the administrations of worldly-great kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus.

7.2.2.1. Daniel's influence, specifically, in the administrations of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus was likely instrumental in protecting the lives of the Jews in captivity.

7.2.2.2. He was instrumental in the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius that extolled Jehovah/Yahweh as the great God.

7.2.2.3. It is also possible that Daniel influenced, or even wrote, the decree of Cyrus which allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. (2 Chron 36.22-23)

7.2.2.4. Seeing the decree for the return from Exile must have been a great satisfaction for Daniel, a great reward for him, and a recognition of his faithfulness to God.

7.3. These words conclude the historical portion of the book of Daniel.

7.3.1. Daniel has extolled the virtues and wonders of the great God in the first six chapters.

7.3.2. After this, Daniel will focus on the future that belongs to God as much as the past does.

8. Who was Darius?

8.1. When we studied chapter 5 (31), we concluded that it is likely that Darius was Cyrus under a different name.

8.1.1. He may have been called 'Darius the Mede' with respect to his ancestry (at least on one side), whereas he was called 'Cyrus' with respect to his rule in the Empire. He could be Darius the Mede by descent (see, Dan 9.1) and Cyrus the Persian by title in his reign over Medo-Persia.

8.1.2. The name 'Darius' may have been a localized (Babylonian vs. Persian) name for Cyrus.

8.1.3. Daniel and his three friends all had two names (Dan 1.7)—a Jewish one and a Babylonian one. It is possible that Cyrus had two names (one a Median, and the other a Persian name).

8.1.4. Alternatively, 'Darius' may have been a nickname, or his personal name and he assumed a royal name when taking the throne. Many kings and popes have done this throughout out history. For example, George VI originally went by the name Albert but changed his public name to George to appear more English after his brother abdicated; his full name was Albert Frederick Arthur George Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

- 8.2. The evidence for Darius being Cyrus is significant:
- 8.2.1. It was common for ancient rulers to use different names in various parts of their realms.
 - 8.2.2. The age of Darius (about 62) in 539 BC was the age of Cyrus at this time (assuming he was born in 600 BC, as secular history indicates).
 - 8.2.3. Darius appointed 120 satraps (Dan 6.1). The cuneiform texts say that Cyrus appointed satraps in Babylon after its capture. It would be peculiar if Darius appointed satraps when Cyrus was around, if Darius was only a subordinate.
 - 8.2.4. It seems unlikely that Darius would have issued a decree to all of the Persian empire (25-27) if he were only a subordinate ruler under Cyrus.
 - 8.2.5. Ezra (Ezra 5.17) mentions that the decree of Cyrus was made from Babylon. It seems, therefore, that it was Cyrus who received the kingdom of the Babylonians and ruled over it.
 - 8.2.6. Darius cast Daniel into the lions' den (Dan 6.5-17). In *Bel and the Dragon* (in the *Apocrypha*; 15.1) it is Cyrus of Persia.
 - 8.2.7. According to Daniel 9.1-2 the restoration of the Jews occurred during the first year of Darius' reign. Other references in the Bible say that it was during Cyrus' first year (2 Chron 36.22; Ezra 1.1ff; Ezra 4.3; Ezra 5.13-15; Ezra 6.3-5).
- 8.3. The translation of this verse (28) makes it appear that Darius and Cyrus are two separate individuals.
- 8.3.1. However, the verse may be legitimately translated, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, *even (that is)*³⁷² the reign of Cyrus the Persian."
 - 8.3.2. The Hebrew and Aramaic ו (and ו, etc.) is mostly translated as 'and'. However it can also be translated as 'also', 'so that' or 'that is'.³⁷³ The NIV (and at least one other modern translation, the NLT) supplies this translation, and identification of Darius, in its footnote.
9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (24-28)
- 9.1. *Vindication* – God will vindicate his people.
- 9.1.1. We learn from this account that false accusers will receive their just payment.
 - 9.1.2. Randy Alcorn, an author and speaker, tells of his own suffering at the hands of evil persecutors. In his own words (abbreviated): "I participated in peaceful, nonviolent civil disobedience in what was ... an extremely unpopular cause—speaking up for the civil rights of unborn children. I briefly went to jail, and abortion clinics brought lawsuits against me and others. ... While there were no actual damages to the clinics except the money lost for abortions prevented, the jury found our group liable for \$8.2 million in punitive damages. ... My family faced this situation with the firm belief that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving, and that no matter what happened, he would work things out for our ultimate good. That is exactly what he did. The fact that we lost the case was irrelevant. We're fortunate not to have to wait for an eternity to see how God worked it for good. We've already seen it in countless ways, though no doubt we'll learn more when we're with him."³⁷⁴
 - 9.1.3. The people who lied at Randy's trial may have gotten away with it, for now; but they will not get away with it in an everlasting existence.
 - 9.1.4. We saw that God vindicates his people in time in an everlasting existence:
 - 9.1.4.1. Those who dig a pit fall into it, and the snares that they lay will come back on their own heads (Ps 9.16; Ps 57.6; Ps 141.9-10).
 - 9.1.4.2. And, if not in the temporal realm, ultimately, on the Day of Judgement, God will repay all injustices and vindicate his people (Dt 32.36; Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30).
 - 9.1.5. As in the case of Randy's situation where he saw good come from the evil, so God

³⁷² As an example, Judges 8.29, 30 (compare, Judges 7.1; Judges 8.35) translates the Hebrew 'and' as 'now'.

³⁷³ *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT*, Logos Research Systems.

³⁷⁴ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good . . . Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009), pp. 158-159.

brought good out of the evil when the court administrators falsely accusing Daniel:

- 9.1.5.1. God removed his enemies (they were cast into the lions' den) and Daniel was of even greater service to God, the king, and the Jewish people.
- 9.1.5.2. Darius sent the report of the events throughout his empire. If it did not lead to the immediate conversion of anyone, it undoubtedly helped soften the king's heart so that a decree was issued allowing the Jews to return to rebuild the Temple.
- 9.1.5.3. The account encouraged the Jews, reminding them that God was in control and watching out for their interests.
- 9.1.5.4. It resulted in the record we have in this chapter, which has been an encouragement to all believers throughout the history of the Church—there is hardly a person, from pre-school to gray-haired, who does not know the account of Daniel in the lions' den.

9.2. *Victory* – God will receive praise from all men, even from pagans.

- 9.2.1. Every knee will bow before Jesus (Phil 2.10-11). Men will bow out of reverence, awe, and love or they will bow out of respect, amazement, and fear; but they will bow! Demons shudder before God (James 2.19), so will all men who refuse to honour him during their lives on earth.
- 9.2.2. God receives glory from evil, by subduing it and bringing good out of it, in spite of the perpetrators' wicked schemes which try to bring down God. "Whenever one of the saints is called to martyrdom and God performs a great miracle through him, henceforth everyone within sight of these marvels is filled with astonishment, and celebrates because of the grandeur of God. And a great number, won to the faith by the martyrs, may also become martyrs of God."³⁷⁵
- 9.2.3. God receives glory through executing divine justice against all those who oppose his people (Dt 32.35-36; Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30-31).
- 9.2.4. In this chapter we have seen how the evil scheme of some of the court administrators resulted in the king declaring a message of truth—that God is:
 - 9.2.4.1. Personal – God is a living person, not a force.
 - 9.2.4.2. Perpetual – He exists in an eternal 'now'.
 - 9.2.4.3. Powerful – He is the all-powerful one whom all men should fear, obey, and worship.
 - 9.2.4.4. Potentate – He is the governor over all rulers of this world; rulers are to serve the true God only.
 - 9.2.4.5. Permanent – His reign, established in Christ, is indestructible; all men are to give allegiance to Christ as God.
 - 9.2.4.6. Perceivable – He reveals himself and his will and Law to men through the Bible.
 - 9.2.4.7. Protector – He saves, delivers, and rescues men from sin and the consequences of sin.

9.3. *Vision* – Faithful men of God can have an influence on culture.

- 9.3.1. We are encouraged by the example of Daniel to remain faithful, no matter how desperate the cultural decay or political situation appears to us.
- 9.3.2. Daniel was taken as a captive hostage/slave from his own land. He did not give up in despair or rebel against God. Rather he lived for the glory of God in every aspect of his life and had great influence in the ancient kingdoms—through parts of seven reigns across about seven decades.
- 9.3.3. This account should encourage those who are in positions of influence in government or business. They can, by the power of God, change the course of events and history, for good.
- 9.3.4. We should therefore be encouraged to pray for those in positions of influence, especially as we see our nation drifting further into a debauched, materialistic paganism that will

³⁷⁵ Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, II.38.4, quoted in: W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian's Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 101.

make the ancient world of Daniel look like a paradise by comparison.

Dominions Typified (Dan 7.1-28)

Symbols (Dan 7.1-14)

1. What happened to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar's reign?
 - 1.1. Daniel received a vision through a dream, at night.
 - 1.2. What was different about this experience for Daniel?
 - 1.2.1. He received the vision, rather than interpreting other people's dreams.
 - 1.2.2. He received direct revelation from God about the future—a prophecy in the *foretelling* sense of the word.
 - 1.3. What is the genre, or style, of this chapter?
 - 1.3.1. It is apocalyptic (taken from the Greek, e.g., the book of Revelation is called the Apocalypse in Greek)—a form of Biblical literature that deals with future events thorough symbols.
 - 1.3.2. The second half of the book of Daniel is largely composed of this form of revelation.
 - 1.4. What makes Daniel's use of the apocalyptic form different from other prophetic uses of this form?
 - 1.4.1. In this chapter, Daniel takes the apocalyptic form deeper than any other does in the OT to his time.
 - 1.4.2. Daniel's use of the apocalyptic form is somewhat different from other prophetic uses of this form in that the events he foresees can be explicitly tied to subsequent historical events. Other apocalyptic symbols in the Bible are often difficult to associate with specific events.
 - 1.4.3. This specificity is one of the reasons why so many 'scholars' want to attribute this book, and particularly these chapters, to c170 BC rather than to c550 BC. They do not believe that anyone could foretell the future so accurately more than 500 years before the events occurred.
 - 1.4.4. As we will see, chapters 7 and 8 contain prophecies covering a common outline of history. The doubling of the prophecy may have been given to Daniel as a sign of the certainty of its fulfillment (Gen 41.32).
 - 1.4.5. Some commentators suggest that the first half of the book was intended for the world at large, whereas the second half was intended for the Church—to encourage it.
 - 1.4.5.1. However, chapter 7 is written in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew. Aramaic is used from 2.4-7.28. It does not make sense to split the Aramaic section saying that part of it was written for the world and part of the Church.
 - 1.4.5.2. In addition, chapter 7 covers similar material as chapter 2 and gives much the same message.
 - 1.4.5.3. It is probably better to conclude that the entire book was written for the world *and* the Church—to teach the world that God is king over the nations and history; and to encourage the Church to trust God in the face of trials, since he is king over the nations and history.
 - 1.5. In what year did Daniel receive this vision?
 - 1.5.1. Most interpreters place it at 552 (or 553) BC, understanding the 'first year' to refer to the year Belshazzar was appointed a coregent with his father, Nabonidus (556–539 BC).
 - 1.5.1.1. However, he was not crowned king at that time.
 - 1.5.1.2. Regardless, he received a vision (Dan 8:1) in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, so the first year of his reign could not have been 539 BC when his father died.
 - 1.5.2. It is interesting that in the Aramaic the name of Belshazzar is spelled differently here than in chapter 5.
 - 1.5.2.1. In chapter five it is spelled *bel-she-azar* (בִּלְשַׁצְרָא), which we noted means: 'Bel guard the king' or 'Bel has protected the king'.

- 1.5.2.2. In this chapter it is spelled *bel-ash-zar* (בֶּלְאַשְׁצַר), which may mean ‘Bel is a fire (Heb: אֵשׁ) of the enemy (Heb: צָר)’.
 - 1.5.2.3. If this is not a transposition and copying error, it may be a deliberate play-on-words. Daniel may be creating a pun out of Belshazzar’s name and ridiculing, Bel, the god of the Babylonians. At one time, the people may have thought that Bel brought them prosperity, but in reality, he was their enemy to consume them with fire.
- 1.6. Why does God reveal the future in cryptic symbols?
 - 1.6.1. Why didn’t God just reveal the future in a straightforward account, such as: “In 225 years a king named Alexander, from Greece, will defeat the empire of Medes and Persians? He will die at the age of 32 and his kingdom will be divided among his four generals.”
 - 1.6.2. The answer to this question does not lie in the fanciful theories of the liberals who propose that Daniel 7.1-28 (along with other parts of this book) is essentially pagan Canaanite myths recast for a Jewish audience.³⁷⁶
 - 1.6.3. God can certainly be explicit in terms of future dates and names. For example:
 - 1.6.3.1. Dates: The duration of the Babylonian captivity was to be seventy years (Jer 25.11; Jer 29.10 with 2 Chron 36.21); foretold 70 years before the event.
 - 1.6.3.2. Names: Cyrus was named as the one who would issue the decree to permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Is 44.28; Is 45:1 with 2 Chron 36.22); foretold ~160 years before the event.
 - 1.6.4. Symbols are generally visual imagery (although they could be sounds [a tune of a national anthem] or smells [baking pastry symbolizing home comfort]) that stand for, or suggest, something else by resemblance (e.g., a stick figure representing a washroom) convention or deliberate association. They may represent something:
 - 1.6.4.1. Physical, such as:
 - 1.6.4.1.1. A city—a logo
 - 1.6.4.1.2. An elevator—an ISO symbol
 - 1.6.4.1.3. An airport—an ISO symbol
 - 1.6.4.2. Invisible, including an entity, idea, or concept, such as:
 - 1.6.4.2.1. A god—a carved idol
 - 1.6.4.2.2. A company or organization—golden arches, a swoosh,
 - 1.6.4.2.3. A nation—a flag, an animal (eagle, bear, dragon, beaver)
 - 1.6.4.2.4. A team—a mascot, an animal
 - 1.6.4.2.5. A religion—a cross or a crescent
 - 1.6.4.2.6. A mathematical concept—such as infinity, ∞
 - 1.6.5. The question of why God uses symbols is similar to the question of why we use caricatures and political (editorial) cartoons.
 - 1.6.5.1. We don’t ask the question of the cartoonist, “Why didn’t you just state your message in propositional form in an essay?” We know that the cartoon hits at the truth in a different, and equally effective, way.
 - 1.6.5.2. Caricatures over-emphasize particular features to deliver a key message.
 - 1.6.5.3. Political cartoons use symbols to deliver a key message.
 - 1.6.5.4. Cartoons mocking pompous politicians were found on the walls of ancient Pompeii indicating the power of this medium. You can understand the power of a political cartoon when you see the reaction today of Muslims to cartoons that depict Mohammed.
 - 1.6.5.5. The popularity of caricatures and political cartoons indicates that we have a basic need for, and understanding of, the use of symbolism to deliver a potent message. The symbols found in the apocalyptic literature in the Bible are, in

³⁷⁶ For example, in: Andre Lacocque, “Allusions to Creation in Daniel,” in J. J. Collins and P.W. Flint, eds. *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 114-131.

some ways, analogous to political cartoons—in that they declare truth through satire and hyperbole.

- 1.6.6. God used symbols in the OT economy; a few examples include:
 - 1.6.6.1. A tree (the tree of life) and the Sabbath to symbolize the covenant with Adam.
 - 1.6.6.2. The rainbow to symbolize the covenant with Noah.
 - 1.6.6.3. Circumcision to symbolize the covenant with Abraham.
 - 1.6.6.4. Incense to symbolize prayer.
- 1.6.7. Jesus used symbols in the NT economy; a few examples include:
 - 1.6.7.1. The bread and wine at the Lord's supper representing his body and blood.
 - 1.6.7.2. In the parables, for example likening the kingdom of God to a fish net or a pearl.
 - 1.6.7.3. Referring to himself as the bread of life or light of the world.
- 1.6.8. Why does God use symbols to reveal his truth, including the future? Possible reasons include:
 - 1.6.8.1. To reveal truth in a memorable form; often in a more memorable form than propositional truths.
 - 1.6.8.2. To hide truth by creating a division between believers who can see the spiritual and temporal applications and unbelievers who cannot see beyond the illustrations (Mk 4.10-12).
 - 1.6.8.3. To introduce a dimension of judgement, since God withholds the light of truth from those who have shut their eyes against it.
 - 1.6.8.4. As a 'short hand' to stimulate memories, evoke emotions (e.g., hope or joy), and elicit a response.
 - 1.6.8.5. To challenge us to think and use the rational capacities with which God has endowed us. The use of symbols, allegory, and caricature utilize our God-given abilities to think critically. Propositional statements lay out a message in a way that we must accept or reject, often unthinkingly. Symbolism causes us to engage and grapple with the message—i.e., to think!
- 1.6.9. There are a few basic principles we need to apply when interpreting symbols in the Bible, especially the complex ones in the apocalyptic literature:
 - 1.6.9.1. Each symbolic revelation (e.g., a vision) contains an essential truth; we are to look first for the *essence* (the key idea or theme) of what is being communicated by God.
 - 1.6.9.2. The message in symbolic revelations is often not in the details but in the whole; we are not to scratch every point in a parable to find hidden meanings. However, there are times when some of the details *obviously* add to the overall message (as we will see in our considerations of the four beasts and their attributes in this chapter).
 - 1.6.9.3. Usually the symbols represent principles that operate throughout the history of the world; although at times they represent specific instances of the general principles.
 - 1.6.9.4. The symbolic revelations were given in an historical context, and we must understand them in that context. For example, we are to understand the revelations in Revelation as having an immediate application to the early Christians suffering under the persecutions of Rome than to extrapolate them onto a particular series of events 2,000 years later.
- 1.7. Why did God reveal this vision to Daniel at night?
 - 1.7.1. We can understand the statement "lay in his bed", to imply "at night" (2).
 - 1.7.2. When we considered Nebuchadnezzar's dream we noted that it came at night (Dan 4.5) and frightened him. We noted that:
 - 1.7.2.1. It is at night when people are unable to sleep and feel entirely alone, that they often are unable to suppress the nagging reality of God's presence and ask the difficult questions about their lives.

- 1.7.2.2. Men cannot hide from reality when they are alone, because then they realize that they really are not entirely alone, since they are in the presence of God.
- 1.7.3. However, in Daniel's case we cannot think that he had to be challenged by God to face everlasting realities. So why did the vision come at night and not during one of his three-times-daily periods of worship (Dan 6.10)?
 - 1.7.3.1. No explicit reason is given in the text or in Scripture for why God gave the vision at night.
 - 1.7.3.2. Examples of God's dealings with his people at night, include:
 - 1.7.3.2.1. The call of Samuel (1 Sam 3.1-20).
 - 1.7.3.2.2. Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen 32.24).
 - 1.7.3.2.3. Gideon's call to destroy the altars of Baal (Judges 6.25) and to fight Midian (Judges 7.9).
 - 1.7.3.2.4. God's offer to Solomon to choose what he wanted (1 Ki 3.5).
 - 1.7.3.2.5. Nathan told to confront David over his sin with Bathsheba (1 Chron 17.3).
 - 1.7.3.2.6. Zechariah's vision of a horseman (Zech 1.6).
 - 1.7.3.2.7. The angel's assurance to Joseph that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1.20, 24).
 - 1.7.3.2.8. The announcement of the angels to the shepherds about the birth of Christ (Lk 2.8).
 - 1.7.3.2.9. Paul's being told of God's protection in Corinth and that God had many people in that city (Acts 18.10); and of the safety of the people on the ship (Acts 27.23).
 - 1.7.3.2.10. Some of the classic and moving paintings of Gabriel appearing to Mary³⁷⁷ position the scene at night.³⁷⁸ However, nothing in the account in Luke 1.26-38 states that it was at night.
 - 1.7.3.3. God, of course, reveals himself during the day (Lk 1.11; Rev 1.10). However, there may be special significance in his revelations at night:
 - 1.7.3.3.1. The Psalmists speak of their instruction and meditation on God at night (Ps 16.7; Ps 63.6) as it being something special.
 - 1.7.3.3.2. The world is mostly shut out during the night; this was more so the case in ancient times when they did not have artificial light sources. Men are more attuned to hear the quiet voice of God in the night.
 - 1.7.3.3.3. The night held sources of terror in the ancient world (Ps 91.5; Song 3.8). Much of this terror was superstitious. God may be using his revelations at night to remind, symbolically, men that he makes light shine out of darkness.
- 1.8. What did Daniel do with vision that he had seen?
 - 1.8.1. He wrote it down in its entirety.
 - 1.8.2. Why are we told this? Isn't it obvious that he wrote it down since we have a record of it?
 - 1.8.2.1. Daniel may be letting us know that while the vision from the dream was fresh in his memory he wrote it down.
 - 1.8.2.2. Our own experience is that often immediately after awakening we can recall a dream and particular details in the dream. However, very quickly the dream fades from memory.
 - 1.8.2.3. Daniel wanted to let his readers know that he was relaying the matters revealed to him accurately and completely.
 - 1.8.2.4. This is significant since it silences those who try to suggest that there were long periods of oral transmission of the Scriptures and that the accounts recorded in the Bible have become popularized myths rather than accurate accounts of what

³⁷⁷ Insert "mary annunciation" into any Web browser search engine and select 'images', to see examples.

³⁷⁸ Consider for example: Henry Tanner's [Mary listening to Gabriel](#)

actually happened.

2. In summary form, what did Daniel see in his vision? (2-8)

2.1. Four great (large) beasts:

2.1.1. A lion, a bear, a leopard, and a terrifying monster.

2.1.2. They were different from one another. (3)

2.2. What do these beasts represent?

2.2.1. Four kings or kingdoms. (17)

2.3. What are the four kingdoms represented by the beasts?

Chapter	Babylon (605–538 BC)	Medo-Persia (538–331 BC)	Greece (331–146 BC)	Rome (146 BC–476 AD)
Dan 2.31–45 Dream image	Head of gold (Dan 2.32, 37–38)	Breast, arms of silver (Dan 2.32, 39)	Belly, thighs of brass (Dan 2.32, 39)	Legs of iron Feet iron/clay (Dan 2.3, 40–41)
Dan 7.1-8, 15-28 Four Beasts	Lion (Dan 7.4)	Bear (Dan 7.5)	Leopard (Dan 7.6)	Strong Beast (Dan 7.7, 11, 19, 23)
Dan 8.1-27 Ram and goat		Ram (Dan 8.3–4, 20)	Goat with one horn (Dan 8.5–22)	

2.3.1. The four kingdoms should be the same in chapters 2 and 7 or the book of Daniel would be very confusing and our ability to understand its meaning would be greatly impaired.

2.3.2. Chapters 7 and 8 develop the theme of chapter 2. And chapters 2, 7 and 8 provide a framework for interpreting the detail in the remainder of the book.

2.3.3. Hippolytus, in his *Commentary on Daniel*, written about 204 AD, was the first writer to identify contemporary Rome with the fourth kingdom of the beasts.³⁷⁹

2.3.4. “[Hippolytus] daringly interpreted most of this Jewish text in a historical-literal fashion. Hippolytus wed the Old Testament text with contemporary Christian circumstances and events in a fashion that was unique among the fathers.”³⁸⁰

2.4. What is the purpose of this vision of the four great kingdoms?

2.4.1. To present an outline of the future from the time of Daniel to the time of the Messiah.

2.4.2. To survey the Gentile kingdoms which would oppress the people of God, until the fourth kingdom was replaced by the Kingdom of the Messiah.

2.4.3. ‘Hippolytus sees history in a model of seven thousand-year periods. The birth of Christ occurred half way through the sixth thousand-year period, 5,500 [possibly basing the calculation of the date of creation on the LXX, rather on the Hebrew text] years after Adam. Writing two hundred years after Christ’s birth, Hippolytus calculates another three hundred years before the end of the world and the ushering in of the final thousand years.’³⁸¹ ... [H]e reveals his belief that the reign of the Antichrist and the immediate end of the world will come six thousand years after creation, or approximately the year 500 CE. This will usher in a “Sabbath that is a type and image of the future Kingdom of the saints [Hippolytus appears to have held to some form of chiliasm], when they will reign with Christ” after his coming from heaven, as John narrates in the Apocalypse. The present Sabbath is a type and image of the coming kingdom of the saints.’³⁸²

2.5. What is the meaning of the wind stirring up the great sea?

2.5.1. The word translated “winds” may also be rendered “spirits,” and may mean angels or messengers sent on a mission from God (Jer 51.1; Zech 6.1-6).

³⁷⁹ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian’s Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 5.

³⁸⁰ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian’s Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 21.

³⁸¹ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian’s Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 111.

³⁸² Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, IV.23.5, quoted in: W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian’s Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 140.

- 2.5.2. The “winds” may not be spirits but a sign that God uses physical earthly forces which God controls and uses to do his bidding.
- 2.5.3. The four “winds” may be general symbols of God’s dealing with mankind.
- 2.5.4. The four “winds” may be earthly human forces (the kings and their armies) contending for supremacy in violent wars like howling winds, and stirring up the nations.
- 2.6. Which sea is referred to?
 - 2.6.1. Our immediate thought might be that it is the Mediterranean.
 - 2.6.1.1. The Mediterranean Sea is referred to as the Great Sea (Num 34.6-7; Josh 1.4; Josh 9.1; Josh 15.12, 47; Josh 23.4; Ezk 47.10, 15, 20; Ezk 48.28).
 - 2.6.1.2. However, the Mediterranean Sea was not the centre of the world for Babylon, the Medo-Persian, or the Greek empires.
 - 2.6.2. It may mean the oceans or a generic world sea.
 - 2.6.3. It may be the nations (Mt 13.47; Rev 13.1) in turmoil (Ps 65.7; Lk 21.25).
- 2.7. The interpretation of the winds and the sea is probably to be understood as the four human empires striving for mastery and stirring up the nations of the earth.
- 3. What was to happen to the first kingdom (4)
 - 3.1. The first kingdom was a lion with eagle’s wings.
 - 3.1.1. One of the symbols of Babylon was a creature with a lion’s body, with eagles’ wings, and a bearded human head (a cherub; Ezk 1.5-21 and Ezk 10.5-17). Carved images like this have been found in the ruins of Babylon.
 - 3.1.2. The Bible refers to Babylon as a lion (Jer 4.7; Jer 50.17) and an eagle (Lam 4.19; Hab 1.8; Ezk 17.3, 12), and both (Jer 49.19–22).
 - 3.1.3. Some have suggested that the combination of the lion and the eagle brings together the two kings of the beasts and the birds, typifying Babylon as the greatest kingdom, the head of gold (from chapter 2).
 - 3.1.4. The main gate of Babylon, called the Ishtar Gate (~14m high by ~10m wide), was decorated with ceramic tiles that included images of various creatures; some of them were lions with wings folded along their sides (not like the images of the cherubim with the wings standing upright from their backs). The Royal Ontario Museum has a part of that gate with a lion.³⁸³
 - 3.1.5. It is clear that the first kingdom that is symbolized is Babylon.
 - 3.2. The wings were torn from the lion. What could this mean?
 - 3.2.1. The mobility and reach of the kingdom were to be destroyed when Belshazzar was killed by Cyrus’ armies.
 - 3.2.2. The core of the kingdom was not to be destroyed; as the city of Babylon was not destroyed in 539 BC when Cyrus captured it.
 - 3.2.3. Alternatively it could refer to Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity for 7 years.
 - 3.3. What might be symbolized by the lion’s standing on two feet (its hind legs) and being given a human heart?
 - 3.3.1. The implication is that it took a human stance.
 - 3.3.2. This may refer to the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity.
 - 3.3.3. It could also be a reference to a form of humbling, making him or his kingdom less lion-like—no longer a *Cœur de Lion*—and possibly more humane, or even cowardly. Calvin says, “[H]e means to imply the reduction of the Assyrians and Chaldeans to their ordinary condition, and that they were no longer like a lion, but like private men deprived of their power and strength”³⁸⁴
- 4. How does Daniel describe the second and third beast? (5-6)
 - 4.1. The second beast was like a bear.

³⁸³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar_Gate

³⁸⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.toc.html
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- 4.1.1. What characterizes a bear? Fearsomeness and strength. It is also less agile and more ponderous than a lion. These attributes appear to align with what we know of the Medo-Persian empire from history.
- 4.1.2. There is no reference, elsewhere in Scripture, to equate explicitly a ‘bear’ with the Medo-Persian empire.
- 4.1.3. What might the other characteristics of the bear refer to?
 - 4.1.3.1. Being raised upon one side *might* refer to a time or size differentiation between the two originally united portions of this empire (Media and Persia).
 - 4.1.3.2. The three ribs in its mouth may refer to three of the first kingdoms that it conquered (i.e., Lydia [546 BC], Babylon [539 BC], and Egypt [525 BC]) or to a generic aspect of its insatiable conquests, with ‘three’ representing a symbol of completeness in its conquests.
 - 4.1.3.3. It was told to expand its conquests. Its conquests continued after 525 BC to about 480 BC as the Medo-Persian empire expanded to take over the territory that includes all, of or parts of, the modern countries of Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. God had allocated to the Medo-Persian empire a territory larger than Nebuchadnezzar’s.
- 4.2. The third beast was like a leopard.
 - 4.2.1. This leopard had four bird wings on its back.
 - 4.2.2. Why was a leopard the symbol for the Greek empire, in Daniel’s vision?
 - 4.2.2.1. The leopard is noted for being fast (Hab 1.8) and agile. With the addition of four wings it’s swiftness would be assured.
 - 4.2.2.2. Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests may have been fast (two wings) but Alexander’s were faster (four wings).
 - 4.2.2.3. Alexander’s armies accomplished conquests in about 5 years (334-330 BC) what had taken about a century for the previous two empires.
 - 4.2.3. What could the four heads represent?
 - 4.2.3.1. After Alexander’s death (323 BC) at the age of 33, his empire was divided into four parts (Dan 8.8, 22) by his generals: Seleucus Nicanor took Asia the Great (Phrygia to the Indus River); Lysimachus (Perdiccas?) followed by Antigonos took Asia Minor (Thrace and Bithynia); Cassander took Macedonia; and Ptolemy (Ptolemy) took Egypt and Palestine.
 - 4.2.4. Dominion (authority) was given to Alexander’s empire. What does this mean?
 - 4.2.4.1. Alexander’s defeat of Darius III’s armies was easy. He chased Darius throughout the empire conquering cities (plundering the treasuries and possibly deliberately burning) as he went.
 - 4.2.4.2. The eastern empire was given by God to Alexander. As Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, it is God alone who promotes and demotes kings (Dan 2.21; Dan 4.31).
 - 4.2.4.3. Hellenism became pervasive throughout the ancient (‘civilized’) world.
 - 4.2.4.3.1. Alexander founded many (>25) cities, most called Alexandria, throughout the empire—including Alexandria in Egypt, Kandahar in Afghanistan, Alexandria Eschate (the furthest) in Tajikistan (now called Khodzents), Alexandria in Susiana near the mouth of the Tigris (near Al Qurnah in Iraq) and Alexandria on the Indus (Uch, today in Pakistan).
 - 4.2.4.3.2. God was preparing a comprehensive dominion over Europe and Asia Minor that would be in place for the coming of his Son.
 - 4.2.4.3.3. A key component of this domination was the replacement of Aramaic by Greek as the *lingua franca* (‘working language’ or ‘bridge

language’) of the ‘world’, until replaced with Latin for almost two millennia, and today by English. It was in God’s plan that the NT should be communicated with the precision of the Greek language.

5. What is special about the 4th beast? (7-8)
 - 5.1. Daniel did not try to compare it to an animal in the natural realm.
 - 5.2. It may have been a composite, made of various parts.
 - 5.2.1. It is likely the same beast referred to in Revelation 13.1-2. This may give us an idea of what Daniel saw.
 - 5.2.2. It was composed of parts of the other three beasts: a leopard’s body, feet of a bear, and a mouth (head) like a lion.
 - 5.3. What are the characteristics of 4th beast?
 - 5.3.1. It was a frightening monster. The dictionary definition of a monster includes an animal of that deviates from normal form or structure, with a terrifying shape, e.g., by extreme ugliness or deformity.
 - 5.3.2. It was an exceedingly strong and powerful monster. The dictionary definition of a monster includes a threatening force.
 - 5.3.3. It had iron teeth with which it broke in pieces (crushed and devoured) its victims.
 - 5.3.4. It trampled the remnant. We see this trampling of the Jews by a kingdom in Luke 21.24. The kingdom that trampled on the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, is the same one that Daniel foresaw in his vision.
 - 5.3.5. It had ten horns and then an 11th that grew up among them and uprooted three of the other horns.
 - 5.3.6. The 11th horn had a man’s eyes and mouth and spoke boastfully.
 - 5.4. What kingdom is typified by the 4th beast?
 - 5.4.1. No kingdom in the ancient world can answer to this description, other than Rome.
 - 5.4.1.1. With its trained legions it was a powerful fighting force that was, militaristically, stronger than any of the kingdoms which preceded it (or followed it, for centuries).
 - 5.4.1.2. It was exceedingly cruel, in many ways. Consider, for example, its use of crucifixion for execution; the gladiatorial competitions; using slaves, conquered peoples and Christians for its bloody spectacles in the circuses; and its total destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - 5.4.2. There are some who argue that the kingdom that replaced Greece, and is spoken of here, is the kingdom ruled by the Seleucids (312-63 BC) with the little horn being Antiochus Epiphanes.³⁸⁵
 - 5.4.2.1. Alexander's generals (the *Diadochi*) ruled over four parts of his empire after his death in 323 BC. Ptolemy, in Egypt, attempted to gain supremacy. His revolt led to a new partitioning of the empire (the Partition of Triparadisus in 320 BC). After this, Seleucus Nicanor was involved in the assassination of the commander-in-chief of Alexander’s army and continued to expand his territory. On establishing himself over Babylon in 312 BC (considered the date for the founding of the Seleucid Empire), he ruled over the enormous eastern portion of Alexander's empire.
 - 5.4.2.2. However, the Seleucids did not have rule over Egypt and western Asia Minor and the portion of Alexander’s empire in Europe. The Seleucid kingdom was not the forth empire seen in Daniel’s vision.
 - 5.4.3. Rome succeeded Greece, as the 4th empire of Daniel’s vision, with the arrival of Pompey in Palestine in 63 BC.
 - 5.5. What are the ten kingdoms or kings, typified by the 10 horns in the vision?

³⁸⁵ Richard D. Patterson, “The Key Role of Daniel ch. 7,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 12.2 (1991) 245-261.
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- 5.5.1. To identify them without any direct or explicit Scriptural guidance presents difficulties.
- 5.5.2. The ten kingdoms or kings *may* be symbolic of completeness. However, if we accept the four horns of the previous kingdom as referring to Alexander's four generals, we should probably, to be consistent, consider the 10 horns as representing ten actual kingdoms or kings.
- 5.5.3. Some view the ten horns as the provinces of Rome at its peak: Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Pannonia, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; with the little horn being the later Muslim Turkish (Ottoman) empire (founded in 1300), which included Asia minor and Asia to the Indus river, Greece, Egypt and north Africa. They refer to Greece, Asia, and Egypt as the three kingdoms that were incorporated into the Turkish empire. This however, does not fit well into the model that the events prophesied in Daniel are leading up to the reign of Christ's kingdom.
- 5.5.4. Some view the ten horns as ten kingdoms that made up Western Europe after the Roman Empire's demise at the hands of the Goths³⁸⁶, or as kingdoms yet to arise in our future.
- 5.5.5. Calvin suggests that the little horn was Julius Caesar (46-44 BC) with the 10 horns being the Caesars who *succeeded* him.
 - 5.5.5.1. Julius Caesar, according to Calvin, was called a little horn because he did not assume the name of a king.
 - 5.5.5.2. According to Suetonius (c 69/75 – after 130) in *The Lives of Twelve Caesars – Emperors of Rome*,³⁸⁷ the emperors who succeeded Julius Caesar were: Octavius Augustus (27 BC-14 AD), Tiberius (14-37 AD), Caligula (37-41 AD), Claudius (41-54 AD), Nero (54-68 AD), Galba (68 AD), Otho (69 AD), Vitellius (69 AD), Vespasian (69-79 AD), Titus (79-81), and Domitian (81-96 AD). Eleven.
 - 5.5.5.3. Calvin indicates that the time of Christ is the key factor in determining the meaning of the ten horns. While I agree that Daniel does foretell history to the time of Christ, it is hard to see how Calvin can get 10 emperors from this list. In this scheme:
 - 5.5.5.3.1. The birth of Christ was during the reign of the first, Augustus.
 - 5.5.5.3.2. His death was during the reign of the second, Tiberius.
 - 5.5.5.3.3. The destruction of Jerusalem was during the reign of the ninth, Vespasian; but was engineered by the tenth, Titus.
 - 5.5.5.3.4. If we take the late date for Revelation (which I do *not*), then it was written during the reign of the eleventh, Domitian.
 - 5.5.5.4. Verse 24 indicates that the 10th king (the little horn) *follows* the others.
- 5.5.6. Edward J. Young suggests that the kingdoms or kings were ones which arose after the historical Roman Empire; not necessarily specific kingdoms but rather the ten may be merely a symbol of completeness. He says that to try to identify them is very precarious and probably unwarranted.³⁸⁸
 - 5.5.6.1. He is consistent as he does not believe that the four horns on the previous beast represented Alexander's four generals, or four primary territories, but rather the four corners of the earth.
 - 5.5.6.2. We noted when studying Nebuchadnezzar's vision in chapter 2 (41, 42), that if there is any significance to the ten toes (other than that the statue had feet on which to stand), they may refer symbolically to the complete number of the rulers of the Empire. So the interpretation of the two visions would be consistent. However, in that vision the number of the toes is not identified as is the number of horns in this vision.
- 5.5.7. Some Jewish interpreters in the 12th century (Rashi and Abraham ibn Ezra³⁸⁹) apparently

³⁸⁶ Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Darby and Brown, 1733); www.gutenberg.org/files/16878/16878-h/16878-h.htm

³⁸⁷ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Lives Of The Twelve Caesars*; www.globus2.com/ebooks/TwelveCaesars/00000010.htm

³⁸⁸ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), pp. 149-150.

³⁸⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel%27s_Vision_of_Chapter_7

held the view that the little horn was Titus who besieged and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Christian expositors have generally not taken this view, and yet it seems to be a possible, reasonable, explanation:

- 5.5.7.1. From Julius Caesar to Vespasian there were ten emperors of Rome. Titus was the 11th succeeding his father Vespasian.
- 5.5.7.2. If we identify the ten kings as Roman emperors around the time of the Messiah we should be consistent and identify the beast of Revelation which had ten horns and seven heads (Rev 13.1; Rev 17.7, 12) also as Rome. It seems likely that Daniel's and John's vision are dealing with the same period of history and the same ten kings.³⁹⁰
- 5.5.7.3. The three horns that were uprooted may be a reference to Galba, Otho, and Vitellius who all had very short reigns (of only a few months) in 68-69 AD.
 - 5.5.7.3.1. Verse 8 says that they were uprooted before the little horn.
 - 5.5.7.3.2. The word 'before' here, is not speaking of the time dimension (although the three were uprooted before Vespasian and then his son, Titus, became emperors), but rather it means "in front of".
 - 5.5.7.3.3. When the Roman Senate declared Galba emperor, Vespasian sent Titus to greet him. While travelling to Rome, Titus received news of the murder of Galba and that Otho had been declared emperor, and that the armies of Vitellius were preparing to march on Rome. Titus didn't want to risk being taken hostage by either party's armies. So he returned to Judea. Otho's armies were defeated and he committed suicide. Vitellius was declared emperor. At the same time, July 69, Vespasian was declared emperor by his troops and he left for Rome. His coalition forces defeated Vitellius' armies and he was declared emperor in December by the Roman senate. Vespasian left Titus in Judea to subdue the Jews.
 - 5.5.7.3.4. So, the three emperors prior to Vespasian were uprooted in front of Titus.
- 5.5.7.4. Titus would fit the account well because he persecuted the Jews, making war against the saints (21)—tens and even hundreds of thousands of them died in the siege of Jerusalem—and he destroyed the Temple.
- 5.5.7.5. Some have suggested that the emperor referred to here as the boastful horn is the antichrist (2 Thess 2.3, 4; written about 20 years before the destruction of Jerusalem). Paul's description seems to fit with Titus who conquered Jerusalem and brought the Roman pagan standards into the city.
- 5.5.7.6. Titus was awarded a triumph for his conquest of Jerusalem.
 - 5.5.7.6.1. The Arch of Titus, still standing in Rome today, commemorates this conquest.
 - 5.5.7.6.2. On the Arch there is a relief carving of a Roman procession of soldiers with laurel wreaths proudly carrying treasure taken from the Herodian Temple—specifically the golden lampstand (Ex 25.31) and the table for the Bread of the Presence (Ex 25.30)—and, it is thought, the trumpets of Jericho; but *not* the Ark of the Covenant which probably was taken and vandalized for its gold, in 586 when the first Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 5.5.7.6.3. Another relief carving shows Titus being carried into heaven on the wings of an eagle. At his death Titus was declared to be a deity by the Roman Senate. All of this may be part of the fulfillment of the 'mouth speaking great things/boastfully'.

³⁹⁰ Kenneth Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation* (Tyler, Tx, Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 106-110.
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- 5.5.8. What could the ‘little horn’ refer to? Why, if this horn is Titus, would he be referred to as a ‘little horn’?
- 5.5.8.1. One explanation (derived from E. H. Young³⁹¹) is that the horn is small, to focus the attention on its eyes and mouth.
- 5.5.8.2. I suggest another possibility. If Titus is the 11th horn, he was the only one of the 11 emperors who was the natural son of the *preceding* emperor.³⁹² The ‘little’ may then have the interpreted meaning ‘son’ or ‘descendant’.
- 5.5.9. My suggestion that the reference here is to Titus is tentative, but supportable (we will consider more to support this suggestion when we study the second half of this chapter). Also, it is as reasonable as the *many* other suggestions that have been provided by interpreters over the centuries,³⁹³ and it is preferable to the speculations of some people who try to place the interpretation of Daniel 7.1-28 in some period long past the time of Christ (e.g., in the Middle Ages in Europe) or at a time still in our future (the premillennial or dispensational interpretation).
- 5.6. We will consider more about this 4th beast when we study the next section of this chapter, since Daniel asks specifically for guidance (16).
6. What similarities do we find between Daniel’s vision in this chapter and the visions in Revelation?
- 6.1. Some of the parallel imagery includes the following:
- 6.1.1. Four winds (2) with Rev 7:1 (Dan 8.8; Dan 11.4; Ezk 37.9; Zech 2.6)
- 6.1.2. Ten horns (7, 20) with Rev 12.3; Rev 13.1; Rev 17.12
- 6.1.3. Boastful mouth (8, 20) with Rev 13.5, 6
- 6.1.4. Thrones in heaven (9) with Rev 20.4 (1 Ki 22.19; Mt 19.28)
- 6.1.5. God portrayed with white hair (9) with Rev 1.14
- 6.1.6. Vast multitude serving in heaven (10) with Rev 5.11 (Ps 68.17; Ps 103.21; Heb 12.22)
- 6.1.7. Judgement court (10, 22, 26) with Rev 4.2ff; Rev 11.18; Rev 20.4
- 6.1.8. Books opened (10) with Rev 20.12
- 6.1.9. Beast slain and cast into fire (11) with Rev 19.20; Rev 20.10
- 6.1.10. The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (13) with Rev 1.7; Rev 14.14 (Mt 26.64; Mk 14.62)
- 6.2. Why is this parallel between Daniel and Revelation significant?
- 6.2.1. If we have the correct interpretation of Daniel’s vision and that the fourth kingdom represents Rome leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, then this can help us with the interpretation of the visions in Revelation, since John’s visions are related to (and influenced by) the prophecies in Daniel.³⁹⁴
- 6.2.2. What John says that he saw appears to be similar to what Daniel saw. Although John had an expanded vision.
- 6.2.3. Therefore the events in the early chapters of Revelation seem to apply to Rome before the destruction of Jerusalem. It is probable that subsequent events in Revelation related to Rome (such as its destruction, typified by Babylon in Rev 18.1-24) were revealed to John as prophecy (rather than written after the fact).
- 6.2.4. This interpretation may help us determine a date for the book of Revelation.
- 6.2.4.1. It would seem, that the armies of Titus had not yet destroyed Jerusalem when John wrote, and the early chapters of Revelation refer to the Temple as still in existence (Rev 3.12; Rev 7.15; Rev 11.1, 2, 19; Rev 14.15, 17; Rev 16.1, 17).
- 6.2.4.2. The absence of a Temple appears in John’s future (Rev 21.22).
- 6.2.4.3. Therefore, a date around 68 AD, before the destruction of Jerusalem and the

³⁹¹ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), pp. 147.

³⁹² Augustus was a grand-nephew of Julius Caesar; Tiberius an adopted son of Augustus; etc. Vespasian was followed by his sons Titus and then Domitian.

³⁹³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel%27s_Vision_of_Chapter_7

³⁹⁴ G. K. Beale, “The Influence of Daniel Upon the Structure and Theology of John’s Apocalypse,” *JETS* 27/4 (December 1984), 413-423.

Temple, appears to be more probable than a date in the 90s under Domitian.

6.2.4.4. Thus, Revelation was written specifically to the early NT Church to encourage them in the face of Nero's persecution; as Daniel was written to encourage the OT Church before it faced persecution.

7. What transaction is described? (9-10)

7.1. It appears to be an image of the final judgement.

7.1.1. However, in this context (i.e., the prophecy of the four kingdoms), it may be:

7.1.1.1. A reference to the fact of judgement—i.e., that the nations of the earth are judged—rather than to a specific time of judgement.

7.1.1.2. Presenting judgement as an activity to be performed as required—in this case to judge the 4th beast/kingdom (by no means implying that the other beasts/kingdoms were not also judged).

7.1.2. Judgement before the tribunal of God is an event that all men (and kingdoms through their rulers) must face (Mt 16.27; 2 Cor 5.10; Heb 9.27).

7.1.3. We think of the judgement as occurring at the end of *time*.

7.1.3.1. This, from one perspective, is correct. At the end of our current space-time realm there will be immediate judgement. For example, all those alive at the time of Christ's return will be required to appear before the judgement throne of God.

7.1.3.2. However, if we think that all judgement is waiting for the consummation of history, we project our time and time concepts into eternity.

7.1.3.3. God is not time bound, Heaven and Hell do not exist in our time. They exist in a different form of reality. The Day of Judgement is not being held up as events in this world unfold. Judgement in the everlasting realm is taking place in an ongoing everlasting now.

7.1.3.4. We cannot avoid using time-bound concepts even when we describe eternity because we cannot think outside of time. Even Paul used concepts of time that from one perspective don't make sense (Eph 1.4; Col 1.17; 2 Tim 1.9; Titus 1.2)—a 'before' cannot exist before *time* was created (in the beginning).

7.1.4. Rather we should probably think of judgement as being instantaneous, at the point we leave this created order (Heb 9.27).

7.1.4.1. For example, the thief crucified with Christ was ushered immediately at death into glory (Lk 23.43).

7.1.4.2. It is probably a mistake to think that at death people are judged once temporarily (sent to Heaven or Hell) in the spiritual realm to wait for a general judgement of mankind in the physical realm (at the general resurrection).

7.1.4.3. Rather, it is possible that all mankind, at death and at the end of the world, appear simultaneously at the general judgement. We step out of time, into an everlasting existence, and are at the Judgement Day. It is hard for us to understand this as we think in sequential terms: "Christ hasn't yet returned so how can mankind be at the Judgement Day?" We might think of time (using an imperfect analogy) as the edge of circle with an everlasting existence being at a point at the centre of the circle. Each second of time/history is equidistant (like spokes on a wheel) from the centre of the circle. As each person leaves time/history he traverses instantaneously the spokes and appears in an everlasting existence at which he first [again, a time/sequence concept] meets God as his judge.

7.1.5. If the 'day of judgement' is instantaneous, how then do we explain verses that speak of time passing in heaven such as:

7.1.5.1. The request of the saints in heaven (Rev 6.10)?

7.1.5.1.1. It may be that they are speaking of events on earth and using earth-based, and time-based, concepts.

- 7.1.5.1.2. The ‘how long’ refers to the time passing on earth, not to time passing in Heaven or the everlasting realm.
 - 7.1.5.2. Christ’s reigning in heaven and waiting for his enemies permanently to be made subject to him (Heb 10.12-13).
 - 7.1.5.2.1. God uses anthropomorphic terms (arms, hands, eyes, voice) to describe himself so that we can understand his dealings with us.
 - 7.1.5.2.2. It is possible that in this case, he is referring to time from our perspective—time passing on earth.
- 7.2. Who is the Ancient of Days?
 - 7.2.1. This name is used only in this chapter (9, 13, 22) in the Bible.
 - 7.2.2. The term could also be translated as ‘the Eternal One’ or as ‘one of ancient days’. There is no article (‘the’) in the text so it may be expressing the quality of the one rather than identification.
 - 7.2.3. This appears to be an image of God sitting on his judgement throne.
 - 7.2.4. If we look ahead to verse 13, we see that the Ancient of Days is distinct from the ‘son of man’ who came to him. Assuming that the ‘son of man’ is Christ (we will conclude this when we consider verse 13), then the Ancient of Days is the Father, from among the members of the Trinity.
 - 7.2.5. This is:
 - 7.2.5.1. The sovereign God (compare with, Is 43.13; Is 57.15a) who exercises control over men and nations.
 - 7.2.5.2. God the Judge (compare with, Dan 7.26). Interestingly, Daniel’s own name means “God has judged” or “God is my Judge”.
- 7.3. How is the Ancient of Days and his throne described?
 - 7.3.1. He wore white clothing. What does this probably represent?
 - 7.3.1.1. Holiness (Is 1.18; Mt 17.2; Jn 20.12; Rev 3.18; Rev 4.4; Rev 6.11; Rev 7.9, 13-14) and a symbol of glory.
 - 7.3.2. He had white hair. What might this image mean?
 - 7.3.2.1. The white hair could be a symbol of infinite knowledge (that comes with an ageless eternity). The image of white hair exceeds the wisdom of the gray-haired (Prov 16.31; Prov 20.29).
 - 7.3.3. The throne had wheels. This is the only mention of a throne with wheels in the Bible. Although Ezekiel 1.4-28 (esp. 16; see chapter 10.2 also) seems to speak of the cherubim having something similar.
 - 7.3.3.1. Histories of thrones, available on the internet, do not mention thrones having wheels (except for a mobile throne that a pope used for a tour). It may be that the throne in this instance is more like a chariot—a chariot with a seat.
 - 7.3.3.2. It is not obvious what may be the significance of the wheels. It may be a suggestion of mobile justice—God’s throne is mobile and goes anywhere where justice needs to be executed.
 - 7.3.4. The throne was flaming with fire and fire streamed from the throne (compare, Rev 4.5).
 - 7.3.4.1. What might the stream of fire issuing from the throne represent?
 - 7.3.4.2. The fire may represent God’s revelation (Ex 3.2) or law (Ex 19.18), holiness and glory (Ex 20.18; Ezk 1.4, 27), or judgement (Ps 18.8; Ps 50.3) as a consuming fire (Dt 4.24; Dt 9.3; Heb 12.29).
- 7.4. How many thrones were in the vision?
 - 7.4.1. At least two, since the word in the text is plural.
 - 7.4.2. Who will sit on the other thrones?
 - 7.4.3. One person is Christ (Ps 110.1; Heb 1.3; Heb 8.1; Heb 10.12; Heb 12.2; Rev 3.21; Rev 7.17).
 - 7.4.4. Christ in the NT is portrayed also as having white hair (Rev 1.13-16) and as acting as judge (2 Cor 5.10).

- 7.4.5. Some commentators have suggested that since Daniel has left the other throne(s) vacant, so should we and not try to guess their purpose. But Daniel hasn't left the other throne vacant; verses 13 and 14 speak of the son or man coming to assume his rule.
- 7.4.6. Others have suggested that the thrones are for Christians who will judge the world (Lk 22.30; 1 Cor 6.2; Rev 3.21). However, this vision seems to be focusing on the centre of the courtroom scene where the great judge and his son preside.
- 7.5. Who make up the innumerable host surrounding the throne in the courtroom?
 - 7.5.1. Probably both angels/demons and mankind made up of believing saints and unrepentant sinners.
 - 7.5.2. We are not to take the numbers (1M and 100M) as literal counts of the numbers before the throne, but rather as symbolic numbers representing the completeness of the very large host—a vast multitude.
- 7.6. What did the court use as the record from which to make its judgement?
 - 7.6.1. *The open books.*
 - 7.6.2. What are the books? What do they symbolize?
 - 7.6.2.1. Calvin suggests that the open books are the preaching of the Gospel. So, in his view it is the preaching the Gospel that precedes, and foreshadows, the destruction the beast (11).
 - 7.6.2.2. Most other interpreters take a significantly different view.
 - 7.6.2.3. The books could be the law recorded in Scripture against which man is held accountable by God (Gal 3.10).
 - 7.6.2.4. The books may contain the names of those who are the elect (Ex 32.32; Ps 69.28; Lk 10.20; Phil 4.3; Rev 3.5; Rev 13.8; Rev 20.12, 15). Christ didn't die for the world in an abstract sense but for specific, named, believers throughout the world.
 - 7.6.2.5. The books appear to be a symbol for the complete record of each person's life (Ps 139.16; Mal 3.16; Rev 20.12). From this record, the indictment (a formal accusation of a crime) and evidence against mankind is recorded.
- 8. What happened to the various beasts? (11-12)
 - 8.1. The 4th beast was burned with fire.
 - 8.1.1. Rome was burned in 64 AD, although that fire did not result in, or coincide with, the demise of the Roman Empire. Rome was sacked, but not damaged significantly, by Aleric and the Visigoths in 410 AD.
 - 8.1.2. In 455 AD, Rome was plundered and burned by Geiseric and the Vandals, and Emperor Maximus was killed during the mob violence.
 - 8.1.3. This date, 455AD, is usually considered to be the end of Rome. Although the Eastern portion of the Empire, centered around Constantinople, continued to exist for over another thousand years.
 - 8.1.4. The judgement by fire may be a general reference to Rome's demise and assignation to Hell, rather than to a specific historical event.
 - 8.2. The other beasts (Babylon, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires) had their authority stripped from them, but they were not destroyed immediately and continued for a "period of time" (NIV; ESV: "season and a time"; both Aramaic words can be translated as 'time'; 'time and duration' or 'time and season' or 'time of duration'). What could be the meaning?
 - 8.2.1. A number of commentators agree with Calvin that the cultures of the first three kingdoms were assimilated into the conquering nations.
 - 8.2.1.1. This may be the explanation. Aspects of the preceding cultures (e.g., mathematics, calendars, alphabets, myths and legends, pantheons, art, music, etc.) were absorbed into the later cultures.
 - 8.2.1.2. Greek culture, in particular, influenced Roman culture.
 - 8.2.2. However, Roman culture was not obliterated or annihilated either. Much of medieval

- Europe was influenced by Roman culture.
- 8.3. When would (or did) these events occur?
- 8.3.1. We need to consider the use of time-based references in the account.
- 8.3.2. If the preceding verses (9-10) refer to the final judgement, then the destruction of at least one of the beasts (the one representing Rome) *follows* the Judgement Day. Yet, from our perspective, Rome was essentially destroyed long ago (i.e., in 455 AD). And the destruction of Rome, in the account, *precedes* the Messiah's receiving his kingdom (13-14), which we know was not the case.
- 8.3.3. Also, how do we explain the comment (12) that the other beasts continued for a season and time? They ceased to exist as nations long before the fall of Rome and did not exist after Rome fell, and certainly will not exist after the final judgement.
- 8.3.4. It may be that we are not to understand the account as giving a chronological sequence of events in history, but rather we should understand the sequence to be how they appeared in the vision.
- 8.3.4.1. For example, someone could report events with the following sequence:
"Yesterday I went to my season-ticket seat in the Air Canada Centre, then my sister sang the national anthem, then the game between the Leafs and the Habs was played, the Habs won, then I headed toward the GO train, on my way I found \$10, then I went home." This report gives history as a pure chronology.
- 8.3.4.2. Alternatively, someone could report the same events in the following way:
"Yesterday I went to the Leafs/Habs game. The Habs beat the Leafs. Two events of interest happened: I found \$10 on the way to the Go train, and my sister sang the national anthem before the game. I have a season-ticket seat at the Air Canada Centre." This report provides the same history and factual information, not in a strict chronological sequence, but with topical groupings of events.
- 8.3.4.3. We may be able to conclude that the account in Daniel 7.1-28 is not in strict chronological order and that the scenes are presented in topical groups.
- 8.4. What may be a way of interpreting this section of the vision?
- 8.4.1. It may be that the fourth beast (Rome) was killed, figuratively, with the formal establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The other kingdoms had lost their dominion as they were absorbed into the next empires, but their lands continued to be inhabited by people who went on essentially as before—living as pagans—until the time of the Gospel age.
- 8.4.2. With the coming of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel, the nations of the earth are no longer held in the thrall of Satan and paganism.
- 8.4.3. It is the coming of the Messiah to receive his kingdom (13-14) that brings about the end of the domination of earthly kingdoms over the minds, hearts, and wills of mankind.
- 8.4.4. These verses may be dealing, not with the end of history after the Day of Judgement, but rather with the end of the old era. The old era came to an end when Christ formally established his kingdom at his resurrection and ascension. We are now in the new era, the last days, the days of the ever-expanding kingdom of Jesus Christ (Is 9.7).
- 8.4.5. However, we may have to conclude that we are unable to obtain a satisfactory explanation as to the sequence of events and the precise meaning of the prophecy and its fulfillment.
9. What happened in heaven, in the second transaction in the vision? (13-14)
- 9.1. Who are the two parties in the transaction?
- 9.1.1. The Ancient of Days is God the Father.
- 9.1.2. The 'one like a son of man' is Jesus. [We will consider the use of the descriptive title for Jesus below.]
- 9.1.2.1. Many Jews, at least before the time of Christ, believed that the 'son of man' was

the promised Messiah. For example, in the *Similitudes of Enoch*³⁹⁵ [1 En 37-71] and 4 *Ezra* [13.32],³⁹⁶ messianic language is used with reference to the ‘son of man’ figure.

- 9.1.2.2. Some critical (liberal) and Jewish ‘scholars’ claim that the Aramaic ‘son of man’ idiom is a general statement for ‘man’ and could be used in a definite or indefinite state, and a personification of the Jewish nation; and therefore the reference in Daniel is not speaking of the Messiah specifically.³⁹⁷
- 9.1.2.3. Two writers (a husband and wife team?) argue that the “one like a son of man” represents the archangel Michael, and the “holy ones” (“saints”; Dan 7.18, 27) are his angelic followers on whose behalf he receives the kingdom.³⁹⁸
- 9.2. What title is given here to the second person in the transaction? Or how is he described?
 - 9.2.1. As ‘one like (as) a son of man’
 - 9.2.2. Why might ‘like’ or ‘as’ be used?
 - 9.2.3. The Holy Spirit through Daniel may be telling us that the second person in the vision was:
 - 9.2.3.1. Simply a vision. Daniel didn’t see real events or a real man, but a vision of a man in his imagination. However, it could be argued that he didn’t see real beasts either, and they are not referred to as ‘like’ beasts.
 - 9.2.3.2. Not purely, or merely, a man. It may be that the particle of comparison ‘like’ (כְּ) used in verse 13 serves a similar function as ‘likeness’ (דְּמוּת) used in Ezekiel 1.5 (etc.), presenting an ideal character who is similar but different (compare, Rev 1.13; Rev 14.14).³⁹⁹
 - 9.2.3.3. A person (the Messiah) who had not yet taken on a human nature and appeared in pre-incarnate form as a man (Calvin).
 - 9.2.3.4. The God-man—a man but not only a man; more than a man.
 - 9.2.4. What is different about this one who is receiving a kingdom, from the representation of the other kingdoms (3-8)?
 - 9.2.4.1. He is man rather than a beast, suggesting that there is something significantly different about his kingdom from the other kingdoms.
 - 9.2.4.2. The vision has moved from an entirely symbolic nature to a more literal account—presenting a vision of what transpired in Heaven after Christ’s ascension.
 - 9.2.5. How do we know that the second person in this vision is Jesus?
 - 9.2.5.1. Jesus used the title ‘Son of Man’ from this prophecy, frequently to refer to himself (e.g., Mt 8.20; Jn 5.27). It was his most common self-designation.
 - 9.2.5.2. Some critical ‘scholars’ claim that Jesus is using the term ‘son of man’ similar to how it is used in Ezekiel dozens of times (e.g., Ezk 2.1), or that Jesus is using it in a generic sense to refer to himself as human (like C. S. Lewis uses ‘son of Adam’ in the *Narnia* series), or that Jesus took the term from mythology or the Jewish Apocrypha. They do not want to accept the truth that Jesus used the term explicitly to connect himself with Daniel’s vision
 - 9.2.5.3. Tertullian was probably the earliest Christian-era writer to suggest that the term refers to an individual and is a title for the Messiah.⁴⁰⁰
 - 9.2.5.4. It is evident that Jesus connects the title ‘Son of Man’ with Daniel’s prophecies

³⁹⁵ www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/rt/otp/dmf/enoch/; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_man

³⁹⁶ www.biblewiki.be/wiki/4_Ezra_Chapter_13

³⁹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Son_of_man

³⁹⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) as reported in the review of the Collins’ book; markuscromhout.wordpress.com/

³⁹⁹ E.J. Young, “Daniel’s Vision of the Son of Man,” *Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research*, 1958;

www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/daniel_young.pdf

⁴⁰⁰ Michael B. Shepherd, “Daniel 7:13 and the New Testament Son of Man”, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 68, Spring 2006, pp. 99-111.

(Mt 24.15) with his appearance (*parousia*) in Matthew 24.15-31 and Matthew 26.64).

9.3. What did this one ‘like a son of man’ look like?

9.3.1. No description is provided.

9.3.2. The simplicity and understatement in the narrative makes it all the more powerful.

9.3.3. Jesus, in his human nature, had no majestic form (Is 53.2) to make him stand out. It was his character, rather than physical beauty, that distinguished Jesus from all other men.

9.4. What was to be the outcome of this heavenly transaction? This transaction is the coronation of the Son of Man as King, who is given a kingdom.

9.5. What are the attributes of this kingdom?

9.5.1. *Empowerment* – The Son of Man (the Messiah) is invested with dominion or authority, sovereign power, and majesty or glory (Ps 110.1-2; Is 9.6, 7; Mt 28.18; Phil 2.9-11; Rev 11.15).

9.5.1.1. Why are three terms used to describe the empowerment of his rule?

9.5.1.1.1. It is unnecessary to distinguish among the three terms. We are to understand them as synonyms, with no essential difference.

9.5.1.1.2. The use of a three-fold parallel construct or synonyms is a means of emphasizing absolute perfection and completeness of his kingdom.

9.5.1.1.3. The three terms build on each other and reinforce the fact that his kingdom is completely empowered. No kingdom can be more empowered than that of the Messiah/Christ.

9.5.1.2. Since Jesus is God, how can he be given more (authority) than he already has as God?

9.5.1.2.1. It is as the Messiah-Mediator in his Divine-human form or specifically his human nature, as the Last Adam, that is being vested with glory.

9.5.2. *Extension* – His kingdom encompasses all nations, and people from all nations, on earth (Mt 28.19-20; Rev 7.9).

9.5.2.1. Again, three synonyms are used here to describe the extent of his kingdom, showing that his is a universal reign. Jesus Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings (1 Tim 6.15; Rev 17.14; Rev 19.16). No nation on earth and no ruler can claim that they are not subject to Jesus.

9.5.2.2. All the authority and power that had been exercised by the rulers of the four great empires (Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman) over the peoples, nations, and languages (Dan 3.4, 7; Dan 4.1; Dan 5.19; Dan 6.25) is conferred on Jesus.

9.5.2.3. The authority of the Son of Man would “ultimately overthrow the beasts of oppressive and persecuting powers.”⁴⁰¹

9.5.2.4. Jesus applies this universality of rule to himself (Mt 25.31-32)

9.5.3. *Esteem* – The peoples of the world will worship and serve Jesus.

9.5.3.1. This is what the Father promised to the Son (Ps 2.10-12; Ps 72.11; Ps 86.9).

9.5.3.2. This is what the Father granted to the Son (Phil 2.10-11)

9.5.3.3. This is what will be completely fulfilled at Christ’s second coming.

9.5.4. *Everlasting* – The dominion of the Son of Man will be establish as an everlasting kingdom (Dan 2.44; Dan 4.34; Dan 7.27). We saw, when we considered, Daniel 2.44, that his kingdom:

9.5.4.1. Will never be conquered by another (compare with, Dan 6.26).

9.5.4.2. Cannot decay (Mt 6.19, 20; 1 Pt 1.4).

9.5.4.3. Is in no danger of destruction, not even Satan or the powers of Hell can overcome it (Ps 125.1, 2; Mt 16.18, 19; Heb 12.28).

9.5.4.4. Can never have its citizens removed (Is 54.17; Jn 10.27-30; Rom 8.33-39).

⁴⁰¹ Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God—Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 2006), p. 310.
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- 9.5.4.5. Is not subject to succession or revolution (Rev 21.1-4).
- 9.5.5. Jesus may have had this section of Daniel in mind when he gave the charge called *The Great Commission* to his disciples (Mt 28.18-20):
 - 9.5.5.1. Empowerment – ‘all authority’
 - 9.5.5.2. Extension – ‘all nations’
 - 9.5.5.3. Esteem – ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded’
 - 9.5.5.4. Everlasting – ‘I am with you always, to the end of the age’.
- 9.6. When did the coronation of Jesus occur?
 - 9.6.1. When he ascended in a cloud (Acts 1.9) into Glory after the resurrection.
 - 9.6.1.1. This reference in Dan 7.13 (clouds and son of man) is quoted in the Gospels (Mt 24.30; Mt 26.64; Mk 13.26; Mk 14.62; Lk 21.27). Also, in Revelation, Jesus is presented as coming or sitting on clouds (Rev 1.7; Rev 14.14–15).
 - 9.6.1.2. Clouds are often used in Scripture as a mark of the heavenly and Divine (2 Sam 22.12; Job 22.14; Ps 18.10-13; Ps 97.2-4; Ps 104.3; Is 19.1; Nah 1.3).
 - 9.6.2. His ascension is the formal commencement of his reign as King. Until that point he was the crowned prince (Is 9.6).
 - 9.6.3. This means that Jesus is reigning as king, now.
 - 9.6.3.1. We are not to think of his reign as only commencing in some future millennial kingdom or only at his second coming.
 - 9.6.3.2. His reign applies to both the Church and to the heavenly realm, today.
 - 9.6.3.3. His reign applies to the everlasting spiritual kingdom.
 - 9.6.3.4. But his reign also has a spatial dimension. The contrast presented in Daniel (2 and 7) isn’t merely between earthly kingdoms and God’s spiritual kingdom but between the kingdoms of men on earth and the kingdom of Jesus Christ on *earth*.
 - 9.6.3.4.1. Jesus rules over the rulers of the earth today, even though they do not give him the respect and homage he deserves.
 - 9.6.3.4.2. The saints will inherit the earth (Mt 5.5) and rule over it with him.
 - 9.6.3.4.3. After his return the earth will be renovated and Heaven will be extended to the earth.
 - 9.6.3.4.4. The renovated earth will have gardens and animals. We will have meaningful roles or jobs and we will make amazing discoveries into an everlasting existence. We should not call residence in the heavenly kingdom the *afterlife*, but life. Here we are in the *before-life*. This life is utterly impoverished compared to what it will be like in Christ’s everlasting physical kingdom.
- 10. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (1-14)
 - 10.1. *Reliability of Prophecy* – The accuracy with which God foretells the future is demonstrated in this account, and through all the prophecies in Daniel and the rest of Scripture.
 - 10.1.1. God is sovereignly working out his purposes precisely as he planned them.
 - 10.1.1.1. In this portion of the chapter, God foretold how events would unfold over the next 600 years.
 - 10.1.1.2. Someone might be tempted to argue that the prophecies in this chapter are somewhat nebulous and that it is only after-the-fact that we can assign actual events to the prophecies. They could point to the difficulty interpreters have with particulars in the vision (e.g., who were the ten horns of verse 7 and the little horn of verse 8). However, to silence all challengers God prophesied about the return from Babylon by precisely naming the king, Cyrus, 200 hundred years before the event (Is 44.28; Is 45:1).
 - 10.1.1.3. We make a mistake if we think that it is difficult for God to predict the future. Time is not a factor which determines whether or not he can predict the future. It does not matter if God is predicting the future one minute or one

- hour from now, or one century or one millennium from now, all of time is within his purview—because he created time.
- 10.1.1.4. God's predictions, which always are fulfilled, are a clear indication that there is something powerful beyond the natural realm, and they demonstrate that God is God (Is 42.9; Is 44.7; Is 46.9, 10; Is 48.5-6).
- 10.1.1.5. Foretelling the future is as much a miracle as saving a man from the mouth of a lion.
- 10.1.1.6. How is it that God can know the future so precisely?
- 10.1.1.6.1. It is not because he looks into the future and sees what men will do.
- 10.1.1.6.2. It is because he has planned, decreed, and providentially governs all events in their entirety.
- 10.1.1.6.3. The only way that God can know the future with precision is because he has said what the future will be.
- 10.1.1.7. Since God has laid out the future in precise detail, how then can man have free will—or where is there room for human volition? Aren't we, then, like computers, carrying out a step-by-step program that God has written?
- 10.1.1.7.1. Many philosophers and theologians have attempted to explain God's sovereignty and human 'free will'.
- 10.1.1.7.2. I find most attempts to reconcile God's sovereignty and human 'free will' bog down in definitions and convoluted conditions, and end up either limiting God (e.g., as in 'open theism') and giving man too much volitional freedom or turning man into a mere puppet.
- 10.1.1.7.3. In fact the will of man is not free. All unbelievers are bound to sin and Satan. Even Christians do not have 'free wills' in the sense that they can act contrary to God's plan. God is, ultimately, the only volitionally free entity.
- 10.1.1.7.4. However, while God sovereignly plans all events including every thought, word, and action of all men (Ps 139.4, 16; Prov 16.33; Acts 13.48; Rom 8.29-30; Rom 9.20-21), men are still fully and really responsible for their actions (Ezk 18.1-32; Rom 6.23). This appears to be a contradiction but as an antinomy it is not illogical. Instead of trying to understand and explain something that our finite minds cannot understand, it is better for us to accept on faith this truth of God. We are to believe this truth in the same way that we are to believe that Jesus is God and man.
- 10.1.2. The prophecies recorded in the Book of Daniel, and their fulfillment, vindicate Daniel as a true prophet.
- 10.1.2.1. The decisive test for determining whether a prophet is a true prophet is if his prophecies come true (Dt 18.15-22).
- 10.1.3. The fulfillment of prophecies teach us to trust God.
- 10.1.3.1. Since God knows the beginning from the end, since he has planned all events, nothing takes him by surprise.
- 10.1.3.2. God is truly working out everything according to his plan (Rom 8.28); for his glory and for the good of his people.
- 10.2. *Reality of Punishment* – There is a judgement to come, and God is the Judge (Ps 58.11; Ps 98.9).
- 10.2.1. We should be encouraged by the reality that God rules over all the kingdoms of the earth (Ps 103.19) and holds them accountable to his laws, justice, and judgement.
- 10.2.2. The kingdoms of this world will be held accountable to God and judged. We know that no '*orbis unum*' (one world) government will ever exist. God will not tolerate any

supreme challenge against the kingdom of his Son—God will permit no unified kingdom to arise again, as did the first Babylonian empire that challenged God and was destroyed (Gen 11.1-9). And no single earthly kingdom will ever reach the heights of rebellion against God that the Neo-Babylonian empire, under Nebuchadnezzar, did. Babylon (and Rome as an extension of Babylon) is the epitome of what man aspires to without God—but it has been destroyed (Is 21.1-10; Rev 18.1-24).

- 10.2.3. The proud and cruel enemies of the Church of Jesus Christ will certainly be judged and destroyed in God's time, and the Church will rejoice (Rev 19.1-5). For example, the Kim regime in North Korea will crash and burn because it aspires to godhood and annihilates Christians; the Saudi hegemony which funds mosques and anti-Christian violence will self-destruct; and the US and the rest of the West will be plundered for having embraced deism, pluralism and materialism, and for locking out Christianity from the public forum.
- 10.3. *Reign of the Prince* – The overruling, eternal kingdom of Jesus will prosper and grow until it fills the whole earth (Dan 2.35; Dan 7.14).
 - 10.3.1. Daniel foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah would be established at the time of the fourth kingdom (Rome) in his vision.
 - 10.3.1.1. It has been established and it continues to prosper, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of Hell. Jesus Christ is Lord and reigns now (Phil 2.9-11; Heb 8.1; Rev 4.2).
 - 10.3.1.2. His kingdom is not a future temporal kingdom to be set up at his second coming. It is a Kingdom that was formally inaugurated 2,000 years ago, continues to exist today, and will exist into an everlasting existence.
 - 10.3.1.3. Premillennialists mistakenly hold that the kingdom, with a throne in Jerusalem, will be established by Christ on earth, at a yet future date.
 - 10.3.2. From a small seed (a dozen disciples of the Master) the Gospel has gone out to the world; and Christianity is found in all nations on earth and more are being added to the Kingdom every day.
 - 10.3.2.1. Christianity has become the dominant religion and moral influence on earth.⁴⁰²
 - 10.3.2.2. Christianity is growing faster than the growth rate of the world's population, and is apparently growing faster (percentage and absolute) than any other (major) religion on earth.⁴⁰³
 - 10.3.3. History in one sense ends with Rome, and the advent of Christ's kingdom. Our age presents no opposition to Christ's Kingdom that warrants mention in Biblical prophecy. Human schemes and inventions to challenge God are nothing new (Eccl 1.9). We are in the 'last days' end of the ages (Heb 9.26) waiting for the return of Christ.
 - 10.3.4. Let the heathen rage and roar as much as they please, God has established his King upon his holy hill of Zion (Ps 2.6)—the Church—and he is coming soon. Even so, come Lord Jesus! (Rev 22.21).

Sense (Dan 7.15-28)

- 1. What was Daniel's reaction on seeing this vision? (15)
 - 1.1. The visions he was granted by God caused him to be anxious and alarmed.
 - 1.1.1. Like Nebuchadnezzar before him (Dan 2.1; Dan 4.4-5) and John after him (Rev 1.17),

⁴⁰² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups

⁴⁰³ www.bible.ca/islam/islam-myths-fastest-growing.htm quoting from David A. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p 4. However, see: Jennifer Riley, "Christian Population Growth Rate Higher than World; Less than Muslims, Hindus," *Christian Post*, 2006-01-06; www.christianpost.com/article/20060106/christian-population-growth-rate-higher-than-world-less-than-muslims-hindus.htm

- Daniel was disturbed by the revelation he was given.
- 1.1.2. Daniel says that his spirit ‘within his body’ (sheath/scabbard) was troubled.
 - 1.1.2.1. It is a construct which may not have any deep meaning. It may be essentially an idiom for expressing ‘mind’—where mind includes both the non-physical aspects of the intellect and consciousness and the perceptions, thought processes and memories that are facilitated by the physical brain.
 - 1.1.2.2. At minimum it appears to indicate that Daniel believed that man has two components to his being—a spirit and a body.
 - 1.2. Why did the vision cause this reaction in Daniel?
 - 1.2.1. The first three beasts were not particularly frightening, being representations of real animals. But the fourth creature was terrifying (19).
 - 1.2.2. However, it was likely not the sight of the creatures that troubled Daniel, as much as the perceived meaning of them. The type of alarm which he registers in this verse is not a visceral reaction but rather a perplexity resulting from what he knew (chapter 2) and guessed about the meaning of the vision.
 - 1.3. To receive this kind of revelation—revelation that is specific about future events—was unnerving.
 - 1.3.1. We will consider this reality again when we identify some of the lessons we can derive from this section of Daniel’s prophecy.
2. How did Daniel go about easing his anxiety? (16)
- 2.1. He approached one of the persons in his vision.
 - 2.2. Whom did he approach?
 - 2.2.1. A being (human or angel) standing before the throne of God in the judgement courtroom (10).
 - 2.2.2. It is possible that it was an angel; possibly the one later identified as Gabriel (Dan 8.16; Dan 9.21).
 - 2.3. Why did he approach the person?
 - 2.3.1. To ask for an interpretation of the vision.
 - 2.3.2. He wanted an authoritative explanation and probably believed that he could obtain an explanation from one who was present in the heavenly scene; particularly if that person was an angel, since angels are messengers of God.
 - 2.4. He asked for an explanation of the vision.
 - 2.4.1. Daniel already knew a basic outline of the future from Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in chapter 2.
 - 2.4.2. Why did he pursue obtaining additional information?
 - 2.4.2.1. He was seeking truth which could help him overcome his anxieties and uncertainties.
 - 2.4.2.2. He wanted to know more, where God had revealed more.
 - 2.4.2.3. In the vision God provided to him additional information about the future than had been provided to Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel wished to understand what was being revealed to him.
 - 2.4.2.4. His was not an idle curiosity or a desire to delve into things that he should not know. He had a sincere desire, like we all should, to understand what God reveals to mankind.
 - 2.4.2.5. His desire to understand is essentially the same as what we are doing in attempting to understand the message and meaning of the prophecies given in the Book of Daniel.
 - 2.5. What is different about this vision from most other forms of revelation in Scripture?
 - 2.5.1. Daniel doesn’t merely see the vision but interacts with the actors in the vision.
 - 2.5.2. He is not observing from a distance, but is present in the vision—he sees himself in the scene.

- 2.5.3. Where in Scripture do we see similar participatory interaction in a vision:
 - 2.5.3.1. Ezekiel is led through the vision of the new temple (Ezk 40-48) and surrounding land by a man (Ezk 40.3) who shows the various dimensions to Ezekiel.
 - 2.5.3.2. Zechariah asks for clarifications of a vision and is asked to participate (Zech 1.9, 14; Zech 2.2; Zech 4.2, 12).
 - 2.5.3.3. John, in Revelation, interacts in a similar way with the persons in the visions he sees (Rev 4.1-2; Rev 7.13-14; Rev 11.1-2).
 - 2.5.4. The movie *Inception*, with Leonardo DiCaprio, which deals with secretly extracting information from the unconscious mind while people are dreaming, has a similar element of a viewer's direct interaction in the vision.
3. What new information is provided in verses 17-18, that was not mentioned in the previous section (i.e., in verses 2-14)?
- 3.1. We are told that the four beasts represent four kings, or kingdoms/dynasties.
 - 3.1.1. The 'shall arise', as used here, is not a pure future (i.e., entirely in Daniel's future). One of the kingdoms had already arisen and was on the scene, as Daniel received this vision near the end of the Babylonian Empire, in the first year of Belshazzar (1).
 - 3.2. The 'saints of the Most High' are introduced (see also, 22, 25, 27) here and given the kingdom.
 - 3.3. Who are the saints that are mentioned?
 - 3.3.1. What might be possible interpretations:⁴⁰⁴
 - 3.3.1.1. Angels
 - 3.3.1.2. Ethnic Jews; God's original Covenant people.
 - 3.3.1.3. Believing Jews; the true Covenant people.
 - 3.3.1.4. A remnant of Jews at the end of time.
 - 3.3.1.5. A portion of mankind (the raptured) at the time Christ comes to set up an earthly kingdom—a premillennial view.
 - 3.3.1.6. All believers in the Messiah/Christ, through all time alive on earth and those in heaven—i.e., the Church.
 - 3.3.1.7. All believers who are/were in heaven at the time of the judgement of the fourth kingdom or on the Day of Judgement.
 - 3.3.2. From Daniel's perspective the 'saints of the Most High' are the true people of God from within the Jewish Covenant people, who would suffer at the time of the little horn (25).
 - 3.3.2.1. However, in general terms, they are believers in the Messiah/Christ, through all time whether ethnically Jewish or Gentile—the true Israel of God (Gal 6.16).
 - 3.3.2.2. They are all members of Christ's kingdom that is superior to all the human kingdoms of the earth.
 - 3.3.2.3. Believers in Jesus will inherit the earth (Ps 37.11; Mt 5.5; Rev 21.7) and be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19.6; Rev 1.6; Rev 5.10).
 - 3.4. What attribute, in particular, is mentioned about the kingdom that the saints will possess?
 - 3.4.1. It is eternal.
 - 3.4.2. The text says: "until forever and until forever and ever".
 - 3.4.3. Why does it do this?
 - 3.4.4. To emphasize the importance and completeness of the reality.
 - 3.4.5. A three-fold repetition of a word or its synonyms is a Hebraic/Aramaic idiom (comparable to our use of adjectives such as 'very') for expressing totality (compare with, Dan 4.34 with three synonyms for 'worshipped'; Dan 7.14 with three references to the 'peoples, nations and languages'; and Is 6.3 which emphasizes the absolute holiness

⁴⁰⁴ The following article examines some possibilities: V. S. Poythress, "The Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel vii" (18, 22), *Vetus Testamentum* 26, 1976, 208-213; www.jstor.org/pss/1517389

- of God with a three-fold repetition).
- 3.4.6. The vision, and Daniel, could not express the timelessness and eternity of the kingdom of Christ in a more explicit way.
- 3.4.7. This vision is consistent with what was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar about the kingdom that would destroy all earthly kingdoms (Dan 2.44).
- 3.5. We first encountered the reference to “the Most High” in Dan 3.26. We will not consider it again, in detail, the meaning of it; but will only note:
 - 3.5.1. The term is also used in 22, 25, 27 in this chapter; and in chapters 3-5. It occurs 13 times in Daniel, more than in any other book except in the Psalms; and six of the occurrences in Daniel (Dan 4.2, 17, 24-25, 32, 34) are spoken by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3.5.2. The term ‘Most High’ is used to distinguish God from the gods in the pagan pantheons. He is above all the created order and invented gods.
 - 3.5.3. The term ‘Most High’ is used here in an absolute sense to refer to the Creator God, the only true God.
- 4. What, in particular, does Daniel want to know? (19-20)
 - 4.1. The truth about the fourth beast.
 - 4.1.1. What would he likely have wanted to know about the fourth beast?
 - 4.1.2. He may have desired to know about such things as:
 - 4.1.2.1. What made it so different from the other beasts and the kingdoms they represented.
 - 4.1.2.2. What kingdom it would be—i.e., where would it originate and over what territory would it have dominion.
 - 4.1.2.3. When this kingdom would appear.
 - 4.2. The fourth beast (as we saw in the previous section) represents a kingdom which was the Roman Empire—in particular the Roman Empire from its first emperor (Julius Caesar) until around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, a period of 120 years.
 - 4.3. In explaining what he wanted to know about, Daniel provides mostly a recap of the vision from the previous section. Verses 19-20 are essentially a parallel to verses 7-8.
 - 4.3.1. What are the key facts about the beast that had been revealed to Daniel?
 - 4.3.1.1. It was not a recognizable animal but a composite beast that was terrifying.
 - 4.3.1.2. It had teeth of iron with which it devoured kingdoms.
 - 4.3.1.3. It had ten horns; which we determined probably represented the Caesars from Julius to Titus. We will review this identification, below, when we consider verse 24.
 - 4.3.1.4. It (either the 10th king or the collective emperors or empire) was intelligent (with the eyes of a man), but was exceedingly arrogant and boastful.
 - 4.3.2. What additional information is provided in this section that was not given in the first narration of the vision?
 - 4.3.2.1. The beast had claws made from bronze.
 - 4.3.2.2. These probably symbolize extreme savagery and destructiveness.
 - 4.3.2.3. In video games and violent movies bronze (or steel) claws are standard melee weapons for slashing opponents.
 - 4.4. What made this ‘beast’ different from the beasts representing the preceding kingdoms?
 - 4.4.1. It seems that the focus of the difference is its:
 - 4.4.1.1. Non-natural ugliness and terrifying appearance
 - 4.4.1.2. Size
 - 4.4.1.3. Viciousness and cruelty
 - 4.4.1.4. Unsurpassed pride.
 - 4.4.2. Rome may have had aspects that we consider ‘good’ today such as it is organizational abilities, military competence, engineering skills, and sophisticated legal system; however, history supports the view that Rome was different from the kingdoms that

preceded it:

- 4.4.2.1. Rome had an exceedingly ugly ‘underbelly’ which included: rampant graft and injustice, an oppressive caste system built around slavery, excessively cruel emperors, persecution of Christians, institutionalization of sexual infidelity.
- 4.4.2.2. Rome included somewhat more territory than the three previous empires—from Britannia to Mesopotamia. However, it did not include the most-eastern lands that had been part of the Persian Empire.
- 4.4.2.3. The cruelty of Rome is well known—including the gladiatorial fights, the ‘games’ in the circuses which included animal and human slaughter, and its treatment of slaves.
- 4.4.2.4. Roman triumphs and emperor deification ceremonies reached a level of hubris unsurpassed before or after.

5. What next happened in the vision that Daniel was watching? (21-22)

5.1. The horn made war against the saints.

5.1.1. What is this a reference to?

- 5.1.1.1. It probably includes the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperors.
- 5.1.1.2. There may be a specific reference to persecutions by a particular king (‘this horn’ in 21; ‘he’ in 24) of this empire (we will consider this in more detail in the next section).
- 5.1.1.3. At minimum it would include the persecution of the Covenant people at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD under Titus, who later became emperor.
- 5.1.1.4. It may include—typologically—all persecution of Christians by all unbelieving government systems, including Western governments which rule against the public observance of Christianity and Islamic governments which outlaw it.

5.2. What brought the war against the saints to an end?

5.2.1. The Ancient of Days (God the Father) ruled in favour of the saints. He rendered a judgement or verdict for the saints.

5.2.2. This could be:

- 5.2.2.1. When the persecution of Christians officially ended (c 313 AD) at the time of Constantine, when he is purported to have seen a vision of a cross and stopped the persecutions to protect his mother (Monica) who was a Christian.
- 5.2.2.2. When Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the official state religion in the 380s and worship at pagan temples was outlawed in 391.
- 5.2.2.3. When the city of Rome was sacked in 410 by Alaric, king of the Visigoths or again in 455 by Geiseric, king of the Vandals; and finally depopulated by Totila, king of the Ostrogoths.
- 5.2.2.4. At the terminus of the Roman Empire in 1453 when Muslims captured Constantinople (Istanbul).
- 5.2.2.5. At the final judgement when all the nations of this earth will be held accountable before God for the way they have treated his saints.

5.2.3. It would seem that the most immediate context for the fulfillment of this part of the vision, is when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. While this interpretation is held by very few interpreters it seems to be a reasonable interpretation, because:

- 5.2.3.1. The saints were to possess a particular kingdom—i.e., the one represented by the 4th beast.
- 5.2.3.2. The meaning of the vision given to Daniel seems to apply to events within history rather than events outside of history—i.e., at the end of time.

6. What would the fourth beast do in the future (from Daniel’s time), as foretold by the vision? (23)

- 6.1. It would devour the *whole* earth
 - 6.1.1. This statement about the ‘whole earth’ is one of the pieces of ‘evidence’ that leads dispensationalists (or premillennialists) and those who believe in world-dominance conspiracy theories to assume that Daniel is not speaking of Rome, but of some future kingdom that will be world-wide.⁴⁰⁵
- 6.2. Since, we have concluded previously that the fourth kingdom is Rome, we need to ask, how did *Rome* devour the *whole* earth?
 - 6.2.1. The Aramaic word used here is ארץ, which can also be translated as ‘land’ or ‘ground’ (e.g., Dan 4.15) and in the Hebrew cognate (אֶרֶץ) as ‘land’ (Gen 2.12) or ‘country’ (Lev 25.24) or ‘ground’ (Ruth 2.10).
 - 6.2.2. Obviously, we then have to understand the word ‘earth’ in its context. Does Daniel mean the whole world (i.e., all the territory included in the 200+ nations of today)? Or is he referring to the ‘known world’ or to the territory that Rome conquered?
 - 6.2.2.1. We will reject the interpretation ‘entire world’ since we assert (based on the analysis we have done above in our consideration of chapter 2 and the preceding part of chapter 7) that this prophecy is speaking of ancient Rome at the time of the Messiah.
 - 6.2.2.2. Replacing ‘whole earth’ with the term ‘known world’ seems to be nothing more than a convenient ‘escape clause’ for many who don’t want to tackle seriously the translation and meaning of the Biblical text. They dismiss fallacious interpretations which lead people to conclude in some places that ‘whole earth’ speaking of the entire world, by concluding simply that the writer was speaking of the ‘known world’.
 - 6.2.2.2.1. It is true that Herodotus, the Greek historian, uses the term when he refers to Babylon as “the most powerful and renowned” of all cities which “surpasses in splendour any city of the known world.”⁴⁰⁶
 - 6.2.2.2.2. However, the ‘known world’ at that time was much larger than the extent of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ. The known world probably included the coasts of Africa (the Phoenicians had sailed along much of Africa, and possibly had circumnavigated it⁴⁰⁷ about the time Daniel was attending the Babylonian civil service academy as a young hostage, long before Vasco De Gamma sailed around the cape in 1497) ; and certainly included Persia and India, and likely China, which were not part of the Roman Empire.
 - 6.2.2.3. We seem to be left with only one way to interpret the expression translated as ‘whole earth’. That is as, ‘all the land’.
- 6.2.3. We could, however, be accused of being inconsistent:
 - 6.2.3.1. The earlier use of the word ‘earth’ in verse 23 is the same Aramaic word as is used in the latter expression ‘whole earth’. However, we could also translate the first occurrence as ‘in the land’ and not change the meaning of the text.
 - 6.2.3.2. The use of ‘whole earth’ (Dan 2.35) and ‘earth’ (Dan 2.39) seems to imply ‘entire world’. This is probably a legitimate translation of Daniel 2.35. However, when we considered that verse we did not determine the extent of the application of the term ‘whole earth’. In the context of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, he saw that the entire *land* was filled with the growing mountain. He

⁴⁰⁵ John F. Walvoord, “Chapter 7 Daniel’s Vision Of Future World History,” bible.org/seriespage/chapter-7-daniel%E2%80%99s-vision-future-world-history; Stan L., “EU World Dictator,” 2006-02-10 and “World Government - Here Now Almost,” 2008-10-27 at: Events in Time (Bible Prophecy Literally Fulfilled)(By God); jsrandier.blogspot.com/; and Elizabeth Dilling, “Prophecy and the Developing Anti-Christ World Government,” in: *Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today*; www.come-and-hear.com/dilling/chapt14.html

⁴⁰⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book I, paragraph 178; classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt.

⁴⁰⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 4, chapters 42-43; www.roebuckclasses.com/texts/Greek/herodotusphoenicians.htm; see also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia

- didn't see a globe (the entire world) but rather a plain with a growing mountain—thus the meaning in the immediate context is 'whole land'.
- 6.2.3.3. When we considered Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation (Dan 4.1) we concluded that he was addressing, at least, all the people in his empire (country, land) but may have been addressing all people, everywhere (entire world). Other occurrences of 'earth' in the chapter (Dan 4.10, 11 ['whole earth'], 15, 20, 22, 23, 35) probably can mean 'entire earth' (35), 'land' (NIV: 10), 'distant parts of the earth' (NIV: 22) or 'ground' (NIV 23) depending on the context.
- 6.2.3.4. We noted with respect to the use of 'in all the earth' in Daniel 6.25, that the NIV has "throughout the land"; whereas Daniel 6.27 should be translated as 'earth'.
- 6.2.3.5. In Daniel 7.4, both the ESV and NIV translate 'earth' as 'ground',
- 6.2.3.6. This examination of the usages of the word 'earth' in Daniel shows that the word has a broad fluidity of meaning, thus illustrating how important it is to translate carefully within the context of the verse.
- 6.2.3.7. Therefore we are not being inconsistent if we conclude that in this verse (23) can be translated as "all the land".
- 6.3. The meaning, therefore, seems to be that wherever Rome went, it devoured the land with a rapacious appetite.
- 6.3.1. The verse is not speaking particularly of the geographic extent of Rome's domination but of its approach to domination.
- 6.3.2. Interpretations that try to suggest what geography is included in this verse (whether from Britain, Gaul and Germany to North Africa and Palestine or from Europe to America and beyond) are missing the point of the verse.
- 6.3.3. Into whatever territory Rome expanded, it greedily swallowed up those nations and lands through cruel destruction.
7. Who are the eleven kings? (24)
- 7.1. We noted previously, when we looked at verses 7 and 8 that there are many different interpretations.⁴⁰⁸ Possible interpretations include the following:
- 7.1.1. The fulfillment was after Daniel's time, but before the incarnation of Jesus (Jewish and liberal interpreters), so the kings lived (actually or symbolically) in 1st or 2nd centuries BC, e.g., at the time of the Seleucids, with the little horn being Antiochus Epiphanes.
- 7.1.2. Julius Caesar was the little horn (Calvin), and the emperors who *succeeded* him were the ten horns.
- 7.1.3. The kings are the provinces of Rome at its peak.
- 7.1.4. The (ten) kings are *nations* that followed Rome; e.g., nations in Europe or the Middle East during the Middle Ages.
- 7.1.5. The little horn is the Turkish empire (Luther, Vatablus), or Islam in general.
- 7.1.6. The 10 horns are yet in our future (as taught by premillennialists) and will coexist in a future revived (e.g., the beast of Rev 13.3, 12, 14), worldwide, 'Roman Empire'. In this interpretation, the fourth kingdom did not exist at the time of the Messiah—rather there has been a gap over 2,000 years between the end of the third kingdom and the advent of the fourth kingdom.
- 7.1.7. The 11th horn is the antichrist⁴⁰⁹, and specifically the Church of Rome⁴¹⁰ or the papacy about which Protestants today should show more concern.⁴¹¹
- 7.1.8. We cannot identify the eleven kings specifically but rather they are symbolic of all nations which will persecute the Church until Christ returns (Young).

⁴⁰⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel%27s_Vision_of_Chapter_7

⁴⁰⁹ Kenneth O. Gangel, "Daniel ch. 7: A Vision of Future World History," *Grace Theological Journal* 6.2 (1985) 247-256.

⁴¹⁰ Isaac Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Darby and Brown, 1733); www.gutenberg.org/files/16878/16878-h/16878-h.htm

⁴¹¹ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). pp. 322-323.

- 7.2. Our, tentative, conclusion was that the eleven kings were eleven of the twelve Caesars identified by the ancient historian, Suetonius.
 - 7.2.1. The first ten kings were Julius Caesar to Vespasian—not starting with Augustus, as modern historians do.⁴¹²
 - 7.2.2. The three kings who were uprooted were Galba, Otho, and Vitellius who all had very short reigns (of only a few months) in 68-69 AD.
 - 7.2.3. Titus was the 11th, succeeding his father Vespasian. He was the General who led the Roman armies in the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 7.2.4. This interpretation seems to be most consistent the view that Daniel's prophecy about the fourth beast primarily foretells events associated with the time of the Messiah.
- 8. What things would this 11th king (Titus) do? (25)
 - 8.1. He would:
 - 8.1.1. Speak words against the Most High
 - 8.1.2. Wear out [oppress] the saints of the Most High
 - 8.1.3. Think to change the [set] times and the law[s]
 - 8.2. How did Titus speak words against the Most High?
 - 8.2.1. The Roman Emperors, in general, were full of pride from the adulation they received, including declarations of divinity after their death by the senate in the imperial cult.⁴¹³ Titus was deified (declared to be a god) after his death in 81 AD.
 - 8.2.2. However, the specific fulfillment of the prophecy may be Titus' attack on Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
 - 8.2.2.1. Titus brought the Roman pagan standards into the city and onto the Temple mount.
 - 8.2.2.2. According to Jewish tradition (in the *Babylonian Talmud*, written about c 500 AD, based on orally transmitted accounts⁴¹⁴) Titus slashed the Temple curtain and entered the holy of holies; committed a sexual act with a prostitute, lying on an OT scroll; and uttered blasphemies against Heaven.⁴¹⁵
 - 8.2.2.3. We noted previously that the Arch of Titus, still standing in Rome today, commemorates this conquest.
 - 8.2.2.3.1. On the arch there is a relief carving of a Roman procession of soldiers with laurel wreaths proudly carrying treasure taken from the Herodian Temple (specifically the golden lampstand (Ex 25.31), the table for the Bread of the Presence (Ex 25.30) and, it is thought, the trumpets of Jericho; but *not* the Ark of the Covenant which probably was taken and vandalized for its gold, in 586 when the first Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 8.2.2.3.2. Another relief carving shows Titus being carried into heaven on the wings of an eagle.
 - 8.2.2.3.3. It may be that God has providentially preserved the Arch of Titus for 2,000 years so that it could be a direct witness to the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy.
 - 8.2.3. How did Titus oppress the saints of the Most High?
 - 8.3.1. There may have been some (limited) persecution of Jews prior to 68 AD, for example by Caligula (37-41 AD).⁴¹⁶
 - 8.3.2. Titus (emperor from 79-81 AD) did not initiate persecution against Christians. Nero before him (emperor from 54-68 AD) persecuted Christians, as may have earlier

⁴¹² E.g., en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_Emperors

⁴¹³ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_\(ancient_Rome\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_(ancient_Rome))

⁴¹⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud#Talmud_Bavli_.28Babylonian_Talmud.29

⁴¹⁵ *Babylonian Talmud* (Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices; Ed, Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein), Gittin 56b; www.come-and-hear.com/gittin/gittin_56.html#PARTb

⁴¹⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_persecution_in_the_Roman_Empire

emperors such as Claudius (Suetonius' passage refers to Jews; he may have mistaken Christians for Jews).

- 8.3.3. However, Titus' treatment of God's covenant people at the time of Christ was infamously brutal. In particular his most notorious act was the destruction of the Temple. The Wailing Wall stands to this day as a reminder to the complete destructiveness of Titus and as a witness to the truth of Daniel's prophecy.

8.4. How did Titus think to change the set times and the law?

8.4.1. What does the text mean, 'think to change the times and the law'?

8.4.1.1. Some suggest that this refers to changes to the festival times established in the God's Law. Antiochus Epiphanes did try to stop the sacred festivals and observances [1 Maccabees 1.45; 2 Maccabees 6.2, 6, 7]. Thus many try to identify this 11th king as Antiochus Epiphanes, and these events during the time of the Seleucids. His attempts were not successful and the Temple observances and Jewish festivals were still in place at the time of Christ.

8.4.1.2. Some suggest that the pope assumes a power to change times and laws—an absolute and despotic power. The change of calendars from Julian to Gregorian by Gregory XIII in 1582, is an example.⁴¹⁷

8.4.1.3. Some (e.g., Calvin) suggest this is a general reference to the Caesars perverting all laws, both human and divine.

8.4.1.4. Some have suggested that this change is still in the future, and that a future world government will attempt to change the observance of time in the same way that during the French Revolution the seven-day week was abolished in favour of ten-day week. And Russia tried the same thing.

8.4.1.5. The word 'think' in the ESV is unique to this verse in the entire OT. Other translations are: 'try' (NIV), 'intend' (NKJV, NAS). Holladay gives the translations: 'strive' or 'seek' and Brown, Driver, & Briggs gives the translations: 'think' or 'intend'. The Septuagint (LXX) (ὕπονοέω) is translated, by Lust, Eynikel, & Hauspie as: 'expect', 'suspect', 'think', 'suppose' or 'devise'.

8.4.1.6. The ESV's translation seems to be a good one, as good as any, and could imply 'sought' or 'devised'. The NIV's translation, as 'try', might place too much emphasis on the idea of attempting to do something, leading to the idea of failure.

8.4.2. Did Titus think (intend, devise) to change the set times and the law?

8.4.2.1. History does not record him setting out a decree to institute new religious festivals or to change the calendar as did Julius Caesar⁴¹⁸ and Pope Gregory.

8.4.2.2. However, Titus did something far more significant than changing civil or religious calendars or legislating perversions of God's laws. Various kings throughout history have done these things—they are not unique activities. The mistake most interpreters seem to make is to look for a fulfillment of this prophecy in the wrong type of actions.

8.4.2.3. Titus did something that no other king in history has done or can ever do again. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, he brought to an end the OT (Levitical) sacrificial system and associated festivals and jubilees; the priesthood, including the high priestly office; and, thus, the entire OT ceremonial system.

8.4.2.4. He may have intended, with deliberate calculation and malice, to bring to an end the sacrificial worship system as a means of subjugating the rebellious Jews to Rome and to dispense with their hated religious system which did not permit emperor veneration and the worship of Rome's pagan gods.

⁴¹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar

⁴¹⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_calendar

- 8.4.2.5. However, he would not have realized that he was acting as an instrument of God to end the sacrificial system as practiced in the Temple so that the focus of mankind could be turned to the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb 10.10).
- 8.4.2.6. God has providentially ensured that the OT ceremonial system remains only a memory (and pointer to Christ) by permitting Muslims to build their shrine (the Dome of the Rock; built in the late 7th c AD) on the Temple mount. Some premillennialists believe that this shrine will be destroyed as a precursor to the Millennial kingdom (others however interpret Revelation 11.2 to mean that a new temple will be built beside the Dome of the Rock). The Dome of the Rock may be destroyed before Christ returns, given the perpetual volatility in the Middle East. However I believe that God will allow it to exist until the end of time as a perpetual reminder that the OT ceremonial system is forever obsolete.
- 8.4.2.7. It seems reasonable to conclude that Titus' is the only possible person who could be the fulfillment of this portion of the prophecy.
- 8.5. What measure of time is given for the oppression of the saints? (25)
 - 8.5.1. "Time, times, and half a time." What might this mean?
 - 8.5.2. When we considered the use of 'times' in chapter 4 (16, 23, 25, 32), we concluded that the 'time' reference was to a 'year' (i.e., seven years). Applying that conclusion, Daniel's vision appears to be suggesting that the oppression of the saints would occur for three-and-a-half years.
 - 8.5.2.1. Can we identify a period of three-and-a-half years of oppression that fits with the timing of the events, as proposed?
 - 8.5.2.1.1. Some have suggested that this refers to the three years in which Antiochus Epiphanes devastated the Temple. But at most that was three years, not three-and-a-half.
 - 8.5.2.1.2. Others place this persecution under Nero or Domitian.
 - 8.5.2.1.3. Still others place it in our future; for example, in a time of persecution before Christ's second coming.
 - 8.5.2.2. Calvin believes that it is wrong to think of 'time' here to mean a year.⁴¹⁹
 - 8.5.3. Since we are dealing with an apocalyptic visions in this chapter, It might be best to consider this reference as being symbolical of a relatively short, determined, period of persecution.
 - 8.5.3.1. It may be that the three-and-a-half year period is half of seven years (symbolically a complete period).
 - 8.5.3.2. It may also be that the symbolical three-and-a-half year period is derived from the historical three-and-a-half years of persecution under Ahab at the time of Elijah (1 Ki 17-18; Lk 4.25; James 5.17).
 - 8.5.4. Assuming that the three-and-a-half year period is symbolical of a period of persecution, what might that period consist of?
 - 8.5.4.1. It may be the entire period from the ascension of Jesus to his return.
 - 8.5.4.1.1. If this is the case, the three-and-a-half could be understood as half of seven, indicating half of a complete period. For example, half of the history of the world—the first half being the former time, the time before the coming of the Messiah; and the second half being the latter days, the time after the coming of the Messiah.
 - 8.5.4.1.2. This would be the time that the antichrist would hold sway over mankind. As John says, we are already in the era of the antichrist (1 Jn 4.3).
 - 8.5.4.2. Alternatively, it could be the period of persecution of Christians under the

⁴¹⁹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.ii.xxix.html
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Roman emperors as a collective.

8.5.4.2.1. The serious persecution of *Christians* under Rome, did not start with Titus (emperor from 79-81 AD) but with Nero around 64 AD and continued under Domitian (Titus' brother; and emperor from 81-96 AD)—Titus effectively handed over the saints to persecution under his brother.

8.5.4.2.2. The persecution of Christians continued under other Roman emperors such as Trajan (from 109-111 AD), Septimius Severus (who ruled from 193-211 AD), Maximinus (in 235 AD), Valerian (in 257 AD), and Diocletian (who from about 284-305 AD).

8.5.5. However, it may be possible to associate these three-and-a-half years of oppression to a *specific* period in history after the arrival of the Messiah.

8.5.6. Does the text (25) support this interpretation—i.e., that the oppression being spoken of is that under a specific emperor?

8.5.6.1. Although it was suggested previously that the little horn, the 11th king (24), is Titus, the actual besieging of Jerusalem and slaughter of hundreds-of-thousands of the Jews did not last for three-and-a-half years.

8.5.6.2. However, it may be that the three-and-a-half years does not refer to only the besieging of Jerusalem, which occurred from March through September of 70 AD, but to a period leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem.

8.5.6.3. What is called the First Jewish-Roman War ran from 66 to 73 AD. It commenced with a revolt of the Jews in the province of Judea against Rome in 66 AD. The rebels overran the Roman military garrison and the pro-Roman king, Agrippa II, with the Roman officials, fled from Judea to Galilee. The Roman legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, tried to quell the revolt but his legion was defeated by the Jewish rebels at the Battle of Beth Horon—a result which shocked the Roman leaders.

8.5.6.4. The Roman Senate appointed General Vespasian to crush the rebellion. He was accompanied by his son Titus, who was second-in-command. Vespasian had four legions assigned to him and, according to Josephus; he invaded Galilee in May 67 AD.

8.5.6.5. During the period 67-69 AD the Roman forces conducted a series of campaigns from their base on the coast and re-consolidated their control of the territories of Galilee, Decapolis, Perea, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea; from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea.

8.5.6.6. The siege of Jerusalem is reported to have occurred from May 67 AD to September 70 AD. From May 1st, 67 AD to September 30th, 70 AD is three years and half years. However, the siege didn't coincide with these exact terminal dates. The three and half years in Daniel 7.25 (and 13.7) is likely a rounded figure to the nearest half-year. Thus, the time of oppression of the Jews under Vespasian and Titus was three and a half years.

8.5.6.7. Jesus refers to this period of occupation and oppression in Matthew 24.15-28 (Mk 13.14-23; Lk 21.20-24).

8.5.6.7.1. The expression 'abomination of desolation' is explained by most interpreters as one of: an ensign of the Roman armies that was brought into the Temple; some form of pagan sacrifice in the Temple, such as the slaughter of a pig; or setting up of an idol in the, then existing, Temple by the Romans or in a yet to be re-built temple by some future evil ruler or false religious leader.

8.5.6.7.2. These explanations miss the mark entirely since the sign was given to the disciples so that they could escape the city *before* it was too late. By the time the pagan armies had reached the Temple, the city was

destroyed and its inhabitants slaughtered. When we compare Luke's account with that of Matthew and Mark, we see that the meaning of the term 'abomination of desolation' is explained, by Jesus, to be *armies* surrounding Jerusalem.

8.5.6.7.3. We are not to interpret this passage, as many do, as a warning for a generation in our future. When Christ returns, there will not be any use in believers fleeing to the mountains around Jerusalem. Believers (alive or dead) will immediately be taken up to meet the returning Lord (1 Thess 4.17).

8.5.6.7.4. Jesus also informs us that this event was the abomination predicted by Daniel to cause *desolation* (Dan 9.27; Dan 12.11). A Roman ensign or a pig sacrifice in the Temple may desecrate the Temple's most holy place, but would not cause desolation. It was the Roman armies that destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.

8.5.6.8. Jesus provided his disciples with an explicit sign of the pending destruction of Jerusalem so that they would know when to leave the city. When the Roman armies began to surround Jerusalem in 70 AD, apparently most Christians heeded the warning sign Jesus had given and fled from the city before the Roman siege-works were set up. Josephus, who acted as a mediator for the Romans with the Jews in the city, witnessed the siege and aftermath when negotiations failed, and in his *Wars of the Jews* claims that more than one million people were killed during the siege, of which the majority were Jewish.

8.5.6.9. It is possible that the period of persecution referred to in Daniel is the same as that referred to multiple times in Revelation (Rev 11.2, 3; Rev 12.6, 14; Rev 13.5).

8.5.7. When we study Daniel 12.7, 11, we will encounter again the expression "time, times, and half a time".

9. What was to bring about an end to the Roman Empire? (26-27)

9.1. These verses reiterate what was seen in the vision (9-11) and given in the angel's summary explanation (18).

9.1.1. Verses 9-11 tell us that God would sit in judgement over Rome—the plundering and burning of the city (e.g., in 455 AD) may be the focus of this prophecy. However, there may be a different way to interpret this.

9.1.2. Verse 18 tells us that the saints of the Most High (the covenant people in general and specifically true believers in the Messiah) would possess an eternal kingdom that would supersede Rome.

9.1.2.1. This began with the resurrection/ascension of Jesus. Shortly thereafter the world was turned upside down (Acts 17.6) as the kingdom of Christ began to infiltrate Rome.

9.1.2.2. This *may* have been definitively demonstrated when Constantine ended persecution of Christians and implicitly endorsed Christianity, or when the Roman Empire officially embraced Christianity as the state religion and pagan temples were outlawed (i.e., under Theodosius in 391 AD).

9.1.3. These verses have a broader application. No earthly kingdom will ever again be able to achieve the levels of domination which the four empires (Babylon, Persian, Greek, and Roman) achieved. The only world dominating kingdom is that of King Jesus.

9.2. What additional information does the angel provide about the nature of the kingdom given to the saints? (27)

9.2.1. Note the ESV footnote: 'their' vs. 'his' and 'them' vs. 'him'.⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ The 2007 edition had the 'his' and 'him' in the footnote and 'their' and 'them' in the body. The 2011 edition has switched them.
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- 9.2.1.1. The previous part of verse 27 indicates that the kingdom will be given to the saints. It is theirs as a gift from the Father and the Son. Thus, the use of the third person, plural may be a legitimate translation and it avoids the switch from the third person singular to the plural in the same sentence.
- 9.2.1.2. There isn't a contradiction between the two, since his (Christ's) kingdom is the kingdom of the saints and they are installed as kings in it (Ex 19.6; Rev 1.6; Rev 5.10) with Jesus as the High King.
- 9.2.1.3. However, the ESV and many other translations (NIV, NASB, NKJV, KJV) follow the Aramaic in the Masoretic text, and have 'his' and 'him', as does the LXX.
- 9.2.1.4. Therefore, it *may* be best to use the standard translation at this point, and to understand the kingdom as belonging ultimately to the High King who represents his people.
- 9.2.2. The post-temporal extent of this new kingdom is described.
 - 9.2.2.1. We already noted, when we considered verse 18, that the kingdom possessed by the saints would be everlasting (emphasized with a three-fold repetition of the word 'forever').
 - 9.2.2.2. The timelessness and eternity of the kingdom of Christ could not be more explicit.
- 9.2.3. The authority of Christ's kingdom is also stated. What aspects of Christ's authority are mentioned?
 - 9.2.3.1. *Omnipresence* – The rulers of "all dominions" will be subject to the High King, Jesus (Mt 28.18-19; Ps 2.10-11; Is 60.3; Phil 2.10; Rev 21.4).
 - 9.2.3.2. *Obeisance* – The rulers and their subjects will "serve" and worship the High King, Jesus (Mt 28.19; Ps 2.11-12; Ps Ps 24.16102.22; Phil 2.11).
 - 9.2.3.3. *Obedience* – The rulers and their subjects will be taught the laws of the Kingdom and "obey" them (Mt 28.20).
- 9.2.4. How did (or will) these things become a reality?
 - 9.2.4.1. Many, reviewing the events of history and the current situation in the world, conclude that what is described here has not yet become a reality and that this verse is speaking of some type of future millennial kingdom on earth, either before or after Christ's return to earth. The implications of this conclusion are:
 - 9.2.4.1.1. The authority of Christ's kingdom applies primarily to the final generations of mankind (e.g., over a 1,000 year period).
 - 9.2.4.1.2. The authority of Christ's kingdom was not officially realized at his resurrection or ascension, but his return is necessary to manifest it.
 - 9.2.4.1.3. Both of these inferences are contrary to the words which Jesus spoke in the Great Commission (Mt 28.18-20).
 - 9.2.4.2. How absolute is this universal reign of Christ to be?
 - 9.2.4.2.1. No interpretation that is Biblically-based can infer from this verse a form of universalism (i.e., that every last person will willingly and believingly subject to Jesus Christ). The Bible clearly teaches that all men are not saved.
 - 9.2.4.2.2. Nor can any interpretation of this passage suggest that all people in a particular generation (or period of generations), such as the last one on earth, will all believe. There will always be evil present in the world, until Christ returns. There will also be a final time of general unbelief (falling away) before he returns (Lk 18.8; 2 Thess 2.3, 7, 8⁴²¹; Rev 20.7, 8). But we will not be able to determine if any specific period

⁴²¹Notice 2 Thess 2.1/ uses the expression "being gathered to him" (compare with, 1 Thess 4.17). This passage is speaking of the time of Christ's return.

of unbelief is the final one before the return of Christ, since this will be one of many.

9.2.4.2.3. Also, because specific nations resist the authority of Jesus (e.g., North Korea, Saudi Arabia), this does not mean that his authority is absolute over the nations. Christ is King of the nations (Ps 2.1-12; Phil 2.9-11), whether or not the nations submit willingly to him or not.

9.2.4.3. This prophecy of Daniel is being gloriously fulfilled in our present age by the expansion of the visible Church, and will reach its ultimate fulfillment in an everlasting existence with the completion of the Church. That is, this prophecy is looking forward to the Church age when Gentiles as well as ethnic Jews would be brought into the kingdom.

9.2.4.4. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is a reality today and his authority is being realized today:

9.2.4.4.1. *Omnipresence* – Rulers of the world are ultimately subject to the High King, Jesus. As Andrew Melville is reported to have said to King James VI in 1596, “Sirrah, ye are God’s silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is king James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member.” The reality is that all civil magistrates are God’s and Christ’s servants (Rom 13.1-7), whether or not they wish to acknowledge this.

9.2.4.4.2. *Obeisance* – The rulers and their subjects have served and worshiped the High King, Jesus. Kings since Constantine have declared their realms to be Christian. Even though the West may have turned against its Christian heritage, recent leaders (e.g., Bush, Harper, Blair) have professed faith in Jesus Christ. In addition, Christianity has become the dominant religion on earth—and continues to grow at a faster rate than any other religion. Christ’s visible kingdom, as realized through the world-wide Church, has more members than any nation has subjects.

9.2.4.4.3. *Obedience* – The rulers of this world and their subjects are required to obey God’s law. It is not optional. It is the normative and objective standard for all mankind. God’s Law applies to all men through all time and in all nations (Gen 9.4-7; Lev 24.22; Neh 13.20, 21; Ps 2.1-7, 10-12; Ps 33.8; Jonah 3.1-10; Mt 14.3-5; Mt 24.14 [compare with Mt 28.19-20]; Acts 17.24-31; 2 Tim 3.15-17). The fact that rulers rebel against this standard does not make it any less a standard.

10. Why was Daniel still troubled after an explanation of the visions was provided to him? (28)

10.1. He states that the end of the matter had come, implying that nothing more was revealed to him. It is possible that this raised in him contradictory feelings:

10.1.1. He wanted to know more. We, with the advantage of history behind us, have some difficulty understanding this prophecy. It would have been even more difficult for Daniel without the advantage of hindsight. He may have wished to have had a clearer, more explicit, explanation. However, God had determined that the explanation would be kept at a general level. In subsequent visions some details are more explicit (compare, Dan 8.20-22).

10.1.2. He had been told too much. Having the future revealed to him was a frightening and wearying experience (compare, Dan 8.17-18; Dan 10.9, 10, 16, 18). We might think otherwise, but have not been through a similar experience. Both the vision of a terrifying beast and the fact that the saints of the Most High were to be persecuted

- would have added to his troubles. Both the form and content of the revelation distressed him.
- 10.2. What might Daniel mean, when he says, “but I kept the matter in my heart”?
 - 10.2.1. What he had seen was overwhelming in its scope and consequences, but he did not immediately share the contents and interpretation of the vision with anyone.
 - 10.2.2. His intention was not to keep the revelation a secret from the Jews, but rather to memorize it so that he could recall it. He knew that he had been called by God as a prophet to reveal God’s truth to kings and to the Jewish people in captivity.
 - 10.2.3. As he meditated on the vision, he formed his thoughts and faithfully reported what had been revealed to him in the book of his memoirs.
 - 10.2.4. Daniel is vindicated as a true prophet and careful reporter. He took care to faithfully remember and then to report the vision so that the Church would be forever established and edified.
 11. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (15-28)
 - 11.1. *Alarm* – Knowing the future can be alarming.
 - 11.1.1. God does *not* reveal the future to us in specific terms.
 - 11.1.1.1. We would be confused and only worry and fret—we would have the wrong kind of alarm. Or we would become proud and conceited about knowing something about what we cannot fully comprehend.
 - 11.1.1.2. If Daniel, who was a remarkable prophet and exemplary godly man, was so weakened by the revelation, how could we face the future if God revealed it explicitly to us?
 - 11.1.1.2.1. People think that they would like to have a ‘crystal ball’ to know the future. They deceive themselves thinking only of possibilities such as cashing in on a lottery by knowing which numbers would be drawn.
 - 11.1.1.2.2. However, if they really knew what was going to happen to them they would likely go insane with trying to avoid the inevitable. For example, if it was revealed to a 20 year old that he was going to die on a particular day in five years, in an automobile accident, he would probably spend every waking moment trying to figure out how to undo God’s plan.
 - 11.1.2. However, God *does* reveal enough about the future so that we know what we need to know and should be alarmed in the right way.
 - 11.1.2.1. What he reveals includes necessary truth such as, there is a judgement day coming and if we have not prepared for that we will face an everlasting existence in Hell.
 - 11.1.2.2. He provides only enough information about the future to warn us and then he grants us grace to meet the future when we need it.
 - 11.2. *Adequacy* – We might ask why God stopped here (i.e., at a particular depth and covering a particular period) with the revelation given to Daniel.
 - 11.2.1. God revealed enough to demonstrate his sovereignty over the nations and the unfolding of future events.
 - 11.2.2. However, God’s purpose was not the inflame human curiosity and passions. God reveals to us only what we need to know about the future. Not what we might wish to know.
 - 11.2.3. God’s word, as recorded in Scripture, reveals all that we need to know, but only what we need to know. There is nothing lacking in his Word, nor is there anything superfluous.
 - 11.2.3.1. We must never accuse God of not providing enough information—for example, saying “God if you had only told us *x*, we would have believed.”

- 11.2.3.2. Also, we must never say that parts of his word are irrelevant for us. *All* Scripture is profitable for our instruction (2 Tim 3.16-17)—including the genealogies and the details about sacrifices in Leviticus, and the prophecies of this book.
- 11.3. *Accuracy* – We have seen (and will see as we continue to study this book) that God’s revelation through prophecy is entirely accurate and reliable.
 - 11.3.1. When God speaks about the future with such accuracy as to identify kings (e.g., Cyrus) by name (Is 44.28; Is 45:1) ~160 years beforehand, and to tell us that the 11th king in the Roman Empire, about 600 years later, would persecute the saints, we should realize that he knows all things
 - 11.3.2. This should encourage us to trust his word when he speaks about the past. For example, when he says that he created the world in six days and gives us a series of genealogies to determine that this creation took place about 6,000 years ago, we should not doubt his word because some deluded fools who call themselves scientists claim that the world is billions of years old.
 - 11.3.3. We also can trust him when he says that Jesus is coming again, in spite of what the scoffers might say (2 Pt 3.3), and that he will never forsake us, that all things will work out for the good of his people, and that he will vindicate his people at the Day of Judgement.
 - 11.3.4. God’s purpose in revelation is to teach us to believe and to trust him. Turn to God’s word, it can be trusted in every detail.

Determined Tyrant (Dan 8.1-27)

Susa (Dan 8:1-2)

- 1. When did Daniel receive his second vision?
 - 1.1. Third year of Belshazzar’s reign
 - 1.1.1. When we studied chapter 7, we noted that Daniel’s first vision took place in 552 or 553 BC. This was the year that Belshazzar was named as a coregent with his father, Nabonidus (556–539 BC).
 - 1.1.2. Therefore, this would be around 550 or 551 BC.
 - 1.1.3. The vision in this chapter was given to Daniel before the events in chapter 5 (539 BC).
 - 1.1.4. It was about 551 BC when Cyrus established the joint state of Medes and Persians—which would become the destroyer of Babylon.
 - 1.1.4.1. Nabonidus, Belshazzar’s father, became concerned over the union of the Medes and Persians under Cyrus and made an alliance with Lydia and Egypt in an attempt to protect himself from the perceived threat.
- 2. Why did God give Daniel a second vision during Belshazzar’s reign?
 - 2.1. Daniel may have been surprised that he was given a second vision; this may be implied by his reference to himself, “appeared to me, Daniel,”
 - 2.2. This vision was given before the end of Belshazzar’s life, which ended in 539 BC.
 - 2.3. It may have been given to confirm what he had been shown previously, so that he would not be surprised by what was to happen in about 10 years.
- 3. Where did the vision take place?
 - 3.1. In Susa, the “citadel city” (i.e., the city that was a fortress)
 - 3.1.1. Susa was situated (in modern Iran), about where the modern Iraq-Iran border is, in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains, 250kms east of the Tigris River, ~250kms north of the Persian Gulf, ~350kms SE of Babylon, and ~375kms SE of modern Baghdad.
 - 3.1.2. Susa appears in early Sumerian records, for example in the legend or *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* it is referenced as being subject to Inanna, patron deity of Uruk.
 - 3.1.3. Susa was the ancient capital of the Elamite Empire (Ezra 4.9) and later it became one

of the royal cities of the kings of Persia; and according to some was the capital of the Persian Empire. During this period, a highway ran from Susa to Sardis on the Aegean Sea.

- 3.1.4. The king of Elam attacked Babylon in the 12th century BC and brought the spoils to Susa. Among them was the pillar with the Code of Hammurabi, which was discovered early in the 20th century in Susa.
- 3.1.5. Seventeen years after Daniel's last vision (Dan 10.1), the Persian king Darius began construction of a magnificent new palace in Susa.
- 3.1.6. The events recorded in Esther (Est 1.2) took place in Susa and Nehemiah was King Artaxerxes' cupbearer (Neh 1.1).
- 3.1.7. Susa was inhabited into the Middle Ages. The citadel area now consists of a large deserted mound (visible in Google Maps satellite pictures) testifying to the size and magnificence of Susa, with surrounding ruins. Shush, an Iranian town, is located adjacent to the mound and ruins today.
- 3.1.8. The Ulai Canal (Eulaeus) was about 100m wide and, according to Pliny,⁴²² it flowed around Susa and connected the rivers Choaspes (Karkheh, today) and Coprates (Dez, today) which flowed to the west and east of the citadel. The canal is dry today.
- 3.1.9. Daniel's tomb is in Susa.⁴²³

4. What was Daniel doing in Susa?

- 4.1. It seems that Daniel must have visited the city, otherwise he could not have recognized it in the vision.
 - 4.1.1. Even if he was not physically present at the time of the vision, it was clear to him that he was in Susa during the vision.
 - 4.1.2. It is possible that Daniel was in Susa on Babylonian business (Dan 8.27) at the time of his vision, for example acting as an ambassador.
- 4.2. Liberal/critical scholars have questioned the authenticity of this account, and thus the genuineness of the book of Daniel. They argue that Daniel could not have been written at the time of Cyrus, since Susa was not subject to Babylon at that time and therefore Daniel could not have known the city.
 - 4.2.1. However, as we noted earlier (Dan 6.1-9), Daniel may have served as an ambassador to Elam (or Persia) from Babylon, representing Nebuchadnezzar or one of the kings that followed him (specifically Belshazzar). If so, he would have been familiar with Susa and the palace.
- 4.3. Alternatively, Robert Wilson⁴²⁴ (1856-1930) pointed out, in: *Studies in the Book of Daniel – A Discussion of the Historical Questions*,⁴²⁵ that Susa could have been part of Babylonia during the period of the Babylonian monarchy. The *Cyrus Cylinder* appears to indicate that Cyrus returned Susa's gods to the city after he had captured Babylon. Up to that time, it may have been subject to Babylon.
- 4.4. What is the significance of the vision being delivered in Susa?
 - 4.4.1. God may have determined to reveal the second vision to Daniel in the context of the city of Susa, as a symbol that the seat of power in the Middle East was going to be moved from Babylon to Susa.

5. Who was the primary audience for the record of this vision?

⁴²² Pliny, *Natural History*, Book 6, chapter 27; www.archive.org/details/plinysnaturalhis00plinrich, pp. 144-145.

⁴²³ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. xvi.

⁴²⁴ Wilson was a linguist (he knew 45 languages, including all the languages that the Bible had been translated into up to 600 AD) and was devoted to demonstrating the reliability of the Hebrew Bible. He taught at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Princeton, and then Westminster, he also contributed articles to the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia;

⁴²⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Dick_Wilson
home.earthlink.net/~ironmen/wilson/title.htm

- 5.1. It cannot be discerned from an explicit statement.
- 5.2. However, there are two indirect means of determining the audience.
 - 5.2.1. The language of the text.
 - 5.2.1.1. This chapter (and the remainder of the book of Daniel) is written in Hebrew, rather than in Aramaic (which was used for Dan 2.4-7.28).
 - 5.2.1.2. The change in language appears to indicate a change in the primary audience from the world nations (such as those addressed by Nebuchadnezzar; Dan 4.1) to the exiled Jews.
 - 5.2.2. The content of the text.
 - 5.2.2.1. While this vision does deal with two (the 2nd and 3rd) of the world empires, more detail is provided which deals specifically with the interaction of those empires with the Jews (9, 13).
 - 5.2.2.2. The focus is on the immediate impact on Judea of the world empires.
- 5.3. God provides the Jews with details of what to expect before the coming of the Messiah.
 - 5.3.1. His intention appears to be to prepare them for the suffering they would experience under the two oppressive empires, and in particular under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
 - 5.3.2. This is similar to the way in which Jesus provided warnings about the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, in Matthew 24.15-28.
- 6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (1-2, 19)
 - 6.1. *Honour* – God honoured Daniel with a second vision of the future.
 - 6.1.1. Daniel was a faithful servant of God and God acknowledged this faithfulness by giving Daniel a privilege that only a few dozen men have had in history.
 - 6.1.2. What is that privilege? Being the direct channel of God's message to mankind.
 - 6.1.3. God honours all his faithful servants—not necessarily with supernatural visions, but with knowledge. The more faithful we are to God the more we will grow in our understanding and the more sense his revelation will make to us.
 - 6.2. *Help* – God's revelation is designed to help his people.
 - 6.2.1. God does not leave us in darkness about what he requires of us and of the essentials with regard to the future.
 - 6.2.2. In a similar way he provides us with sufficient detail, about what we *need* to know, of what will happen in the future—specifically about his second coming and the final judgement.
 - 6.2.3. Scripture teaches us what we need to know about how to be saved and how to live in obedience and hope (2 Tim 3.16-17).
 - 6.3. *Hope* – There was hope in the midst of apparently impossible circumstances.
 - 6.3.1. Through Daniel, God provided the Jews with significant detail about what would happen over the next 600 years. He may have provided this information to assure the Jews that they had a future in spite of their present captivity and the future threat from the Medes and Persians.
 - 6.3.2. God, similarly, reminds us that the Church has a future (Mt 13.31-32; Mt 16.18) in spite of the apparently hopeless circumstances we see around us.

Subjugation (Dan 8.3-12, 20-25)

- 1. What was the first animal that Daniel saw in the vision? (3-4, 20)
 - 1.1. A ram with two horns
 - 1.2. What does the angel tell him that the ram represented?
 - 1.2.1. The kings (or kingdom) of Media and Persia.
 - 1.3. What do the two horns represent?
 - 1.3.1. The two horns, which did not arise simultaneously, appear to represent the two parts of an amalgamated kingdom.
 - 1.3.2. One horn was longer than the other. Media was the older of the two parts of the

- kingdom, but Persia became the more prominent (“the higher one came up last”)—with Persia being the prominent name for the amalgamated kingdom.
- 1.3.3. Persia began with less strength yet subsequently become more powerful than the Media portion. When Cyrus (Darius the Mede) came to power, Media was a major force, while Persia was a smaller country. Cyrus gained control of both territories (c 550 BC) and then made Persia the primary state in the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - 1.4. Where was the ram standing?
 - 1.4.1. It was standing on the bank of the canal, at Susa. This seems to imply that where it stood was its place of residence—Susa was where the Medo-Persian kings established their primary headquarters.
 - 1.5. In which directions did the ram charge?
 - 1.5.1. West, north, and south—westward (into Babylon, Syria, Asia Minor, and parts of Greece), northward (into the territories of the Lydians, Armenians, and Scythians), and southward (into the territories of Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia).
 - 1.5.2. It has been suggested that the three directions correspond to the three ribs from the preceding chapter (Dan 7.5).
 - 1.5.3. Why is the eastward direction not mentioned?
 - 6.3.2.1. The Persians did try (until the time of Darius) to go into the eastern countries (i.e., parts of eastern Pakistan and India today) but were largely unsuccessful in making their conquests permanent.
 - 1.6. How successful was the Medo-Persian Empire in its conquests?
 - 1.6.1. It is ironic that the symbol for the empire was a ram, an animal considered to be subject to attacks from dangerous beasts (lions, bears, etc.), yet it is portrayed here as the aggressor.
 - 1.6.2. Persia extended its empire with a large army, that at one point numbered some 2 million soldiers.
 - 1.6.3. Its conquests were largely successful as the empire went where it wanted (in three directions). As a result the empire became great.
 - 1.6.4. In summary, no country or nation (in the three directions) was able to stand against the onslaught of the Medo-Persian armies. It reached the edges of the ‘civilized’ world in its conquests.
 2. What was the second animal that Daniel saw in the vision? (5-7, 21)
 - 2.1. A male goat with a single horn
 - 2.2. What kingdom did this goat represent?
 - 2.2.1. Greece. In the Hebrew it is Javen (Gen 10.2, 4; Is 66.19; Ezk 27.13), sometimes given as Ionian, as in the Septuagint (LXX) in Gen 10.2. The LXX translates 8.21 as Ἑλλήνων—i.e., explicitly as Greece. The LXX was translated after the time of Alexander’s conquest of the Middle East, and the Greek language became the common commercial language of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. So, it is not surprising that the Greek version of the OT refers to the more current name for Greece in Daniel.
 - 2.2.2. Greece is, of course, west of the western territory (Asia Minor—Turkey today) of the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - 2.3. What does the large prominent horn represent?
 - 2.3.1. Alexander the Great
 - 2.3.1.1. Alexander III of Macedon (b. July 356 BC – d. June 323 BC).
 - 2.3.1.2. His tutor was Aristotle, who used the temple of the Nymphs at Mieza as their classroom. In exchange for agreeing to teach Alexander, Philip rebuilt Aristotle’s hometown of Stageira, which Philip had razed, and he freed the ex-citizens who had been made slaves and pardoned any citizens in exile.
 - 2.3.1.3. Though his father, Philip II of Macedonia, had united all the Greek city-states

except Sparta, Alexander is considered to be the first Greek king. This is recorded, for example in 1 Maccabees 1: “And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chettiim, had smitten Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece.”

2.3.1.4. Upon Philip's death, Alexander, at the age of 20 (336 BC), inherited a strong kingdom and an experienced army and began a military conquest that is unrivalled in history.

2.3.1.5. He died (of malaria and complications from consuming too much alcohol) at the age of 32 in Babylon (in 323 BC), where he had been planning a military campaign to Arabia.

2.3.1.6. After Alexander's death, there was a series of civil wars that tore his empire apart and the kingdom was divided among his four surviving generals.

2.4. What, in Daniel's vision, stood out about this kingdom?

2.4.1. The speed of Alexander's conquest.

2.4.1.1. The speed was so great that his feet, figuratively, did not touch the ground.

2.4.1.2. It took less than five years for Alexander to conquer the entire Middle East.

2.4.1.3. This description somewhat parallels the description of the third beast in 7.6, who was likened to a leopard with wings. Both animals moved quickly. In addition, the leopard had four heads whereas the goat, later, had four horns (8).

2.4.2. The ferocity of Alexander's conquests.

2.4.2.1. In 334 BC, he invaded Persian-ruled Asia Minor and began a series of military conquests. The rage (6) of the Greeks was the result of the Persians having defeated the Greeks at the Battle of Marathon (Darius I, 490 BC) and at the Battle of Salamis (Xerxes, 481 BC).

2.4.2.2. Alexander's army of about ~30,000 foot soldiers and 5,000-7,000 mounted soldiers defeated the much larger army of Darius III Codomannus, then emperor of Persia. In the final battle at Gaugamela (331 BC; east of Mosul in modern-day northern Iraq) Alexander's men killed ~100,000 Persians.

2.4.2.3. The Greek Empire stretched from the Adriatic Sea to the Indus River and from



the mountains to the desert.

Source: www.thejournal.org/studylibrary/maps/empire-of-alexander-the-great-map.html

- 2.4.2.4. When we studied chapter 7 we noticed that as Alexander moved through the Middle East he founded more than 25 cities, which bore his name.
- 2.4.3. Alexander was undefeated in battle and is considered to be one of the most successful military commanders of all time.
 - 2.4.3.1. Alexander's military strategy became the measure against which generals, even to this day, compare themselves. Military academies throughout the world still teach his tactics.
 - 2.4.3.2. He desired to reach the "ends of the world and the Great Outer Sea". He invaded India in 326 BC, but was forced to turn back by the near-mutiny of his troops. Even so, he created a vast empire (3.9 million square kilometers, 1.5 million square miles) in a shorter period than anyone before, or after, him.
 - 2.4.3.3. 1 Maccabees 1. 2-4: "[He] made many wars, and won many strongholds, and slew the kings of the earth, And went through to the ends of the earth, and took spoils of many nations, insomuch that the earth was quiet before him; whereupon he was exalted and his heart was lifted up. And he gathered a mighty strong host and ruled over countries, and nations, and kings, who became tributaries unto him."
 - 2.4.3.4. Alexander believed that Achilles and the god Hercules were his ancestors. For political reasons, and out of pride, he required the provinces to worship him as a god.
- 2.4.4. Josephus, in the *Antiquities* makes reference to a visit by Alexander the Great to Jerusalem:
 - 2.4.4.1. "So when Alexander besieged Tyre, he sent an epistle to the Jewish high-priest, to send him some auxiliaries, and to supply his army with provisions; and that what presents he formerly sent to Darius, he would now send to him, and choose the friendship of the Macedonians, and that he should never repent of so doing. But the high-priest answered the messengers, that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him; and he said that he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living. Upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry; and though he determined not to leave Tyre, which was just ready to be taken, yet as soon as he had taken it, he threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high-priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oaths. ... Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddus the high-priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifice to God, whom he besought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced, and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of

the king. And when Jaddus understood that Alexander was not far from the city, he went out in procession, with the priests and the multitude of the citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. ... for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high-priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high-priest. The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about. ... and [when Alexander] had given the high-priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city. And when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high-priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high-priest and the priests. And when the Book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present. But the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high-priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired. And when they asked him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired. ...⁴²⁶

2.4.4.2. The book of Daniel was probably completed before 530 BC, not long after the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 BC. The account in Josephus is called a fabrication by many 'scholars' on the assumption that long-range predictive prophecy is impossible. They claim that book of Daniel was composed no earlier than the Maccabean period (2nd century BC), and that Josephus must have enhanced the account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. On the contrary, if we accept Daniel and Josephus at face value, we have an example of the Bible accurately predicting events 200 years before they occurred.

2.4.5. Alexander's lasting legacy was not his conquests and the creation of a permanent empire, but the cultural diffusion his conquests engendered—leading to the dissemination of Greek culture and the Greek language throughout the Middle East, in preparation for the coming on the Messiah and the writing of the NT in Greek.

3. What happened at the height of Alexander's power? (8, 22)

3.1. He was cut off.

3.1.1. Alexander died (of malaria and complications from consuming too much alcohol) at the age of 32 in Babylon (in 323 BC), where he had been planning a military campaign to Arabia.

3.1.2. This is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy given to Daniel (around 551 or 550 BC) about 225 years before it occurred.

3.2. His kingdom was broken into four parts, as represented by the four conspicuous (or prominent) horns in the vision.

3.2.1. Alexander had at least two sons (Heracles, b. 327 to his mistress Barsine, daughter of the Satrap Artabazus of Phrygia; and Alexander IV, b. 323 BC to his wife Roxana, a princess of Bactria). Both sons were too young, at the time of his death, to have contended directly for the throne.

3.2.2. During Alexander IV's nominal reign (323-309 BC), four regents acted in his name. The final regent, Cassander, one of Alexander's generals, had both of Alexander's sons


⁴²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* (translated by William Whiston), book 11, chapter 8; www.ccel.org/i/josephus/works/ant-11.htm
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- murdered in 309 BC.
- 3.2.3. During the period of the regency, there were struggles among Alexander's principal generals, who are commonly designated as the Diadochi ("successors") and his family. For example, his uncle, Philip III of Macedon, was considered to be mentally deficient and was murdered by one of the regents (Polyperchon) at the instigation of Alexander's grandmother
 - 3.2.4. Almost all interpreters identify the horns and four winds as four (of his five) senior generals:
 - 3.2.4.1. Cassander took Macedonia and Greece.
 - 3.2.4.2. Lysimachus took Thrace and much of Asia Minor (western Bithynia, Phrygia, Mycia, and Lydia).
 - 3.2.4.3. Seleucus took Syria and Mesopotamia.
 - 3.2.4.4. Ptolemy took Egypt.
 - 3.2.4.5. For a while a fifth, Antigonus, held territory in Asia Minor, but in 301 BC he was overthrown and his territory was divided among the other four.
 - 3.2.5. What Alexander strove for, the world's largest empire in extent, he did not have time to enjoy and there ended up being no family to whom he could leave the proceeds of his vain accomplishments.
 - 3.3. This portion of the vision (8-19, 22-26), gives the course of history from 323 BC to 165 BC
 - 3.3.1. It is such an accurate portrayal of the history, so far in advance, that many have been led to question Daniel's authorship of the book.
 - 3.3.2. They question whether such detail (e.g., about Alexander's death and the division of his kingdom) could be so accurately foretold.
 - 3.3.3. To deny God the ability to reveal what he had planned is to question his veracity and power.
 4. What happened in the area to the south/southeast portion of the Greek Empire? (9-12, 23-25)
 - 4.1. A horn grew out of one of the four horns
 - 4.1.1. A particular king arose, later in the history of the divided Empire.
 - 4.2. Who was this king?
 - 4.2.1. Antiochus Epiphanes ('manifest' 'visible'; implying deity) IV or the Illustrious (his self-designation).
 - 4.2.2. He lived from c. 215 BC-163 BC.
 - 4.2.3. He was the eighth ruler of the Seleucid portion of the Greek Empire (175–163 BC).

5. How did Antiochus Epiphanes fulfill the vision of Daniel's prophecy?

Prophecy	Antiochus IV Epiphanes as Fulfillment
A little horn (9)	Antiochus had an insignificant beginning. His nephew, son of his older brother Seleucus IV, was the rightful heir to the throne.
At the latter end of their kingdom (part of their reign) (23)	The Greek Empire was winding down as Antiochus Epiphanes was ruling, and Rome was in the ascendancy. For example, Antiochus became a political hostage of the Roman Republic following the Peace of Apamea in 188 BC, but was exchanged for his nephew Demetrius I Soter. Julius Caesar, the first emperor of Rome, was born 63 years after the death of Antiochus.
A king of bold face (stern-faced, severe) (23)	Antiochus was an excessively wicked man, with nothing of a prince in his character. Some called him Antiochus Epimanes (the 'furious' or 'mad' one) because of his often eccentric behaviour, capricious actions, and apparent insanity.
One who understands riddles (master of intrigue), shall arise (23) By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand (25)	Antiochus gained the throne through, fratricide (he murdered his brother, the rightful heir to the throne), bribery and flattery.
His power shall be great—but not by his own power (24)	With the help of King Eumenes II of Pergamum, Antiochus seized the throne, proclaiming himself coregent for a son of Seleucus, who was an infant at the time, and whom he later murdered. It is possible that Satan is in view as the source of Antiochus' power.

Daniel – The Man who Feared God

Prophecy	Antiochus IV Epiphanes as Fulfillment
	Some (e.g., Leupold) have suggested that it is God's power that is in view. Of course, behind either Eumenes or Satan would be God's providential plan. However, it is probably not the direct intervention of God (e.g., as we saw in chapter 4) that is prophesied in this statement.
Grew exceedingly great toward the south and toward the east (9)	Antiochus made conquests in Egypt (the south) and Persia (the east). During his second attack on Egypt (168 BC), he was confronted by a Roman ambassador who drew a circle in the sand around him, telling him that he had to reply to the Roman Senate's request for a meeting before he stepped out of the circle or he would be considered at war with Rome. This is the origin of the metaphorical phrase, 'line in the sand'. Antiochus backed down rather than fighting with Rome.
Grew ... toward the glorious (beautiful, pleasant) land (9)	Antiochus controlled Palestine (Dan 11.16, 41; Ps 48.2; Jer 3.19), called 'beautiful', not for its scenery but for its spiritual significance—it was the land chosen by God. The Hebrew doesn't have 'land', it only has 'the decoration' or 'the ornament'; <i>הַתְּשֵׁבִי</i> (<i>hatstsebbi</i>).
Grew great, even reaching the host of heaven and threw them down to the ground trampling on them (10) He shall cause fearful destruction (astounding devastation) and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints (holy people) (24) Without warning (when they feel secure) he shall destroy many (25)	The host of heaven (the stars) are symbolical of the people of God, the saints, the OT Church. Antiochus persecuted the Jews (from 170 BC to December 164 BC (Hanukkah), when the Temple was rededicated). He died shortly after in 163 BC. Tens of thousands of Jews were murdered by his soldiers, including women, boys, girls, even infants [2 Maccabees 5.11–14]. He persecuted (trampled) on the Jews in many ways [1 Maccabees 1.20–32, 41–64]. The reference to 'mighty men' may speak of the leaders among the Jews whom he murdered, his own relatives whom he murdered, or the military commanders whom he defeated.
Set himself up as [rather than <i>against</i>] the Prince [prince] of the host (11) In his own mind he shall become great (consider himself superior) (25)	One interpretation is that the reference to the prince refers to Onias, the high priest, whom Antiochus deprived of his office. Antiochus was probably guilty of his murder. Antiochus set himself up as Israel's king and compelled the Jews to worship him. He assumed divine epithets such as Epiphanes ('manifest'), which no other Hellenistic king had done. His coins were inscribed <i>Theou Epiphanion</i> ('God manifest'). 
Stopped the regular burnt offering (the daily sacrifice) (11)	Antiochus stopped the Temple worship, and required that the Jews refrain from their ceremonial practices related to diet, circumcision, Sabbaths, and feasts [1 Maccabees 1.44–45].
Tore down (brought low) the sanctuary (11)	Antiochus desecrated the Temple [2 Maccabees 6.2–5], plundering it of its treasures. On December 16, 167 BC, he had a pig sacrificed on the sacred altar. He placed the Greek gods above the LORD and made the Temple into a temple for Zeus, setting up Zeus' image in it.
The host (the saints) will be given over ... because of transgression (rebellion) (12) When the transgressors (rebels) have reached their limit (become completely wicked) (23)	Divine judgement, through Antiochus, came on apostate Jews because of their sins. Many were not faithful to God and adopted the idols of the Greeks [1 Maccabees 1.11–15, 43].
and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper (prospered in everything) (12)	Truth, in the true religion and true worship (Jn 4.23), was so despised by Antiochus that it was 'thrown to the ground'.
He shall even rise up (take his stand) against the Prince of princes (25)	This is likely a reference to Christ, rather than to the high priest. In denigrating God's worship and destroying God's people, Antiochus was, ultimately, challenging the Lord Jesus.
He shall be broken—but by no human hand (power) (25)	He died of an insane rage in Persia in 163 BC, at the age of 52, after being defeated in a siege of the city of Elymais and being informed that his army had been routed by the Jews in Palestine [1 Maccabees 6.1–16].

- 5.1. There is no (or, very little) doubt among commentators that the person in view in this prophecy is Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - 5.1.1. It was the Jewish interpretation; for example, that of Josephus.⁴²⁷
 - 5.1.2. The details contained in the prophecy are too precise to point to any other specific individual.
 - 5.1.3. This has led some ‘scholars’ to argue that Daniel was written during the second century at the time of, or shortly after, Antiochus Epiphanes⁴²⁸.
 - 5.1.4. We, of course, do not question the fact that God in his predestining providence and omniscient foretelling can declare the future with absolute certainty. Some additional reasons, for why we believe that Daniel wrote the book in the 6th c BC⁴²⁹:
 - 5.1.4.1. If it had been written in the second century it would not have been written in Hebrew and (early) Aramaic, but in Greek.
 - 5.1.4.2. The 19 Persian loanwords used in Daniel are from the Old Persian and were not used later than 300 BC.
 - 5.1.4.3. The details about Babylon (e.g., the plastered walls in the palace in chapter 5) and Susa are from an eyewitness, not a second century Jew.
 - 5.1.4.4. Belshazzar’s reign was essentially unknown during the second century BC, and only rediscovered in the 19th century (e.g., with the discovery, in 1881, of the Nabonidus Cylinders).
 - 5.1.4.5. No books from the second century BC are accepted by the Jews as being part of the canon of Scripture.
- 5.2. While most commentators believe that this section speaks of Antiochus Epiphanes, some with dispensationalist (or premillennial) views want to apply a double fulfillment to it, with the passage speaking of a future eschatological antichrist.
 - 5.2.1. Undoubtedly, there are parallels between Antiochus Epiphanes and the antichrist mentioned in the NT, including the use of intrigue and deceit, the application of state powers to persecute believers, the substitution of pagan rituals for true worship, blasphemy against God, and usurping God’s place through self-deification.
 - 5.2.2. However, the parallels exist because Antiochus Epiphanes is typical of all the anti-Christian monsters who have paraded through history—such as: Herod, Agrippa I, Nero, Titus, Domitian, Shapur II,⁴³⁰ Timur (Tamerlane),⁴³¹ Pope Martin V,⁴³² Tippu,⁴³³ Charles II and Archbishop Sharp, Mao Tse-Tung, Stalin, Hitler, and Kim Jong-Il.
6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (3-12, 20-25)
 - 6.1. *Provocation* – When the people of God fall into apostasy, they can expect to be chastised (Prov 3.11-12; Heb 12.6-11).
 - 6.1.1. Throughout Biblical history when the hearts of God’s covenant people grew cold, he chastised them—examples include: the Flood, serpents in the wilderness, 40 years of desert wandering, Babylonian Captivity, and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - 6.1.2. God would not have permitted the ascendancy of Antiochus Epiphanes if his people had not provoked him to do so.
 - 6.1.3. God was, again, teaching his people a lesson—not to depend on men, to compromise with pagan systems, or to participate in false worship.
 - 6.1.4. All the successes of the church’s enemies are but a rod of chastisement in God’s hand.
 - 6.1.5. We should expect, then, persecution in the Church in the West because of apostasy.

⁴²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 10; chapter 11, paragraph 7; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-10.htm

⁴²⁸ www.tutorgig.com/ed/Book_of_Daniel#Dating_and_content; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel

⁴²⁹ David Conklin, *Evidences Relating to the Date of the Book of Daniel*, 2004; www.tektonics.org/guest/danielblast.html

⁴³⁰ Zoroastrian; ordered the massacre of all Christians in Persia in 341 AD.

⁴³¹ Muslim warlord of Turco-Mongol descent who conquered Persia, Mesopotamia and Syria in the 14th c; he had 70,000 Assyrian Christians beheaded in Tikrit and 90,000 in Baghdad.

⁴³² Had John Huss burned at the stake on July 6, 1415, and in 1420 proclaimed a crusade "for the destruction of the Wycliffites, Hussites and all other heretics in Bohemia".

⁴³³ In India in the 1780s issued orders to destroy more than 50,000 Christians.

- 6.1.5.1. Most Christians in Canada/US show little evidence of a strong faith and consistent obedience. The Church is full an easy-believism—if you say *the* prayer you can be saved from Hell, and then can go on living in a worldly way.
- 6.1.5.2. Radical faith, holiness, and discipleship are concepts that are entirely foreign to most of us. We are consumed by material comfort, pleasure, and security.
- 6.1.5.3. Salvation is viewed as only a product (a ticket to heaven) not a process.
- 6.1.5.4. We are primed for God’s hand of chastisement.
- 6.2. *Persecution* – Persecution is the lot of the saints, when they are living godly lives and challenging the culture (Jn 15.20; 2 Tim 3.12; 1 Pt 4.12) or are living where the church is being purged by God (Prov 3.11; Heb 12.6; 1 Pt 4.17).
 - 6.2.1. Believers are warned by the general application of this prophecy that at times they may be called upon to endure suffering, even martyrdom, for the Lord.
 - 6.2.2. We hear of examples of great persecution: in the book of Acts, by Rome Emperors, by the Inquisition, during the Killing Times, under Hitler/Mao, and today under Islam.
 - 6.2.2.1. Our brothers and sisters today suffer in various parts of the world. They have their property confiscated, they are beaten, their church buildings are fire bombed
 - 6.2.2.2. Christians are suffering severe persecution, mostly by the hand of Muslims, in Egypt, Iraq, Indonesia, and Pakistan; but also in India and China. Occasionally (more and more often) we hear of someone in Canada/US who is blacklisted, fined, loses his job because he wrote against homosexual practices, took a stand against abortion, or taught that there are issues with Evolution.
- 6.3. *Preparation* – The Biblical prophecies of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, and other tyrants, is intended to prepare us to meet the coming challenge
 - 6.3.1. What is the evidence professing or an apostatizing Church? Persecution!
 - 6.3.1.1. When the Church is living in a state of grace, a light shines in spiritual darkness. The powers of darkness—Satan, demons, the beast of human governments, the prophets of false religions, and debauched humankind who do not want to hear that their sordid life is an abomination—will fight to the death to stop a Christian ascendancy.
 - 6.3.1.2. When the Church is not living in a state of grace, God prunes out the dead branches. In the process, some of his faithful people suffer along with the pretenders in the Church.
 - 6.3.1.3. Persecution is the lot of Christians in this life. If Islam gets its way, we can expect more. If secular humanism gets its way, we can expect more.
 - 6.3.2. Do you hope that you will not see serious persecution in your life?
 - 6.3.2.1. Are you like Hezekiah who thought that the word of judgement from Isaiah was okay, because peace and security would remain in his days (2 Ki 20.19)? This attitude came from a member of God’s covenant family, from a father in Israel!
 - 6.3.2.2. In contrast, we should have the attitude of Thomas Paine, an avowedly anti-theistic man, who said: “If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, so that my children can have peace”.
 - 6.3.2.3. Oh, that Christians were prepared to face persecution for the cause of Christ!
 - 6.3.2.4. Oh, that Christians took their Christianity seriously enough that the world would rise up in antagonistic hatred!
- 6.4. *Patience* – We are to bear patiently the hand of God’s chastisement. The persecutions will end shortly—by the removal of the wicked persecutors, by our removal to Glory, or by the return of Christ to punish all persecutors of his Church.
 - 6.4.1. God limits the time of severe persecution (Mt 24.22; Heb 10.36-39).
 - 6.4.2. In general, tyrants have a limited life. Consider Alexander who died at the age of 32 and Antiochus Epiphanes who died at the age of 52 and persecuted the Jews for (only)

six years. The Killing Times in Scotland lasted eighteen years (1660-1688). Similarly, Hitler's brutal program of slaughter lasted for only a decade and died at age 56.

- 6.4.3. Thus, God will cause Islam to implode in its own self-destruction when he has used it to punish the apostatizing West. At the same time, God will bring down the paganistic and hedonistic West through economic collapse and riots.
- 6.5. *Perdition* – Those who persecute God's people, even while they are his instruments of chastisement, can expect nothing except swift retribution.
 - 6.5.1. Kingdoms come and go. The pride of man (Alexander and Antiochus Epiphanes both wanted to be worshiped as gods) cannot persist. God brings down all his enemies, even though he uses them as his rod of chastisement for his own people.
 - 6.5.2. We can trust God that he will recompense his people. Those who resist him, like Pharaoh will end up drowned in the waves of the darkest dregs of dereliction
- 6.6. *Promise* – In spite of persecution, the Church will prevail.
 - 6.6.1. Daniel shows that God is sovereign and brings ultimate victory for his people.
 - 6.6.2. The pattern in Daniel is to move from the oppression of God's people to their final victory.
 - 6.6.3. This is the path of God's redemptive plan. His Church will grow and prevail. The gates of Hell cannot overwhelm the Church of Christ! (Mt 16.18)

Span (Dan 8.13-19, 26)

- 1. What did one of the participants in the vision ask of another? (13)
 - 1.1. When particular events would be fulfilled.
 - 1.1.1. The question was referring to events in the space-time realm that were portrayed in the vision, and not asked from the context of an everlasting existence.
 - 1.1.2. The form of the question, with the listing of the events, indicates that the question relates to the elapsed time for those particular events.
 - 1.2. What were the particular events that one speaker asked the other about?
 - 1.2.1. It was not about the entire period covered in the vision, but rather a select set of events.
 - 1.2.1.1. For example, the question does not relate to the period covered in the entire vision—from the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great to the ascendancy of Rome.
 - 1.2.1.2. Nor is this a reference to some future (from us) time, when the antichrist will oppress the NT Church or interrupt sacrifices in a supposed reconstructed Temple.
 - 1.2.2. The events were, specifically:
 - 1.2.2.1. The discontinuance of the daily burnt sacrifice offering.
 - 1.2.2.2. The despoiling of the Temple with a pig sacrifice and by setting up the abominable statue of Zeus.
 - 1.2.2.3. The desecration of the Temple sanctuary with the cruel boots of the pagans.
 - 1.2.2.4. The destruction of God's people ('host') by the oppressive Seleucid armies.
 - 1.2.3. This list of events deals specifically with a period during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - 1.3. Who are the speakers in the vision?
 - 1.3.1. Calvin suggests that the first angel who was speaking was Christ. He argues that the words used to describe the angel refer to one who "was incomprehensible, or at least far superior to ordinary ones."⁴³⁴ A problem with this interpretation is that the same Hebrew word is used to describe both of the speakers.
 - 1.3.2. Most interpreters view the two persons who spoke to one another to be two angels. In Daniel 4.13 an angel is referred to as a *holy one*; and in Jude 14, the angels are called *holy ones*. The two angels could have been Gabriel (16) and Michael (Dan 10.13, 21;

⁴³⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.iii.xvii.html
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- Dan 12.1) who could be the two chief angels (Jude 9).
- 1.3.3. One of the angels then turned to Daniel (14) to provide the answer to the question about the duration of the events enumerated.
2. How long was to be the period of the particular events identified in verse 13? (14)
- 2.1. The angel spoke directly to Daniel ('me') to explain the timeframe of these events.
- 2.2. 2,300 evenings and mornings.
- 2.2.1. Until "the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state".
- 2.2.2. Until the purification of the Temple sanctuary—a restoration to its rightful state, or vindication (literally 'justified').
- 2.3. How are we to understand the reference to the 2,300 days? There are at least three interpretations given of this time period:
- 2.3.1. As a symbolic reference to years:
- 2.3.1.1. The evenings and mornings represent years, which can be calculated from:
- 2.3.1.1.1. The date of the prophecy (551 or 550 BC)
- 2.3.1.1.2. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus (539)
- 2.3.1.1.3. The issuing of the decree to rebuild the Temple (538 BC; 2 Chron 36.22-23; Ezra 1.1-4; Ezra 5.13)
- 2.3.1.1.4. The decree of Darius I to continue building the Temple and to restore the articles (520 BC; Ezra 6.1-12)
- 2.3.1.1.5. The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus relating to financing the animal sacrifices at the Temple (457⁴³⁵ BC; Ezra 7.11-26).
- 2.3.1.2. William Miller, a Baptist lay preacher, used the 2,300 days (as years) from 457 BC to predict that in 1844 Christ would return and purify the Earth by fire. He was the founder of the Millerite movement.
- 2.3.1.3. The Seventh Day Adventist Church, founded by Ellen G White, views 1844 as a key year in their chronology, when White saw visions of the "of the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City".
- 2.3.1.4. Charles Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses used similar calculations, but changed the date of the advent a number of times, and then settled on 1914 as the date Christ returned in an invisible manner. Their calculations are no longer based on the 2,300 days.
- 2.3.1.5. This type of interpretation is fanciful and invested with the wild imagination of founders of cults and premillennial interpreters.
- 2.3.2. Some understand the 2,300 evenings and mornings to refer to 2,300 sacrifices and thus to 1,150 days. This was roughly the amount of time that the daily sacrifice was interrupted (3 years and 70 days on a 360-day calendar or 3 years and 55 days on a 365-day calendar).
- 2.3.2.1. Some have tried to place the exact dates from the first desecration of the Temple with the image of Zeus, on December 16, 167 BC [1 Maccabees 1.54] to the cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus on December 14, 164 BC (the Feast of Dedication or Hanukah; [1 Maccabees 4.52] or to when all the Jewish sacrifices were fully restored and religious independence gained for Judah in 163 BC.
- 2.3.2.2. It does not appear to be possible to equate this time period (1,150 days) exactly to dates associated with any of the events in the life of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- 2.3.2.3. It may be possible to extend the date range to be closer to 1,150 days, by including the period from when Antiochus Epiphanes first entered the city of Jerusalem.
- 2.3.2.4. At best, we appear to be able to only approximate the time period for the actual

⁴³⁵ W. H. Shea, "Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day—Years of Daniel 8:14," JATS 12 (2001), 89-96.

- desecration of the Temple using 1,150 days.
- 2.3.2.5. What is another problem with this interpretation? It does not include the time-frame for all the other specific events included in the list in verse 13 (e.g., the trampling of the host—the persecution of God’s people from 170-164 BC).
- 2.3.3. Others conclude that we are to interpret the 2,300 days (i.e., 6 years and 3-4 months, depending on the calendar used) as actual days (even if applied as a round number).
- 2.3.3.1. This fits roughly with the period from 170 BC to 164 BC in which Antiochus Epiphanes terrorized Jerusalem, including his acts of desecrating the Temple.
- 2.3.3.1.1. The text indicates that this period will end with the cleansing of the Temple sanctuary, and the reestablishment of sacrificial system, which occurred in 164 BC.
- 2.3.3.1.2. With the termination point being in December 164 BC, the beginning of the period must have been an event in 170 BC.
- 2.3.3.1.3. Was there an event, in 170 BC, that could serve as the trigger for the 2,300 days?
- 2.3.3.1.4. A possible event that could serve as the starting point was the murder⁴³⁶ of the former high priest (Onias III, reported to be a pious man who resisted Hellenizers) at the urging of Menelaus the high priest appointed by Antiochus Epiphanes for a bribe (2 Maccabees 4.7–10). From that point Antiochus Epiphanes caused continual trouble for the Jews for six, plus, years.
- 2.3.3.2. The 2,300 days is the most natural reading of the text.
- 2.3.3.2.1. It is consistent with the use of evening and morning to reckon a day, for example in Genesis 1.5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.
- 2.3.3.2.2. The Hebrew text has literally “evening morning”. There is no ‘and’. It is essentially a compound word, being a substitute for the word day.
- 2.3.3.2.3. The Greek Septuagint version of this account translates it as ‘days’, indicating that this is how the Jews of the second century BC (i.e., about the time of Antiochus Epiphanes) understood the meaning.
3. Why was Daniel perplexed and unable to understand the meaning of the vision? (15)
- 3.1. Even though he had been able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams (in chapters 2 and 4) he could not interpret this vision.
- 3.2. We might think that the reason was because this vision was too complex for Daniel. However, that would be putting the complexity and the interpretation in the wrong place—i.e., in the mind of Daniel.
- 3.3. The reason Daniel could not understand this vision is because any dream or vision from the Lord also requires that the Lord provide the interpretation.
- 3.4. Ultimately, Daniel did not interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s visions. God provided the interpretation to Daniel through direct revelation (Dan 2.19, 28).
4. Who was sent to provide an explanation of the vision to Daniel? (15-16)
- 4.1. The angel Gabriel was sent to provide an explanation of the vision.
- 4.2. One of the angels, or possibly God himself, instructed Gabriel to explain the meaning of the vision to Daniel.
- 4.2.1. The voice came from “between the banks of the Ulai”, literally “between the Ulai”.
- 4.2.2. The angel that gave the command seems to have been hovering in the air above the

⁴³⁶Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – 135 A.D.)*, revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1973), p 150;
books.google.ca/books?id=p75tWhrwGT8C&pg=PA150&lpg=PA150&dq=in+what+year+was+Onias+III+murdered&source=bl&ots=esWVK77GVg&sig=VdboTq3WrZDwzKVcF-rjo8kzkl&hl=en&ei=6oBITeuhlcXYgAfttJS2Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7&ved=0CDcQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q&f=false

- middle of the river (Dan 12.6, 7).
- 4.3. What do we know about Gabriel?
- 4.3.1. He is mentioned only in Daniel 8.16; Daniel 9.21; Luke 1.19, 26.
 - 4.3.2. He has (or had in these instances) an appearance like a man (Dan 9.21). Other angels, such as the cherubim (Ezk 1.5-11; Ezk 10.15) have different appearances.
 - 4.3.2.1. It is possible that the angel appeared in human form to be less intimidating as a messenger.
 - 4.3.2.2. Contrast that the appearance of cherubim which probably have a fearsome appearance in their role as protectors of God's holiness (Gen 3.24).
 - 4.3.3. He and Michael (Dan 10.13, 21; Dan 12.1; Jude 9; Rev 12.7) are the only two angels named in the Bible.
 - 4.3.4. Gabriel means 'man of God' or 'mighty one of God'.
 - 4.3.5. Possibly he is an archangel, along with Michael (Jude 9).
5. What was Daniel's reaction when he saw the angel? (17a, 18)
- 5.1. Daniel was frightened (terrified) and fell with his face to the ground. Why?
 - 5.1.1. The angel may have appeared in shining light; the glory may have overwhelmed him.
 - 5.1.2. The angel's voice may have sounded like thunder and been frightening.
 - 5.1.3. He may have felt that he was a sinful creature before a holy being.
 - 5.2. Daniel fell into a deep sleep because of seeing and hearing the angel.
 - 5.2.1. He may have been exhausted from seeing and thinking about the meaning of the vision. The shock of seeing the angel caused him to collapse into a 'deep sleep'.
 - 5.2.2. The Hebrew verb (רָדַם *rādam*) is used for Jonah's 'deep sleep' as he slept through a violent storm (Jonah 1.5), and the related noun was the sleep God brought upon Adam when he created Eve (Gen 2.21).
 - 5.2.3. It is not easy to translate this statement. The NIV, for example, has: "While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep"
 - 5.2.4. It may be, also, that the term 'deep sleep' (נִרְדַּמְתִּי) should be translated as, "I fell in a swoon". In other words, it may mean that he fainted.
 - 5.3. He then had to be awakened by the touch of the angel to hear the explanation of the vision
 - 5.3.1. Angels are sent as ministers of God to men.
 - 5.3.2. While some (such as the cherubim) may be assigned to intimidate and strike fear into the hearts of sinful men (Gen 3.24), the general presentation of angels in the Bible is that they are sent to comfort and encourage (Ps 91.11; Mt 4.11; Lk 2.9-14; Lk 4.10; Lk 16.22; Jn 20.12).
6. What did Gabriel tell Daniel about the vision? (17b, 19)
- 6.1. That the vision related to the 'time of the end'.
 - 6.1.1. 'Time of the end' is a literal translation of the Hebrew (in both 17 and 19).
 - 6.1.2. Most translations, and all the widely used ones, have the same phrase.
 - 6.1.3. An alternate (interpretive, but possible) translation is: "to an appointed time there is an end" or "an appointed time has an end".
 - 6.2. What is the 'end' to which the vision refers?
 - 6.2.1. Not the end of *all* time, but either:
 - 6.2.1.1. The end of the old era—the pre-Messianic age, the OT era; to be followed by the 'last days' when God will establish his eternal Messianic kingdom on earth.
 - 6.2.1.1.1. We live in the 'last days' (Heb 1.2; 2 Pt 3.3).
 - 6.2.1.2. The end of the events relating to the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - 6.2.2. Verse 19 provides a parallel to the 'time of the end' in the phrase 'end of the indignation' (time of wrath).
 - 6.2.2.1. This appears to narrow this part of the vision to the time period when either the indignation of Antiochus Epiphanes would be brought to an end, or when

God's anger against his people would be lifted.

6.2.2.2. The time in focus was ~385 years into Daniel's future.

6.2.3. Some, such as the premillennialists and dispensationalists, suggest that there is a double fulfillment (one historic and the other prophetic⁴³⁷) for this passage. They say that while the immediate reference is to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it could also be a reference to the end of all history when a NT antichrist is brought to his own end.

6.2.3.1. There is no doubt that we can infer a principle from this—i.e., that all the oppressors of God's people will be brought to their end.

6.2.3.2. However, this passage is not making a direct (or indirect) prophecy about the antichrist—particularly if one interprets the NT as teaching that the antichrist arises out of the Roman Empire (e.g., Nero) and not out of the Greek Empire.

6.2.3.3. It certainly is not speaking about some future (relative to us) antichrist, which might yet arise.

6.3. How did Gabriel address Daniel when speaking to him? (17)

6.3.1. As 'son of man'

6.3.2. Ezekiel is often (93 times) called the same (e.g., Ezk 2.1) in direct address by the LORD and possibly by an angel (e.g., Ezk 8.2).

6.3.3. Prior to this time (i.e., the time of Daniel and Ezekiel, who were contemporaries), the term had had limited use (a total of twelve times, in the ESV) in God's revelation.

6.3.3.1. It is used six times as 'a son of man' (Num 23.19; Job 16.21; Job 35.8; Ps 146.3; Jer 50.40; Jer 51.43) and five as 'the son of man' (Job 25.6; Ps 8.4; Ps 144.3; Is 5.12; Is 56.2); both referring to a generic member of the human race.

6.3.3.2. There is one instance (Ps 80.17) where it may refer to the nation of Israel, and possibly be a prophetic reference to the Messiah.

6.3.3.3. It is used twice in Daniel:

6.3.3.3.1. Once as 'a son of man' (Dan 7.13) to refer to Christ appearing like a man.

6.3.3.3.2. In this verse (17) as a direct reference to Daniel. This is the only place, outside of Ezekiel, where a man is addressed by the title 'son of man'.

6.3.3.4. Jesus takes the title, and applies it to himself as his most commonly used self-designation. When we studied 7.13, we considered how Jesus took this reference as the basis for his self-designation and his association with the one prophesied as coming to the Ancient of Days.

6.3.3.5. The title is used, outside of the Gospels, only four other times in the NT; in reference to Christ by title (Acts 7.56) or appearance (Rev 1.13; Rev 14.14); and once as a quotation from Psalm 8.4-6 (Heb 2.6).

6.3.4. The term, as used here (17), emphasizes Daniel's weakness and mortality.

6.3.4.1. Some suggest that the term may have been used by Gabriel to humble Daniel, to remind him that he is speaking with an angel. That does not seem appropriate as angels are not proud creatures (for example they tell men not to worship them and are sent to serve men) and man is the pinnacle of God's creation, not angels:

6.3.4.1.1. Only men have both aspects of God's creation—physical bodies and immortal spirits.

6.3.4.1.2. Only for men did Christ die, not for fallen angels.

6.3.4.1.3. Only men are given the right to reign with Christ and are adopted into his household as sons and daughters.

6.3.4.1.4. So angels do not demean men, although demons do.

6.3.4.2. The term was not used to demean Daniel but to show a sensitivity to him.

⁴³⁷ www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/scofield-reference-notes/daniel/daniel-8.html

Gabriel was indicating that he was considering Daniel's frailty and taking it into account as he revealed the meaning of the vision.

6.3.4.3. It is possible that the term, as used here, is a title of honour, which treats Daniel with respect as a prophet and as a type for the Messiah.

7. What did Gabriel tell Daniel to do? (26)

7.1. To 'seal up the vision'.

7.2. Why was Daniel to seal up the vision?

7.2.1. First, we need to consider what Gabriel meant when he said to seal up the vision. What is the meaning of 'sealing'?

7.2.1.1. Seal it to keep it secret.

7.2.1.2. Revelation 10.4 is an example of this meaning. There is no record of what John heard.

7.2.1.3. If it meant this in Daniel 8.26, then Daniel was to keep the vision a secret from the Babylonians and Persians, and even from the Jews.

7.2.1.3.1. However, there is little reason to think that this was necessary. The Babylonian and Persian kings would not care about these prophecies relating to a period ~385 years into the future. Nor would they necessarily believe them to be factual—but rather the mad ravings of an old seer.

7.2.1.3.2. In fact, the message was *not* kept from the Jews. The Jews copied the book down to the time of Christ. They translated it into other languages (i.e., the Greek Septuagint and Aramaic Targums) and they knew about the book and its account at the time of Alexander the Great (as we saw when we considered verses 8.5-7, the high priest showed Alexander that he was mentioned in the book).

7.2.1.3.3. It is unlikely that any part of Scripture, even portions dealing with future events, should be hidden from the Church.

7.2.1.3.4. Copies were probably made widely available among the Jews in captivity to encourage them that they had a future as a people.

7.2.1.4. Seal it, to preserve it for the future.

7.2.1.4.1. Daniel was to take precautions to write it down and seal it to preserve it for future generations

7.2.1.4.2. He probably made sure that a master copy was in a form (e.g., on a parchment and stored in a clay jar, rather than on papyrus or even clay) that would last for centuries.

7.2.1.4.3. By taking this precaution there could be no doubt that it was prophesied long before the events occurred.

7.3. Of what did Gabriel assure Daniel?

7.3.1. He assured him that the revelation of the vision was true and would be fulfilled.

7.3.2. Gabriel was assuring Daniel that what he had seen in the vision was not a creation of his own mind, but from God. Similar reassurances are given elsewhere in Scripture (Dan 10.1; Rev 19.9; Rev 21.5; Rev 22.6).

7.3.3. Because it related to the distant future and was so perplexing for Daniel, he needed to have this assurance that he was not having a normal nightmare or trance induced vision, but receiving direct revelation from God.

8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (13-19, 26)

8.1. The primary lesson of this section is that God is the creator and controller of time. Time came into existence when God created the physical universe.

8.2. Some specific aspects of God's sovereignty over time include:

8.2.1. *Appointed Lives* – The LORD is the lord of history. God sets the time-span and

establishes the events of the lives of all mankind. When it was time for Antiochus Epiphanes to act as God's scourge he was raised up. When God was finished with him, he was removed.

8.2.2. *Afflictions Limited* – God is careful not to overwhelm the faith of his people.

8.2.2.1. He will not send more, or more difficult, trials than he has equipped them to endure.

8.2.2.2. Afflictions are limited (Rev 2.10). The use of 'days' in this account reminds God's people that afflictions are temporary and that their troubles will end (Mt 24.22).

8.2.3. *Affirmed Letters* – What God wishes communicated to his people is true, because he is Truth—he cannot lie.

8.2.3.1. Gabriel told Daniel that what had been revealed to him was true. So all of Scripture is true. It is the self-attesting breathed-out word of the living God (2 Tim 3.16).

8.2.3.2. As the events prophesied here came true ~385 years later, so the promises in his word (e.g., about Christ's return, the renovation of the created realm, the resurrection, and Heaven) are all absolutely true.

Sickness (Dan 8.27)

1. What impact did the vision have on Daniel?

1.1. He fainted (18) and became ill from seeing the vision.

1.2. Why did he (his body) respond in this way?

1.2.1. Thinking can be hard and exhausting work. Some people who conduct mostly physical labour do not understand how someone who 'sits behind a desk' all day can be exhausted. They don't understand the levels of stress and weariness that can result from dealing with bureaucracy, making 'important' decisions, or solving complex problems.

1.2.2. The mind and body are a unit in the humankind. For example:

1.2.2.1. When we have physical pain, it can affect our minds; for example, causing us to become discouraged and even depressed.

1.2.2.2. When we have spiritual or psychological difficulties, our bodies can respond with tiredness and can break down with illness.

1.2.3. Daniel would have been about 70 years old at this point (about 550 or 551 BC; the third year of Belshazzar's coregency with his father). We calculated that Daniel was about 82 in 539 BC when Belshazzar held his feast and lost his life.

1.2.3.1. Being of an older age, he was not as strong and as able to bear the strain associated with receiving revelation through visions.

1.2.4. Looking into spiritual matters is challenging. Every prophecy has an element of mystery. We have become more accustomed to the mystery of revelation, because we have grown up hearing the Bible stories and reading the Bible. As revelation was given, the newness of it was unsettling. The disciples of Jesus couldn't understand things that we now consider obvious (Lk 18.34).

2. Why would God cause the understanding of his revelation to be so exhausting for Daniel?

2.1. Daniel still did not understand fully the significance of what he had seen in the vision and heard in the explanation from Gabriel. In particular, he would have wanted to know the explanation of the time frame in which the events would occur and who would be the particular perpetrator of the evil against the Jews and the Temple.

2.2. As we saw earlier, he was not the only person who has been bewildered by this vision.

Strange explanations have been offered over the centuries, in particular by the cults but even by those in the Evangelical wing of the Church.

2.3. God does not make all of his revelation equally simple for us to understand. Some parts are straightforward and clear, other parts are still somewhat cryptic for us, requiring diligence and

- careful study to understand and apply.
- 2.4. Ironically, some of the most straight forward teachings of Scripture are also the most abused; for example:
 - 2.4.1. God created the universe in six days about six thousand years ago. Yet many Christians try to interpret Genesis 1.1-31 to support an age for the earth of billions of years.
 - 2.4.2. Jesus Christ is the God-man who was conceived and born of a virgin, performed miracles, died on the cross, and rose again on the third day. No eyewitness account can be clearer, yet it is rejected as myth.
 - 2.4.3. Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth to bring about the resurrection of the dead and to renovate the created order. The world scoffs at such statements based on Scripture.
 - 2.4.4. Salvation is found in Christ alone, by faith alone, through grace alone. You are considered to be a religious bigot if you suggest this is the teaching of the Bible.
 - 2.5. Some areas of God's revelation require considerable effort on our part to understand and to apply. It appears that God's purpose in this is multifold, and may include the following reasons:
 - 2.5.1. Revelation is to be accepted on faith (e.g., Heb 11.1-3) with applied rationality. God is not subject to man's attempts at intellectual autonomy. Man is not the ultimate authority for truth; God is. If every word in Scripture were simple for us to understand where would there be room for faith? Man would think that he had the intellectual prowess to establish and determine truth.
 - 2.5.2. God humbles man by reminding him, through Scriptural revelation, that he does not know all things. For example, we learn that we cannot question God with regard to:
 - 2.5.2.1. His providential dealings, such as why he permits evil.
 - 2.5.2.2. How it is possible for such conundrums to exist as:
 - 2.5.2.2.1. Three persons in the Trinity, but only one God
 - 2.5.2.2.2. Jesus as both God and man
 - 2.5.2.2.3. Human responsibility and God's foreknowledge and predestination.
 - 2.5.3. Some parts of Scriptural revelation are difficult because God wants to teach us to depend on the Holy Spirit. Natural man, steeped in irrationality due to innate sin, is not able to understand the Bible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Mt 11.25; Mt 13.10-17; Mt 16.17).
 - 2.5.4. God wishes men to look in hope to him and not depend on their own wits and senses. For example, the revelation in Scripture about the nature of heaven is incomplete from our perspective (we want to know more). This is not so that we can speculate widely, but so that we will place our hope in his promises.
 - 2.5.5. Yet, at the same time, God wants us to use our intellects and reason. He has endowed us with intelligence. The Bible is for the simple as well as for the sophisticated. Understanding the Bible cannot be exhausted by even the most brilliant of men.
 3. What did Daniel do when he had recovered?
 - 3.1. He went about the king's business.
 - 3.2. We are not told what this business was, but it is possible that Daniel was in Susa as an ambassador to the court of Cyrus, having been appointed by Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father.
 - 3.3. Daniel was faithful in his duties even though he knew that the Babylonian Empire was drawing to a close.
 4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 4.1. *Intensity* – Understanding revelation from God is something that we are to take seriously and to work at. Daniel offers us an example. Even in his old age, he did not cease from understanding what God was communicating to mankind. This teaches us the importance of regular Bible reading and study (Is 34.16; Lk 1.3; Acts 17.11).

- 4.2. *Inscrutability* – God is a God of mystery (Rom 11.25; Rom 16.25; Eph 1.9; Eph 3.3, 9; Eph 5.32; Col 1.26; 1 Tim 3.9, 16) and does not make everything clear to us in this time-space realm. His wisdom is beyond what our finite minds can comprehend (Is 55.8), and will be in an everlasting existence even though the remnants of sin’s despoiling will be removed from our natures.
- 4.3. *Importance* – This vision related an important message for Daniel and the Jews from his day until the 2nd century before Christ. Daniel displays an understanding of its importance by trying hard to understand its meaning. Understanding the vision is also important for us, because as we come to understand it, it teaches us that God is the ruler of history and is unfolding events according to his eternal plan.

Desolation’s Timeframe (Dan 9.1-27)

Scene (Dan 9.1-4a)

1. What is the context for the revelation that is given to Daniel (24-27)?
 - 1.1. *Reign* (1-2a) – The revelation was given to Daniel in the first year of the reign of Darius.
 - 1.2. *Record* (2b) – Daniel was reading the record of the prophet Jeremiah and he understood that the 70 years of captivity were ending.
 - 1.3. *Request* (3-19) – Daniel responded to his understanding of Jeremiah with a prayer. His prayer was a request for forgiveness and lifting of the punishment on Israel.
 - 1.4. *Response* (20-23) – Gabriel is sent to Daniel to explain the meaning of the seventy sevens.
 - 1.4.1. What do you notice when you compare the ‘seventy’ in Daniel 9:2 with the ‘seventy’ in Daniel 9.24?
 - 1.4.2. Daniel had been considering Jeremiah’s prophecy of seventy years. However, Gabriel gave Daniel an explanation of a different period of seventy (‘seventy sevens’).
 - 1.4.3. The Holy Spirit and Gabriel used the seventy (years) of captivity which were just ending as a starting point to explain about a different period of seventy (sevens) which was just beginning.
 - 1.5. *Revelation* (24-27) – Gabriel then gives to Daniel a vision or revelation of the future.
2. When did Daniel receive the communication from Gabriel?
 - 2.1. In the first year of the reign of Darius
 - 2.2. Who was this king, Darius?
 - 2.2.1. We answered this question in detail when we studied the last verse of chapter 5 (31).
 - 2.2.2. At that time we concluded that the Darius mentioned here is:
 - 2.2.2.1. Not Darius I who came to the throne in 522 BC (and reigned until 486 BC).
 - 2.2.2.2. Probably Cyrus under a different name; he could have been ‘Darius the Mede’ with respect to his ancestry (at least on one side), whereas he was called ‘Cyrus’ with respect to his rule in the Empire.
 - 2.2.3. He is called, in the ESV, ‘the son of Ahasuerus’ (as in the Hebrew).
 - 2.2.3.1. In some translations (e.g., NIV) this is rendered as ‘the son of Xerxes’. However, this appears to be a faulty⁴³⁸ conclusion.
 - 2.2.3.1.1. It is based on the idea that Ahasuerus is a Hebrew approximation of the Persian *khshayarsha* (or *Xšāyāršan*) which came through Greek into English as ‘Xerxes’.
 - 2.2.3.1.2. Xerxes was born about 10 years after Cyrus died.
 - 2.2.3.2. Ahasuerus was probably a title, used by the Jews, not his father’s personal name. His father’s personal name was probably Cambyses.
 - 2.3. What does Daniel mean when he says that Darius was “made king”?
 - 2.3.1. Some suggest that Darius was a mere appointee of Cyrus and that he was made king by Cyrus. However, this view is ruled out if Darius and Cyrus are the same individual.

⁴³⁸ See, “The Identity of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther” in Floyd Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 199-205.

- 2.3.2. Rather, Daniel is probably speaking of God's action in placing Darius on the throne. God granted Darius the right to rule. This is consistent with Daniel's view of rulers—they are servants of God who are given authority (Dan 2.21; Dan 4.17).
- 2.4. In what year did Daniel receive this communication?
 - 2.4.1. Darius captured Babylon in 539 BC—this assumption of power is recorded in Daniel 5.30.
 - 2.4.2. This means that the events in chapter 9 took place before the events in chapter 6, when Daniel was cast into the den of lions.
 - 2.4.3. The first year of Darius' reign likely means that the events in this chapter occurred in 538 BC.
 - 2.4.4. The events of this chapter occurred about 12 years after Daniel's second vision recorded in chapter 8.
 - 2.4.5. Daniel had been taken captive from Jerusalem in 606 B.C. If he was 14 in 606 BC, then he was around 82 years at this time.
- 3. What prompted Daniel to pray this particular prayer (in verses 4-19)?
 - 3.1. It was the time of the evening sacrifice (21).
 - 3.1.1. Since the Temple sacrifices had ceased with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, he uses the term 'evening sacrifice' to refer to a generic time of worship (typified by reading scripture, praying, and singing Psalms) not the specific act of sacrificing animals.
 - 3.1.2. Daniel was probably observing his personal time of evening worship—what some would call 'private devotions'. We know that he had a practice, at this period of his life (Dan 6.10), of praying three times a day.
 - 3.1.3. He wasn't doing anything different from his normal practice.
 - 3.2. He was reading the Scriptures.
 - 3.2.1. He was reading the 'books' (ספרים, 'writings')—the Scriptures which were available to him at that time.
 - 3.2.2. Much of the OT was available by that time. The following books of the OT had not yet been completed: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, (possibly Joel), Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 1 & 2 Chronicles and the completed book of Psalms (if Ezra was the final compiler)—although most of the Psalms would have been known—and, of course, the book of Daniel.
 - 3.2.3. Many of the Jewish scribes would have been with him in captivity (either in Babylon or Susa) and it would have been relatively easy for him, being an educated man and a high ranking courtier with financial means, to have obtained copies of the scrolls of the Scripture books.
 - 3.2.4. He probably followed a regular pattern of reading through the books of Scripture on a consistent and regular schedule.
 - 3.3. He was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah.
 - 3.3.1. It happened, in God's providence, that the portion of Scripture that he read that evening during his devotions was from the prophecy of Jeremiah.
 - 3.3.2. The prophet Jeremiah had died, in Egypt, not too long before this. It is possible that Daniel was reading the book of Jeremiah for the first time.
 - 3.3.3. Regardless, Daniel knew that he was living in the midst of prophetic fulfillment (the taking of Babylon by Darius in 539 BC had fulfilled the prophecy of chapter 2 given to Nebuchadnezzar) and Daniel would have been particularly attentive to Jeremiah's prophecies.
 - 3.4. He read of the prophesied end of the captivity.
 - 3.4.1. The specific verses of the book of Jeremiah that he encountered are found in Jeremiah 25.9-12 and/or Jeremiah 29.10.
 - 3.4.2. He understood that the desolations of Jerusalem would be completed in seventy years.

- 3.4.2.1. “Desolations” is plural in the Hebrew, suggesting an intensity.
- 3.4.3. He learned from Jeremiah that the time of the captivity was about to end.
 - 3.4.3.1. The total time for the captivity was to be 70 years.
 - 3.4.3.2. By our reckoning it had been 68 years since Daniel was taken captive (606 – 538⁴³⁹).
 - 3.4.3.3. The return from Captivity, based on the decree of Cyrus was in the fall of 538—by our reckoning that would be 68 years.
 - 3.4.3.4. Some might conclude that 68 years is not 70 years. However, using Jewish *sabbatical* reckoning, the return from captivity could still be considered as having occurred 70 years after the captivity began.
 - 3.4.3.4.1. The Jewish sabbatical calendar started in the fall (Lev 25.3-4).
 - 3.4.3.4.2. The captivity was based on sabbatical years (2 Chron 36.21).
 - 3.4.3.4.3. It is possible that the captivity began in the spring of 606 BC (Jer 46.2 may provide a hint, and conquest campaigns were normally started after the winter rains, 2 Sam 11.1; 1 Ki 20.26), so that spring fell in the *previous* year, by the sabbatical reckoning, giving 69 whole or part years.
 - 3.4.3.4.4. The return from the captivity appears to have been in the late fall of 538, at the time of the feast of booths (Ezra 3.4), possibly placing the return into the *next* (i.e., 70th) year giving, 70 whole or part years.
 - 3.4.3.4.5. Jewish years were reckoned by whole years or part of a year; as day reckonings could include part days—Jesus was in the grave for three days (Friday afternoon to Sunday morning).
 - 3.4.3.5. Some, place the decree of Cyrus in 537⁴⁴⁰ BC, which would be 69 years from 606 BC and then only the partial year in 606 BC would have to be included to make 70 years.
 - 3.4.3.6. However, the partial years may be an unnecessary complication in the reckoning of the seventy years. With additional research into the chronology of events during the Babylonian and Persian periods we may find that the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s having taken captives from Jerusalem and the date for Cyrus’ decree need to be modified.⁴⁴¹
- 3.4.4. Regardless of the exact way in which the seventy years is to be calculated, Daniel realized that the time had come for the restoration from the captivity
- 3.5. He knew that Israel was not in a proper state to receive the fulfillment of the prophecy.
 - 3.5.1. Many in captivity had intermarried with the nations around them; as we see from the cleansing that Ezra and Nehemiah had to undertake (Ezra 9-10; Neh 13.23).
 - 3.5.2. Many made business alliances with the pagans that were not proper (Neh 13.4-9).
 - 3.5.3. Many were more concerned about their material well-being than about their spiritual well-being (Haggai 1.1-11).
 - 3.5.4. Many had syncretized and taken up elements of false worship (Ezk 33-34).
 - 3.5.5. Many among the Levites and priests had fallen away, and few could be found to take up their duties when the Temple worship was to be reconstituted (Ezra 8.15-20).
- 4. What was Daniel’s view of Scripture? (2)
 - 4.1. *Authority* – Daniel viewed Scripture as having Divine authority.
 - 4.1.1. He understood that even though the words of the book he was reading had been prophesied by a man and written down by a man (within the lifetime of Daniel himself); they were the words of God.

⁴³⁹ Note: Some calculate the 68 years from 605 BC to 537 BC. Others calculate the 70 years from 608 BC to 538 BC; with 608 being the first year of Jehoiakim.

⁴⁴⁰ C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Jer 25:11), (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

⁴⁴¹ Refer to the notes relating to the starting point for the seventy sevens (Dan 9.25) in the section below entitled *Seventy Sevens* (24-27), for a consideration of some of the reasons why dates of this period *may* need to be recalibrated.

- 4.1.2. He viewed Scripture as the very breath of God (2 Tim 3.16).
- 4.1.3. Our understanding of Scripture must be the same. For example:
 - 4.1.3.1. What Scripture says has authority over what scientists claim (e.g., that the world is billions of years old rather than the ~6,000 that the Bible says it is).
 - 4.1.3.2. What the Bible teaches about sin, morality and punishment (e.g., the death penalty; Gen 9.6) is superior to anything a worldly philosopher, ethicist, or judge can concoct.
- 4.1.4. Scripture is to be taken in its plain sense, unless the context clearly indicates that it is speaking in a typological, allegorical, parabolic, or metaphorical manner.
 - 4.1.4.1. For example, when the Bible states that God created in six days or that Jesus turned water into wine, we are to understand that these things actually happened, as they are portrayed.
 - 4.1.4.2. Someone may argue that these accounts are merely metaphorical with spiritual lessons. We can respond:
 - 4.1.4.2.1. There can be no basis for morality if what the Bible says cannot be trusted and taken in its plain sense. How would we know for instance that the Ten Commandments are not also metaphorical?
 - 4.1.4.2.2. A writer who makes the claim that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are merely myths would be incensed if his book or paper were dismissed as merely a myth. It would be arbitrary and inconsistent to expect his work to be taken in its plain-sense and not as a myth, but to dismiss the Bible as myth.
- 4.2. *Accuracy* – He believed that what the Scriptures said was to be taken at face value.
 - 4.2.1. God had communicated through Jeremiah the duration of the captivity, and Daniel understood that that prophecy was more reliable than his own account of what he had eaten for breakfast.
 - 4.2.2. Daniel accepted the words of God through Jeremiah as literal and without error.
 - 4.2.3. This is a strong affirmation of the theological principle which we espouse, which teaches the ‘verbal inspiration’ of the Bible.
 - 4.2.4. Similarly, we must believe that the Bible is without error and must not be fooled by those who would attempt to subject it to their own tests of accuracy. We must not fall into the sin of Eve, who questioned the accuracy of God’s word by heeding the serpent in the Garden (Gen 3.1-6).
- 4.3. *Attention* – He was diligent in his attention to the word of God.
 - 4.3.1. Daniel studied the Scriptures as part of his daily routine of worship.
 - 4.3.2. He paid attention to what Scripture said, obtaining from it guidance for his personal life and for the life of his nation.
 - 4.3.3. Even though Daniel was a highly educated man, a man blessed with the ability to interpret dreams, and a man who was given direct revelation from God in visions, he did not consider it beneath him to be taught by the writings of other prophets in the Scriptures.
 - 4.3.4. We need to have the same attitude:
 - 4.3.4.1. Taking the Bible as our primary and final source of instruction for faith, doctrine, and practice (2 Tim 3.16, 17).
 - 4.3.4.2. Being willing to be guided by Scripture and not by our own ‘inner light’ or personal opinion.
 - 4.3.4.3. Continually learning from the Bible (Acts 17.11).
 - 4.3.4.4. Being willing to listen and learn, and not always teaching (James 3.1).
 - 4.3.4.5. Esteeming the instruction of others who are called by God to be teachers (1 Thess 5.12-13). Some prominent preachers and Bible teachers do not have the interest or patience to listen to the teaching of those whom they consider to be less educated or less important than themselves.

- 4.4. *Attestation* – Daniel refers to the writing of Jeremiah as Scripture—Scripture is self-authenticating
 - 4.4.1. We have an example in this verse of one part of the Bible referring to another part as having Scriptural authority. Another example is what Peter says about Paul’s writings (2 Pt 3.16). In addition, we see Jesus and the NT writers quote from the OT to validate it. This is part of the way in which the canon of Scripture is recognized—through its self-attestation and authentication.
 - 4.4.2. The Bible as our ultimate authority must be self-attesting.
 - 4.4.2.1. It makes no sense for someone to ask for a proof that the Bible is true. Since whatever we would select, as our measure for the truthfulness of the Bible, would in turn have to be validated as a standard. The Bible cannot be the ultimate standard if it is subjected to proof.
 - 4.4.2.2. Any ultimate authority must be self-attesting. It must prove itself.
 - 4.4.2.2.1. This is not a vicious circular of reasoning. It is the very nature of ultimate authorities.
 - 4.4.2.2.2. For example, God can swear by no other so he swears by himself (Heb 6.13).
 - 4.4.2.2.3. Consider logic as another example of self-attestation. If the laws of logic didn’t exist or weren’t consistent, we couldn’t make any arguments. Since we can make rational arguments using logic, the laws of logic must exist. Logic proves its own existence. You cannot step outside of the laws of logic to prove the laws of logic. Ultimately, logic reflects the mind of the self-existent God.
- 5. How did Daniel respond to his reading of Scripture? (3, 4a)
 - 5.1. He prayed.
 - 5.1.1. Daniel’s study of the Scriptures led him to turn to God.
 - 5.1.2. His prayer was not a perfunctory litany of insincere words as part of an evening bedtime ritual.
 - 5.1.3. What indicates that he prayed fervently?
 - 5.1.3.1. “I turned [gave] my face”. He looked to God in prayer until God gave him an answer.
 - 5.1.3.2. The form of the verb, translated “I Prayed” (4), is emphatic (a cohortative) in the Hebrew.
 - 5.2. For what did he ask God?
 - 5.2.1. He asked for mercy and forgiveness through confession of sin.
 - 5.2.1.1. We will look at the structure and content of his prayer in some detail in the next section of our study.
 - 5.2.1.2. However, as a preview, we can note that his prayer consisted primarily of confession of personal and national sin (5-10), recognition of God’s righteousness and justice (11-14), and petitions to end the captivity (15-19).
 - 5.2.2. He asked God for what he had already promised.
 - 5.2.2.1. We cannot discern this from verses 3 and 4 alone. However, it was while reading the prophecy of Jeremiah about what was to happen within a short period (a few months to a year) that he prayed for it to come about.
 - 5.2.2.2. There is no contradiction in asking God for what he has already promised. “Daniel read the prophecy of Jeremiah that the captivity would last seventy years. Yet, he prayed for what God had already decreed: the end of the captivity (Dan 9.3-19). This is how the divine decrees should be understood. When we speak of the decrees of God, including predestination, all we are

doing is speaking of the good purposes of God.”⁴⁴²

5.2.2.3. We do the same thing when we pray “your kingdom come”. God has already decreed that his kingdom will grow and prosper and that, in the end, his kingdom will extend for sea to sea (Ps 72.8). When we pray for what God has already decreed we honour him by intimating that his righteous decrees are glorious and gracious.

5.3. What accompanied his prayer?

5.3.1. He fasted and repented in sackcloth and ashes.⁴⁴³

5.3.2. Why did he fast?

5.3.2.1. To remind himself that he did not live by natural bread (Mt 2.1-4), but through God.

5.3.2.2. To facilitate grieving over sin and confession (Judges 20.26; Neh 9.1-2) through a heightened awareness of God’s presence.

5.3.2.3. The NT endorses fasting as an individual, voluntary and extraordinary, act of private, personal worship (Mt 6.16, 17).

5.3.3. What did wearing sackcloth signify?

5.3.3.1. It signified mourning, confession of sin, and concern (2 Ki 19.1, 2; Est 4.1-4).

5.3.3.2. It also implied the abasing of the body as a sign of humiliation and mortification of sin.

5.3.4. What did the ashes signify?

5.3.4.1. They served as a sign of mourning or grave concern (Job 2.8; 2 Sam 13.19; Est 4.1-4; Ps 102.9).

5.3.4.2. They also signified worthlessness, or lowliness; similar to the significance of dust (Ps 102.9; Is 44.20).

5.3.5. Is there an equivalent outward means today, by which we can show a heart that is full of contrition and confession?

5.3.5.1. Jesus seems to prohibit the use of sackcloth and ashes (Mt 6.16-18) as an outward display of inner contrition and true piety. The outward act of debasement has been superseded, but not the inner substance.

5.3.5.2. The spiritual equivalent may be achieved through singing the Psalms (Ps 35.13; Ps 69.10, 11) and prayer (Acts 14.23; Mt 17.21/Mk 9.29; 1 Cor 7.5); particularly when we sing Psalms of confession (e.g., Ps 27.1-14; Ps 51.1-19; Ps 103.1-22; Ps 106.1-48; Ps 130.1-8) and pray prayers of confession.

5.4. To whom did he pray?

5.4.1. He prayed to his personal God—“the LORD my God”.

5.4.1.1. He is not suggesting, by saying ‘my’ that God was his invented idol, or a puppet to do his will. Rather he means that he prayed to the God whom he knew personally to be the true God.

5.4.1.2. He identified himself as a child of God.

5.4.1.3. He explicitly rejected the false gods of Babylon by declaring himself for Jehovah/Yahweh.

5.4.2. He used the particular, personal name of God—Jehovah/Yahweh—and referred to him as both Lord or sovereign master (, יהוה) and God (, אלהים).

5.4.2.1. The use of ‘God’ identifies God as the creator of the universe—the all powerful God.

5.4.2.2. The use of ‘Lord’ identifies God as the ruler of the universe—the only one with the power to direct the course of history, and to answer his prayer.

5.4.2.3. The use of ‘Jehovah/Yahweh’ may be deliberate, to remind his readers that he prayed to the gracious, covenant-keeping God (Ex 6.2–8) who has a personal

⁴⁴² Richard C. Gamble, *The Whole Counsel of God* (Phillipsburgh, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009), pp. 648-649

⁴⁴³ See: “Appendix N – Fasting” and “Appendix O – Repentance in Sackcloth and Ashes” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

relationship with his people, the true Israel.

6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 6.1. *Studying* – We should study the Bible regularly, as Daniel did.
 - 6.1.1. He set aside regular times in each day when he studied the word of God. This should be our model and practice. Calvin reminds us, “Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know”.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, we should study the Scriptures for in them we learn all that we need to know for doctrine, faith, and life (2 Tim 3.15-17).
 - 6.1.2. Even though he was a prophet and had been given great visions directly from God, he did not think he was beyond needing to study and learn from the Scriptures. So, all leaders and congregants within the Church should be eager to learn from the oracles of God.
 - 6.1.3. Even though he held an important position in government, and probably had great responsibilities, he set aside time to read the Bible and to pray.
 - 6.1.3.1. He didn’t find time; he made time, by being disciplined about his priorities.
 - 6.2. *Searching* – Daniel searched God’s word to determine what God’s plans were for his people. We also need to search the Scriptures to see what prophecies God has yet to fulfill in our future—in particular, that Christ will return to this earth on the final day, the day of judgement.
 - 6.2.1. Daniel believed without reservation in predictive prophecy from God’s word. He didn’t interpret the prophecy of Jeremiah as a metaphor or in some symbolic way, but accepted it as something which would be literally fulfilled.
 - 6.2.2. When God states explicitly that he did something (e.g., created in six days; Ex 20.11) or will do something (e.g., Jesus will return to earth from heaven on clouds in the same way he went into heaven on clouds; Acts 1.9-11), we are to take his words at face value.
 - 6.2.2.1. We are to understand God’s word in its plain sense. If God states truths about the future which are clearly in propositional form (e.g., that the world will be consumed by fire as it was deluged by water; 2 Pt 3.6-7) we are to expect that.
 - 6.2.2.2. This, of course, does not mean that when God is obviously speaking in symbolic language about the future (e.g., of a beast rising out of the sea; Rev 13.1) that we are to look for a literal fulfillment.
 - 6.2.3. The predictive prophecies in God’s word can, and should, encourage us in the face of wickedness and decay all around us. It teaches us, for example, that:
 - 6.2.3.1. Everything in this world is under the controlling hand of God and he will never permit things to go ‘out of control’ so that his people can no longer live in the world (Gen 8.22).
 - 6.2.3.2. God will, in his time, bring down the haughty and wicked (Ps 1.4, 6).
 - 6.2.3.3. Jesus is coming back to take us with him (Jn 14.3; 1 Thess 4.16).
 - 6.2.3.4. A glorious heaven, in which we will dwell with resurrected bodies, awaits believers (1 Cor 15.12-58; 1 Pt 1.3, 4).
 - 6.2.3.5. God will vindicate his people by judging the wicked (2 Thess 1.5-10).
 - 6.3. *Supplicating* – Our reading of Scripture should lead us to pray.
 - 6.3.1. God’s promises should not reduce our prayers but encourage us to pray all the more (Heb 10.25).
 - 6.3.2. Because God’s promises are sure, we should not abdicate and say “*Que sera, sera*; Whatever will be, will be;” but rather appeal to God fervently to bring his promises to fruition (Rev 22.20).
 - 6.3.3. So, for example, he says that all who believe will be saved (Jn 3.16). This should lead

⁴⁴⁴ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), book 3.21.3, p. 924.

us to pray earnestly for the salvation of the lost—particularly, and specifically, for those whom we know personally.

Supplication (Dan 9.4b-19)

1. What is the basic structure of Daniel's prayer?
 - 1.1. The prayer does not appear to be highly structured.
 - 1.1.1. It is a fervent prayer that overflows with emotion. This emotion overwhelms the 'logic' or 'structure' of the prayer.
 - 1.1.2. There is a continual refrain of confession, interspersed with praise.
 - 1.1.3. It is not until late in the prayer (16-18) that he becomes bold enough to ask for what he was hoping.
 - 1.2. However, we can give the prayer an outline structure, as follows:
 - 1.2.1. *Adoration* (4) – Praising God for his person and works.
 - 1.2.2. *Admission* (5-10) – Confession of personal and national sin.
 - 1.2.3. *Acknowledgement* (11-14) – Humbly bowing before God and declaring him righteous in his judgements.
 - 1.2.4. *Appeal* (15-19) – Petitioning God to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy given through Jeremiah (Jer 29.10).
 - 1.3. This outline provides us with an example (or model) that is appropriate for us to apply in our prayers.
 - 1.3.1. It contains similar components, albeit in a different order, as are included in the *Lord's Prayer*, the model that Jesus gave to his disciples:
 - 1.3.1.1. Opens with God's name
 - 1.3.1.2. Extols God's rule
 - 1.3.1.3. Makes petitions
 - 1.3.1.4. Confesses sin.
 - 1.3.2. It has a similar basic structure as the 'ACTS' acronym used to structure prayer:
 - 1.3.2.1. Adoration
 - 1.3.2.2. Confession
 - 1.3.2.3. Thanksgiving
 - 1.3.2.4. Supplication.
 - 1.4. We will see, as we look at the components of the prayer in more detail, that Daniel's mind was saturated with the Word of God, which coloured the expressions he used.
 - 1.4.1. What shows that Daniel was well versed in the existing Scriptures?
 - 1.4.2. There are a number of references and allusions to earlier OT passages, particularly in Deuteronomy, 1 Kings 8.22-53 (Solomon's prayer at the time the Temple was dedicated), and Jeremiah.
 - 1.5. Before we look at the prayer in more detail we should make an observation on how the commentaries, generally, approach this prayer in comparison with a later section of the same chapter (24-27).
 - 1.5.1. E. J. Young, for example, covers the prayer in 5 pages, but includes 30 pages on verses 24-27; H. C. Leupold has 19 pages expositing the prayer compared with 37 pages on verses 24-27.
 - 1.5.2. In most commentaries, the sincere prayer of an honest and godly man is passed over quickly to get to what most people consider to be the more exciting and entertaining portion of the chapter—an end-time prophecy.
 - 1.5.3. While some might argue that it is necessary to spend time on verses 24-27 to counter false teaching, much that is written on those verses is highly speculative and tending to the absurd.
 - 1.5.4. In general this is indicative of the state of the Church. There is too much interest in the fantastic and sensational and not enough in humble steady perseverance in the walk of faith. A prime witness to this is how few people would attend a prayer meeting in

contrast with a ‘Christian’ concert, a healing service, or a lecture on establishing the date of the rapture.

- 1.5.5. So, let us take the time to savour this passionate prayer and what it can teach us—in other words, let us ‘stop and smell the roses’.

2. What attributes of God does Daniel include in his prayer?

2.1. *Sovereign God* (4) – He addresses God as Lord.

2.1.1. The use of both of these titles for the LORD reminds us that he is sovereign, and God—i.e., the Creator.

2.1.2. This single verse has four of the most common terms used in the OT to refer to God: אֱלֹהִים, יְהוָה, אֵל, and אֱלֹהִים.

2.2. *Great* (4, 15) – God is the God who is great and mighty—i.e., all powerful.

2.2.1. The expression “great God” is used four times in the ESV OT (Ezra 5.8; Neh 8.6; Ps 95.3; Dan 2.45). the expression “God is great” is used three times (Job 36.26; Ps 70.4; Ps 77.13). The use of ‘great’ with ‘Lord/LORD’ is more common.

2.2.2. Greatness in the Biblical sense encompasses size and extent in God’s infinitude, as well as his eternity.

2.2.3. His greatness is exhibited on earth through his ‘mighty hand’—i.e., his works among men.

2.3. *Awesome* (4) – God inspires awe because he is beyond our understanding and also is to be feared.

2.3.1. The Hebrew root from which the word *awesome* is translated, is the word *to fear* (Ps 96.4), as inspiring fear.

2.3.2. God is first referred to as being awesome by Moses (Ex 15.11; Ex 34.10; Dt 7.21; Dt 10.17; Dt 28.58); although the place where Jacob encountered God (Gen 28.17) is also called *awesome* because of the presence of God.

2.3.3. When the word *awesome* is used in the OT (it does not appear in the ESV NT) it is mostly used to refer to God, his name, and his works. It is also used to refer to angels (Judges 13.6; Ezk 1.18) and Solomon’s bride (Song 6.4, 10).

2.3.4. Today, youth use the word *awesome* to refer to about anything that they find interesting or exciting. We should try not to use the word *awesome* to refer to anything other than God so as not to dilute his majesty.

2.4. *Covenant Keeping* (4, 15) – God keeps the covenants he has made.

2.4.1. God makes covenants with his people and then keeps the covenants he makes with them.

2.4.2. A similar idea is expressed in Nehemiah’s prayers (Neh 1.5; Neh 9.32).

2.4.3. Nehemiah, in his prayer in chapter 1 (verse 5), also includes the idea of God’s awesomeness and greatness. It is likely that Nehemiah was echoing Daniel’s prayer. Nehemiah would have been in the Persian court about 100 years after Daniel, according to the traditional dates; or they may have been near contemporaries if we were to use a revised means of dating the Persian period—which we will consider in the section entitled *Seventy Sevens*, below.

2.4.3.1. Nehemiah’s prayer in chapter 9 is also a prayer of confession.

2.4.4. The particular covenant that Daniel is thinking of is likely that made with Abraham, referred to in Dt 7.7-12 (8, ‘to your fathers’ and brought out of Egypt), which is a covenant of love. Note that these verses also speak of God keeping his covenant. Daniel may have had these verses in Deuteronomy in mind when he voiced this prayer. This is reinforced by verse 15 which makes reference to the Exodus which is a confirmation of the covenant promise to Abraham—God kept faith with Israel for the sake of his covenant with their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and brought them to the promised land.

2.5. *Loving* (4) – This is the only reference to love in the prayer. However, later in Daniel 9.23,

Daniel is told by Gabriel that he was sent to Daniel because Daniel was loved by God.

- 2.5.1. True love is unconditional. God loves his people in spite of their sins, not because there is anything lovely in them by nature (Rom 5.8).
- 2.5.2. True love spends freely (Jn 15.13).
- 2.5.3. True love is steadfast (Rom 8.39).
- 2.6. *Volitional* (4, 12, 14, 15, 19) – God takes action.
 - 2.6.1. A common theme of the OT prophets when they deal with the idols of the nations around them, is that their gods are deaf, dumb and mute—they cannot act because they are nothing more than vain imaginations represented by carved blocks of wood or lumps of engraved or cast metal (Ps 97.7; Ps 115.4-8; Is 40.18-20; Is 44.9-20; Jer 10.3-5; Hab 2.18-19).
 - 2.6.2. God, in contrast, is overwhelmingly presented in Scripture as being the living God and the prime mover (Gen 1.1-31; Num 14.21; Job 38-41; Prov 16.33; Prov 19.21; Is 42.5-9; Acts 17.26-28).
- 2.7. *Lawgiver* (5) – God is the one who gives commands and rules that all men are expected to obey.
 - 2.7.1. Daniel assumes that wickedness and rebellion are defined relative to God's commands and rules.
 - 2.7.2. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says, "Q14: What is sin? A: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God."
 - 2.7.3. This is a Christian presupposition—i.e., the law is defined by God and sin is defined as breaking God's law.
 - 2.7.3.1. We must not forget that Daniel was a *Christian*. He was looking for the coming of the Messiah/Christ and was depending on Christ's substitutionary atonement for his salvation.
 - 2.7.3.2. It is this Messiah and his sacrifice in the midst of the seventieth 'seven' that is the subject of verses 24-27 in this chapter.
 - 2.7.3.3. The fulfillment of the prophecy in those verses is the answer to Daniel's prayer, and the only solution to the sin of Israel.
 - 2.7.4. No other religion or philosophy, but Christianity, has this perspective and definition of law and sin.
 - 2.7.4.1. Secular philosophies identify law as a mere creation of man that is subject to change through time. They deny the existence of sin and guilt and substitute ideas such as 'dysfunction' and 'paranoia' in their place.
 - 2.7.4.2. Religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism do not consider their gods (to the extent they have defined 'gods') to be personal and lawgivers. The definition of law, therefore, rests ultimately with man. Sin is abstracted into a nebulous bad karma that results from how we interact with our co-creatures while we pass through this, or a subsequent, existences; or it is a warping of an aesthetic principle.
 - 2.7.4.3. Religions such as Judaism and Islam, and cults such as Mormonism, have the concept of a god giving laws. But since their god is not the God of the Bible and they do not hold the Bible to be God's single source for revealing his truth and will, their definition of law can only be based upon human opinion. Their idea of sin is usually limited to consequential actions and does not include corrupt attitudes, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.
- 2.8. *Communicator* (6, 10, 11, 12) – God speaks directly, and through messengers.
 - 2.8.1. God spoke when he brought the universe into existence (Gen 1.3; a total of 10 times).
 - 2.8.1.1. It is interesting that the Genesis account records that "God said". It doesn't say that "God thought". Of course, thought precedes communication, since all true communication has rational content.
 - 2.8.1.2. Why does Genesis 1.1-31 record God as communicating? There is

- communication among the members of the Trinity (Gen 1.26). It probably indicates that God is a plurality of persons. The members of the Trinity communicate (and commune) with one another.
- 2.8.2. God spoke directly to his rational (physical) creation (Gen 1.28).
- 2.8.2.1. God not only communicated among the persons of the Trinity, but with his rational creation.
- 2.8.2.2. Man, being created in the image of God, is also a rational, verbal communicator. This is one of the characteristics of man that sets him apart from the animals.
- 2.8.3. Two forms of revelation are also mentioned:
- 2.8.3.1. The voices of the prophets
- 2.8.3.2. The written account of the prophetic word (e.g., as recorded in the Law).
- 2.8.4. The messengers mentioned in these verses are the prophets, including Moses.
- 2.8.4.1. The prophets are credited with speaking on behalf of God (10).
- 2.8.4.2. An angelic messenger, Gabriel, is also mentioned (Dan 9.21).
- 2.8.5. God uses other forms of revelation, beside direct speaking and speaking through his prophets (Heb 1.1).
- 2.8.5.1. Natural revelation—in the witness of the created order and through the inner innate knowledge of God and his laws with which we are all endowed (Rom 1.18-32)
- 2.8.5.2. Inner communication of God, through the Holy Spirit, which enables us to believe, and convicts us of truth (Jn 14.17; Jn 15.26; Jn 16.13).
- 2.8.5.3. God's most important form of revelation is his living Word—the Lord Jesus. Jesus, as the Word, communicates the true nature of God to mankind (Heb 1.2; Col 1.15).
- 2.9. *Righteous* (7, 14, 16) – God is righteous. He is without sin and does only that which is right and just.
- 2.9.1. The Hebrew word for righteousness (צִדִּיק) used here is the same one used in Melchizedek's compound name, which means 'king of righteousness', who is a fore type for Jesus, who is the ultimate King of Righteousness.
- 2.9.2. In the Bible, God is referred to many times as being righteous (Ps 7.9) and of performing righteous acts (14, 16).
- 2.9.3. The term is also applied to those who keep the Covenant. Righteousness, while innate with God (7), is an attribute of God which he endows in his believing people—we are declared righteous (forensically) and made righteous (experientially). We will become entirely righteous in Glory.
- 2.10. *Merciful and Forgiving* (9, 18, 19) – God is uniquely merciful and forgiving.
- 2.10.1. Verse 9 has, "the mercies and the forgiveness." The emphasis of this verse, along with verse 18, indicates that God's manifold mercies and forgiveness overflow abundantly.
- 2.10.2. We need to understand this importance of God being merciful in the greater context of Daniel's prayer.
- 2.10.2.1. The Jews were in captivity under Babylon and Daniel understood that that period was coming to an end (2) because of God's being merciful and willing to forgive his people.
- 2.10.2.2. The gods of the pagans (and of false religions today) were neither merciful nor forgiving. They were portrayed as being vicious and vindictive. Before they would dispense favour they had to receive oblations and appeasements. God, however, reaches out in mercy to the rebellious human race and draws, converts, and sanctifies those whom he saves.
- 2.10.3. Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness in the model prayer (Mt 6.12) he gave to his disciples, through his teaching (Mt 6.14, 15; Mt 18.21-35) and through

- his example (Mt 9.6; Mt 23.34).
- 2.11. *One who Hears* (13, 18, 19) – God is not a silent watcher, but one who is engaged with his creation.
- 2.11.1. Caricatures of God make him into either a disinterested being who started the universe on its way and left it to unfold through ‘natural laws’ (the god of the Deists), or a god who engages in the creation like a limited and capricious human being (the gods of false religions).
- 2.11.2. Even though the Bible teaches God’s active, personal engagement in governing the universe, both of these caricatures infect the thinking of the Church.
- 2.11.2.1. Many professing believers think, believe, and feel that God does not hear their prayers because he does not answer them the way they would like to see them answered.
- 2.11.2.2. Many have been influenced by the teachings of ‘open theism’ which argues against God’s immutability, omnipotence, and omniscience; claiming that God cannot know the future because of the supposed ultimate indeterminacy of quantum physics, and that he changes his mind as humans take actions that he could not foresee.
- 2.11.3. Daniel took comfort from the truth that God hears the sincere prayers of his people (Ps 145.18-19; Jn 9.31).
- 2.12. *Truthful* (13) – God does not lie, he is truth personified and communicates only truth.
- 2.12.1. God cannot lie (Num 23.19; 1 Sam 15.29; Is 45.19).
- 2.12.1.1. Jesus declared himself to be the way of truth (Jn 14.6).
- 2.12.1.2. The Holy Spirit is truth according to the teaching of Jesus (Jn 16.13) and John (1 Jn 5.6).
- 2.12.1.3. The Father is the source of truth (Is 65.16; Jn 15.26).
- 2.12.1.4. The Bible does not explicitly say that “God is truth”, the way it says that “God is love” (1 Jn 4.8). However, since all three persons in the Trinity are truth personified, we can confidently state that God is Truth.
- 2.12.2. Truth is only from God, is absolute (2 Tim 2.15, 25), and is knowable by man (2 Thess 2.13; Titus 1.1). We are not to be ever on a quest for ‘truth’ but to receive truth by receiving the Word of Truth (Jn 1.14; James 1.18)—Jesus Christ—and the written word of truth—the Gospel declared in the Bible (Ps 119.160; Eph 1.13; Col 1.5).
- 2.12.2.1. Absolute truth is an unalterable and permanent fact—e.g., God exists as an eternal, spiritual being.
- 2.12.2.2. Philosophers debate whether such a thing as absolute truth can exist, but the idea of ‘a relative truth’ is really a fallacy of equivocation (changing the meaning of a word in the course of a debate).
- 2.12.2.3. It is relatively easy to demonstrate that truth exists by using the transcendental argument—i.e., the impossibility of the contrary; if truth didn’t exist nothing could be proven at all.
- 2.12.2.4. Everyone assumes that truth must exist even when they deny its existence. Consider the following examples:
- 2.12.2.4.1. “There are no absolutes.” This statement declares that there are absolutely no absolutes. Yet it declares an absolute and is logically contradictory.
- 2.12.2.4.2. “Truth is relative.” This is, again, an absolute statement. If the statement is true and truth is in fact relative, then everything including the statement would be relative. If the statement is relative, then it cannot always be true and sometimes truth is not relative. This means there are in fact absolutes, and the statement is false.

- 2.12.2.4.3. “Who knows what the truth is, right?” In the same sentence the speaker declares that no one knows what the truth is, then he asks those hearing it to affirm the truth of his statement.
- 2.12.2.4.4. “No one knows what the truth is.” The speaker obviously believes that his statement is true.
- 2.12.2.4.5. Relativistic arguments about truth, like these, will always contradict themselves, thus vindicating the reality that there is absolute truth.
- 2.12.2.5. Anyone who doubts the existence of truth (Jn 18.38), or suppresses or perverts truth (Rom 1.18, 25), is a rebellious reprobate.
- 2.13. *Good* (15, 17) – God is good and does only good.
 - 2.13.1. God is always shown to be good by his actions.
 - 2.13.2. In this prayer Daniel reflects on God’s goodness as shown by his delivering his people out of Egypt. Daniel may be alluding to the words of Jeremiah (Jer 32.20, 21) in his prayer. This is quite likely, since we know that he had read the writings of Jeremiah (2).
 - 2.13.3. This act of deliverance distinguishes the true God from the pagan gods and pointed to the ultimate act of deliverance by which Christ redeems his people out of the spiritual ‘Egypt’ and out of the spiritual wilderness.
 - 2.13.4. The goodness of God is often questioned by Christ-haters and even by some in the Church, who bring up examples of God’s justice and the supposed ‘problem of evil’.
 - 2.13.4.1. They make claims like, “a good God wouldn’t have called for the destruction of the Canaanites” or “a good God would not permit suffering of innocent children”.
 - 2.13.4.2. We won’t address the philosophical inconsistency of those who claim that there is a problem with a good God permitting evil. We looked at that briefly in the section entitled *Station* (Dan 1.17-21), and have dealt with it in other places.⁴⁴⁵ In addition, others have dealt with this subject thoroughly, such as Greg Bahnsen⁴⁴⁶ and Randy Alcorn⁴⁴⁷, and their cited works are recommended.
 - 2.13.4.3. The ultimate proof that God is good lies in two truths:
 - 2.13.4.3.1. God, the self-attesting God, declares that he is good (Ps 25.8; Ps 73.1; Ps 100.5; Ps 106.1).
 - 2.13.4.3.2. God shows that he is good by saving sinners who deserve nothing but everlasting damnation (Jn 3.16; Rom 5.8).
 - 2.13.5. God’s retributive justice is also good. There is nothing logically inconsistent between God’s goodness and kindness and his punishing sin. In fact, to the contrary, if God did not punish sin, he would not be good, but wicked and capricious.
 - 2.13.5.1. It is God’s prerogative to judge the wicked (Dt 32.35). Men know innately that this is true (Rom 1.32). They just don’t like the idea of God’s punishing sinners—especially his punishing them. Justice can only be realized if God is just and punishes sin. Therefore, we must not look with disgust on the doctrine of God’s vindictive justice.
 - 2.13.5.2. Rather we must embrace it as a glorious truth (Ps 94.1). God will not permit a single sin committed against his Law or against Christ and his people to go unpunished and allow those who have despised him to go merrily into an everlasting existence. In justice, God receives the full honour of his majesty. We must rejoice in God’s justice as much as in his

⁴⁴⁵ E.g., James R. Hughes, *Meditations on the Life of Jesus – A Contemporary Application*; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁴⁴⁶ Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready – Directions for Defending the Faith* (Nacadoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation), pp. 163-175.

⁴⁴⁷ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good . . . Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009).

love!

- 2.14. Daniel, in effect, creates a definition of God through his description of God in his prayer.
 - 2.14.1. The attributes of God which Daniel includes in his prayer describe God as: sovereign, great, awesome, covenant keeping, loving, volitional, lawgiver, communicator, righteous, merciful and forgiving, one who hears, truthful, good.
 - 2.14.2. We could review the list of the attributes of God derived from the prayer and compare it with the definitions of God given in documents such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith*⁴⁴⁸ and the *Larger* (Q7) and *Shorter Catechism* (Q4).
 - 2.14.3. For example, how does the definition of God given in the Shorter Catechism compare with the list of attributes identified in Daniel's prayer?
 - 2.14.4. *Shorter Catechism*, Q4: "What is God?" A: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."
 - 2.14.5. Daniel includes (or implies) a number of the attributes which are in this short, formal definition of God, including: power, goodness, and truth. Daniel also mentions a few of the other attributes of God which are included in the *Confession*.
 - 2.14.6. The primary difference is that Daniel does not focus on the non-relational attributes that are prominent in the *Westminster* definitions. For example, he does not speak directly of God's aseity (self-existence), immutability, infinity, and eternality.
 - 2.14.7. Daniel focuses primarily on the attributes of God which are displayed as God interacts with his people. This does not mean that Daniel did not understand or believe in these other attributes of God. They are assumed in his worldview.
 - 2.14.8. We should derive instruction from how Daniel describes God in his prayer. We, in the Reformed and Presbyterian wing of the Church, can have a tendency to indulge in the unhealthy fruit that can, sometimes, grow on the tree of Protestant Scholasticism⁴⁴⁹ if we are not excessively diligent. While the precision of the Puritans is a good thing for belief, we must not let this definitional precision become a substitute for knowing God relationally. We need to know the truth about Christ correctly, but we also need to know him personally. We should follow the example of Daniel—who would have been among the most educated of the OT prophets (Moses and Ezra would have been others). Yet, Daniel in this prayer shows us that he not only knows about God (in an abstract way), but he knows God personally, as the God who loves him, and whom he loves.
3. What is the nature of the sin which Daniel confesses?
 - 3.1. Whose sin does he confess?
 - 3.1.1. He confesses the sins of his nation, but he includes himself in the confession.
 - 3.1.1.1. His use of 'we' and 'us' ten times may stand out as remarkable, given what we know about his character and how he was viewed by his contemporaries (Ezk 14.14, 20).
 - 3.1.1.2. 'Daniel, a righteous man, came before God confessing the sins of his nation, not saying, "They have sinned," but, "We have sinned" (Daniel 9.5). He took ownership for his own contribution to the problem of national sin. So should we all.'⁴⁵⁰
 - 3.1.2. Why do you think he used 'we' when he himself was a righteous man?
 - 3.1.2.1. He knew his own heart was no different from that in others. It was only by God's grace that he had been preserved from idolatry in a land steeped in superstitions.
 - 3.1.2.2. He likely believed that he was as much at fault as were his peers (and

⁴⁴⁸ "Of God, and of the Holy Trinity," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 2, paragraphs 1 & 2.

⁴⁴⁹ mb-soft.com/believe/txc/scholasp.htm; solascripturaministriesinternational.wordpress.com/2010/09/27/protestant-scholasticism/

⁴⁵⁰ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good . . . Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009), p. 82.

- ancestors) because he had not done more to proclaim and defend the righteousness demands of the holy God.
- 3.1.2.3. His inclusion of himself in the confession is neither perfunctory nor gratuitous.
- 3.2. What are some synonyms for sin he uses and the types of sin that he mentions?
- 3.2.1. Doing wrong (5), wickedness (5, 15), rebellion (5, 9), transgression (11), disobedience (implied in 10), iniquities (13), treachery (7), turning aside from the Law of God (5, 10, 11, 13), and having closed ears and not listening to God and his messengers (6, 10, 11, 13, 14).
- 3.3. What is a unifying factor underlying these sins?
- 3.3.1. They are not sins of ignorance or neglect but sins of wilful disobedience.
- 3.3.2. The many ways used to describe sin speaks of a great perversion and a twisted nature that would act against knowledge, light and truth.
- 3.3.3. They are sins which we should not expect from God's people who claim to know and love God.
- 3.4. Whom does he include with himself in these sins?
- 3.4.1. Israel's kings and princes (6, 8, 9) – the anointed ones who represented the people.
- 3.4.2. The fathers (6, 8) – the ones who saw God's miracles and with whom he made a covenant.
- 3.4.3. All Israel (7, 6, 8, 11) – the residents of the promised land and the holy city.
- 3.4.4. It is an comprehensive list, including high and low and from past to present.
- 3.4.5. Nehemiah (Neh 9.32, 34) appears to follow the example of Daniel and uses the same list in his prayer of confession, with the addition of the Priests.
4. What punishments for the people's sins does Daniel identify?
- 4.1. *Diaspora* (7) – Being driven from their homeland and scattered throughout the territory of the Babylonian Empire.
- 4.1.1. The Jews were scattered at the destruction of Samaria in 721BC and Jerusalem in 586 BC and many of them were absorbed into the surrounding peoples. Some returned from the Babylonian Captivity. But the Jews were destroyed and scattered again at the second destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- 4.1.1.1. There is no person alive today who could prove that he is a Jew (i.e., a descendant of Jacob). The physical descendants of Jacob's twelve sons can no longer be identified through a genealogical record. Those who call themselves 'Jews' and apply to live in Israel today may have blond hair and blue eyes, may have dark skin and black curly hair, or may have olive skin and dark brown hair. Which of these racial/ethnic groups are the descendants of Jacob according to the flesh?
- 4.1.1.2. The Jews reaped their reward for rejecting Jesus and continue to reap if through absorption into the nations of the world.
- 4.1.1.3. Thus their hope in a yet-to-come Messiah is vain. No son, born to a professing Jewess, could demonstrate that he was a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, and David.
- 4.1.1.4. Judaism is a false religion, since those who call themselves Jews today reject Jesus as the Messiah and as the second person of the Godhead.
- 4.1.1.5. Of course, this is considering Jews as a cultural/ethnic group. Individual Jews can be saved, and will be saved when they turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- 4.1.2. The scattering of the Jews is a sign for what happens when nations that have known of Christ reject their godly heritage. We see the consequences of this as Christians are being driven out of lands where Islam is in the ascendancy (e.g., Egypt and Iraq).
- 4.2. *Discipline* (11) – Bringing on themselves the curses God swore by oath, as recorded in the Law of Moses, which would come upon them for rebellion.
- 4.2.1. The particular curses that Daniel appears to have in mind are those recorded in

- Deuteronomy 28.15-68 (see also, Lev 26.14-45), and pronounced on Mount Ebal.
- 4.3. *Destruction* (12-14, 18) – Having to experience the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. This consisted of (2 Chron 36.17-20):
- 4.3.1. Siege.
 - 4.3.2. Slaughter of many.
 - 4.3.3. Plundering of the city.
 - 4.3.4. Levelling of the walls and houses.
 - 4.3.5. Removal of remainder of the Temple's vessels, including possibly the Ark of the Covenant if it had not been taken in 604 BC (see notes on Dan 1.1-2).
 - 4.3.6. Destruction of Solomon's Temple—the Wailing Wall is the only significant thing still remaining from that temple.
 - 4.3.7. Most of the rich and powerful Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon.
- 4.4. *Disaster* (12-14) – Experiencing calamities and disasters that were worse than anything ever experienced by any people.
- 4.4.1. What is it that makes these events unique in history?
 - 4.4.2. Other nations had suffered defeat and destruction—even genocide.
 - 4.4.3. The primary difference is that these nations were worshipers of pagan gods and their gods were worthless—neither helping nor hindering them. Their punishment was worked out in the general providence of God's dealings with the nations. For example, the destruction of all mankind—whose hearts were only wicked all the time (Gen 6.5)—by the Flood, or the decimation of Egypt by the ten plagues.
 - 4.4.4. In contrast Israel was God's own nation. The true, only, and living God took an active part in bringing punishment on his own people.
 - 4.4.5. Nothing like this had happened in history—the closest analogues were the destruction of all mankind by the Flood (which may have included some believers) and the Egyptian slavery.
- 4.5. *Defamation* (8, 16) – Having their name (i.e., Jews) become a byword and object of scorn to the nations around them, and bringing shame upon them.
- 4.5.1. Few men like to have a despised reputation and bad name.
 - 4.5.2. Having a bad name is considered to be as despicable as being struck with financial disaster.
 - 4.5.3. Some people will even commit suicide rather than have to live with being defamed and having a bad reputation.
 - 4.5.4. Throughout the period of the Babylonian Captivity and into the Persian period they were a despised people (Neh 4.2).
- 4.6. *Desolation* (17) – Having the Temple destroyed and left desolate.
- 4.6.1. The desolation of the Temple was a primary cause of grief for Daniel and his fellow Jews. The destruction of the Temple (and the city) happened during Daniel's lifetime (he would have been in his 30s) while he was serving as a senior administrator in Babylon. This must have been a source of additional grief to Daniel. He probably felt that there could have been more that he should have done to stop Nebuchadnezzar and his general Nebuzaraddan.
 - 4.6.2. It should be a cause for grief among all the saints when we see the desolation of God's living sanctuary—the Church. When desolation is wrought in congregations or denominations by false doctrine, teaching, worship, or practice we should be marked by grief for the Church of Jesus Christ.
- 4.7. *Demonstration* – God must punish sin even, and particularly, if it is found in his own people.
- 4.7.1. Judgement will start with the house of God because God must purge evil out of his Church (1 Pt 4.17).
 - 4.7.2. Of those to whom much is given, more is demanded (Lk 12.48). Those who know the true God are held to a higher standard for obedience—there simply cannot be an excuse for wilful rebellion among the people of God, because they cannot make ignorance

their excuse.

4.7.3. God's faithfulness to his own person and his covenant makes it imperative that he punish rebellion and disobedience among men.

5. What condition for avoiding punishment and receiving blessings does Daniel mention? (4)
 - 5.1. The only condition he mentions is that God's steadfast love is shown to those who love and keep (obey) his commandments.
 - 5.1.1. Consistent with Moses, Daniel reiterates the principle that obedience to God produces blessing, and disobedience results in punishment.
 - 5.1.2. The nation's captivity in Babylon was an outworking of this principle.
 - 5.2. How does Daniel represent his and the people's righteousness? (18)
 - 5.2.1. He declared that they had no innate righteousness.
 - 5.2.2. He disavows a works-based righteousness, knowing that all of his 'holy works' have been tainted with sin and any judicial righteousness that he has is from a merciful God.
 - 5.2.3. He espoused justification by faith without explicitly spelling it out.
 - 5.3. What can we conclude from comparing verses 4 and 18?
 - 5.3.1. Obedience to God's commandments is not the source of righteousness but the evidence of it.
 - 5.3.2. Those who are true to the Covenant will obey the Law. Jesus says essentially the same thing—if you love Jesus you will obey the Law (Jn 14.15; Jn 14.21, 23; 1 Jn 2.3; 1 Jn 5.3).
6. What petitions does Daniel make? (16-19)
 - 6.1. He asks God to:
 - 6.1.1. *Lift* (16, 19) – Lift his anger from Jerusalem and act on their behalf.
 - 6.1.2. *Look* (17, 18) – Look at the desolations of the city and then look with favour on (make his face shine upon) his sanctuary.
 - 6.1.3. *Listen* (17, 18, 19) – Listen to his (Daniel's) petitions for mercy on behalf of God's people and destroyed city and Temple.
 - 6.1.4. *Let-up* (19) – Forgive his people and remove the punishment from their backs.
 - 6.2. What does Daniel ask God to do specifically?
 - 6.2.1. He does not specify what God should do. He does not explicitly ask for the end of the captivity, but rather for the end of God's wrath against his people and holy city.
 - 6.2.2. He appeals to the God of all the earth—its creator and governor—to do right and leaves the specifics in God's hands.
 - 6.2.3. However, the implied request is for the speedy end of the captivity (2), the return to Judea, and the rebuilding of the city and Temple.
 - 6.3. What are some words we might use to express how Daniel presents his petitions.
 - 6.3.1. *Presumptuous* – It is bold, even presumptuous, for Daniel to suggest that God needs to look and listen—as if he had not been.
 - 6.3.2. *Pressing* – Daniel's urgency comes out in his petitions. It is time for God to act without delay. The speed with which Gabriel responds (21) indicates that God shared Daniel's concern. When it is the decreed time for God to act, he acts with immediate swiftness (e.g., Lev 10.1, 2; Acts 5.5; Gal 4.4).
 - 6.3.3. *Passionate* – Daniel cares greatly for God's people and his place.
 - 6.3.3.1. As we noted, "prayed" (4) is emphatic in the Hebrew, suggesting the fervency of his petitions.
 - 6.3.3.2. He is especially passionate in his closing words (19). The NIV and NASB correctly include exclamation marks to emphasize the power of Daniel's requests.
 - 6.4. Could these words be used to describe our prayers?
 - 6.4.1. *Presumptuous* – Boldly asking God to save the worst of sinners and forgive the worst

of sin (Heb 4.16).

6.4.2. *Pressing* – Pleading urgently for the salvation of the lost because we know what terrible damnation is in store for them.

6.4.3. *Passionate* – Pleading out of love for our fellows and for God's glory.

Are our prayers more than ritual and repetition? Are they real? Are they passively perfunctory, or are they presumptuous, pressing, and passionate?

7. What reasons does Daniel give, for why God should hear his prayer? (16-19)
 - 7.1. To display justice (16) – Justice in punishment has been served. Daniel is pointing out that since the 70 years of captivity are at an end, justice now demands the lifting of the punishment and the restoration of favour.
 - 7.2. Other grounds of Daniel's appeal are: God's mercy (18), God's name (18, 19) and God's possessions (17, 19).
 - 7.3. What is the ultimate foundation on which Daniel places his appeal?
 - 7.3.1. No reason is given that is based on man or man's needs; all the reasons are based upon God's will and desires.
 - 7.3.2. The foundation of Daniel's rationale for why God should hear and answer is God's own unchanging character.
 - 7.3.3. Ultimately the reason that God should act is for his own glory (17)
8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 8.1. *Model* – Daniel provides us with a model for how to structure and deliver our prayers.
 - 8.1.1. The structure of his prayer is a good one for us to use:
 - 8.1.1.1. *Adoration* – Praising God for his person and works.
 - 8.1.1.2. *Admission* – Confession of personal and national sin.
 - 8.1.1.3. *Acknowledgement* – Humbly professing the goodness and mercy of God.
 - 8.1.1.4. *Appeal* – Petitioning God to bring about the fulfillment of his promises.
 - 8.1.2. Daniel's delivery can also serve as a model for the attitude with which we should pray. We learn from Daniel's delivery that we need to have:
 - 8.1.2.1. *Conviction* – Conviction of God's righteousness and justice, and of mankind's sin and rebellion.
 - 8.1.2.2. *Compassion* – We need to care passionately about God's person, God's people, and God's place.
 - 8.1.2.3. *Confidence* – We must approach God in humble boldness, without fear or doubt, believing that we can challenge God to be faithful to his promises.
 - 8.2. *Message* – We should also learn from the content of his prayer.
 - 8.2.1. We need to extol the greatness of God in various ways. We can refer to the attributes of God that Daniel voiced in his prayer, including that God is: sovereign, great, awe inspiring, covenant keeping, the lawgiver, righteous, forgiving, truthful, and good.
 - 8.2.2. Like Daniel we need to repeatedly make confession of our sin; our personal commissions and omissions and our complicity with the sins of our nation.
 - 8.3. *Mercy* – With Daniel, we need to believe, without wavering, in God's merciful goodness.
 - 8.3.1. We must believe that we can appeal to God for mercy and seek his favour.
 - 8.3.2. We need to be encouraged that God hears and answers the prayers of penitent sinners.
 - 8.4. *Motive* – Our motive in prayer must be the same as Daniel's—that God will receive the glory.
 - 8.4.1. Like Daniel, we must come before God with a humble, serious, and reverent address.
 - 8.4.2. We must lay aside all conceit and confidence in our own righteousness.
 - 8.4.3. We must greatly desire that God will receive all the honour and glory.

Sent Servant (Dan 9.20-23)

1. What happened while Daniel was praying?
 - 1.1. Gabriel was sent to Daniel and reached him while he was still praying.

- 1.1.1. Gabriel obeyed God's command, as all the angels do (Ps 103.21), and carried a message to Daniel.
- 1.1.2. The ESV (NIV, NASB) translation says (21) that Gabriel 'came' to Daniel. The KJV translates it as 'touched'. Some suggest therefore that Daniel was so absorbed in his prayer that he didn't know that Gabriel was present until he touched him.
- 1.1.3. The Hebrew word could mean literally 'touched'. But it could also be an idiom, meaning that Gabriel reached (NKJV) him; that is, 'came' to him.
- 1.2. When had Daniel seen Gabriel before?
 - 1.2.1. '[I]n the vision at first'; the NIV translates it as 'earlier vision'.
 - 1.2.2. That may be the vision he had seen previously, recorded in chapter 8 (16); although that had been given to him about twelve years before this encounter with Gabriel.
 - 1.2.3. Verse 23 reads, "I, I have come" which seems to indicate that Gabriel was sent to Daniel personally and not in a vision this second time. The personal visit emphasizes the importance of the message he was carrying (compare with, Lk 1.19, 26-27).
- 1.3. Who is Gabriel?
 - 1.3.1. When we encountered Gabriel in Daniel 8.16 we noted that Gabriel:
 - 1.3.1.1. Is mentioned only in Daniel 8.16; Daniel 9.21 and Luke 1.19, 26.
 - 1.3.1.2. Has (or had in these instances) an appearance like a man (Dan 8.15; Dan 9.21). Other angels, such as the cherubim (Ezk 1.5-11; Ezk 10.15) have different appearances
 - 1.3.1.3. Along with Michael (Dan 10.13, 21; Dan 12.1; Jude 9; Rev 12.7) are the only two angels named in the Bible.
 - 1.3.1.4. Means 'man of God' or 'mighty one of God'.
 - 1.3.1.5. He is possibly an archangel, along with Michael (Jude 9).
 - 1.3.2. Apparently Gabriel is the chief angel God uses for carrying messages directly from his throne to mankind, as he did with Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary (and possibly Joseph). Again, this emphasizes the importance of the message he was carrying.
- 1.4. How did he come to Daniel?
 - 1.4.1. In swift flight (ESV/NIV/NKJV/KJV/Geneva 1599)—indicating the urgency of the mission he was on and the importance of the message he was carrying, and that the answer to Daniel's prayer was not to be delayed (19).
 - 1.4.2. The NASB translates this portion of verse 21 as "in my extreme weariness". A number of prominent commentators (e.g., Keil, Leupold) also conclude that this is how it should be translated (or something similar); however E. J. Young says that "to fly swiftly ... gives a good sense but does not accurately represent the original."⁴⁵¹ The arguments for translating this phrase as "in my extreme weariness" include:
 - 1.4.2.1. The Hebrew uses the words for weariness (literally: 'being weary in weariness he touched me'); but angels cannot be said to grow tired, so they apply the weariness to Daniel.
 - 1.4.2.2. The translation 'in swift flight' apparently requires a conjecture that the words used here come from a different root word than is in the Hebrew Masoretic text (i.e., *עָרַף* rather than *נָפַח*).
 - 1.4.2.3. Daniel was probably exhausted after his fasting and prayer (3).
 - 1.4.3. The arguments in favour of translating the phrase as 'in swift flight' include:
 - 1.4.3.1. Angels (e.g., cherubs and seraphs) are described as having wings (Ex 25.20; Is 6.2; Ezk 1.6, 11, 19, 24). Even if Gabriel didn't have wings *per se*, he could still have been described as flying.
 - 1.4.3.2. It may not be conjecture to understand the root word as 'fly' rather than as 'weary'. Halliday for example, in his lexicon, provides this rendering (i.e., *נָפַח*) under *נָפַח*, effectively redirecting to *עָרַף* (see, for example, Job 5.7; Job 20.8; Ps

⁴⁵¹ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 190.

18.10).

1.4.3.3. Two old Greek manuscripts translate the phrase as ‘flying’ (πετόμενος) and as ‘swiftly being carried along’ (τάχει φερόμενος). This seems to indicate that translators, much closer to the time when Daniel was written than we are, understood the meaning of phrase to be along the lines of how most of the prominent English translations have translated the phrase.

1.5. Where did Gabriel come from?

1.5.1. He probably came from the presence of God. Therefore, he came from Heaven.

2. How quickly did God answer Daniel’s prayer?

2.1. When he began his prayer, the answer from Heaven was on its way (23)?

2.2. Does God answer all prayer this quickly?

2.2.1. Yes (Ps 66.20; Ps 91.15; Is 30.19; Is 58.9; Is 65.24; Mt 18.19; Jn 16.23; James 1.5; 1 Jn 5.14-15).

2.2.2. God knows what we will pray for before we even ask it (Mt 6.8).

2.3. Is there such a thing as ‘unanswered prayer’?

2.3.1. The only possible answer, without contradicting God’s word, can be that there is no such thing as unanswered prayer.

2.4. How then do we deal with what appears to be unanswered prayer?

2.4.1. Some ‘prayer’ is not prayer. The utterances of the heathen or of unbelievers to an unknown god is not the prayer that comes from a person declared righteous in Christ (Prov 15.8, 29; James 5.16).

2.4.2. If we are living in rebellious, un-repentant sin our prayers are not valid (Ps 66.18, 19; Prov 28.9; Mt 6.12).

2.4.3. If we pray to have our selfish desires, and not truly for what is in God’s will (Jn 14.13, 14), our prayers are not legitimate.

2.4.4. God *always* answers the true prayers of believers. However, some answers can be, ‘Yes.’ ‘Yes, but in a way that you don’t expect.’ ‘Yes, but in my time.’ ‘No this is not according to my great plan for your good; but have faith, I am with you.’ Sometimes God’s answer is ‘no’ to our legitimate needs, desires, hopes, and wishes.

2.5. How, then, can we explain the situation when Christians offer sincere prayers, for righteous things, and pray in a proper manner. For example, what if we have been praying for years for the conversion of relative and it appears that God is not answering, what are we to conclude in this case? Let’s consider some examples:

2.5.1. Moses (Dt 3.23-28) – Moses was given an answer. The answer was, ‘no’ to crossing over but God gave him a vision of the land, gave him Joshua as his successor to take the people across, and took him across into a better promised land—do you think Moses cared about having missed the crossing of the Jordan once he was with Christ in an everlasting existence?

2.5.2. Jesus (Mt 26.36-44) – No one could accuse Jesus of praying an unrighteous prayer. He prayed three times for the cup to be removed, believing that all things are possible with God; but he prayed that the cup was to be removed only if it was the Father’s will. He was in constant communion with the Father, and there can be no doubt that his prayer was heard. Yet, in his case the answer was, ‘No, the cup cannot be removed if salvation is to be accomplished.’ But after praying in agony three times about the matter Jesus humbly and willingly submitted to the Father’s will and went out to complete his temporal life’s calling and work.

2.5.3. Paul (2 Cor 12.8) – Paul pleaded with God three times to have his infirmity removed. God answered him, not by removing his infirmity but by teaching him that the infirmity was intended to keep him humble so that he could be effective as a minister of the word. God also assured Paul that his grace was sufficient for all that he needed.

2.5.4. When Christians say that God did not answer their prayers—for example, when a child

- died of cancer over the pleas of her parents, or a person did not receive the promotion he had been hoping and praying for—they mean that God did not answer the way they *wanted* their prayers to be answered.
- 2.6. What must we conclude about answered prayer?
- 2.6.1. It must be expectant, not demanding. Full-faith prayer must be believing, bold, and balanced. Or, presumptuous, pressing passionate, as we noted were attributes of Daniel's prayer.
- 2.6.2. God's answer is always for our best in the long term, according to his plan and will. We must trust that the omniscient, omnipotent, and good God really does have our best interests in mind (Rom 8.28).
- 2.6.3. We won't fully appreciate how God has worked things out until we reach Glory. We are confused now because we are like someone watching for the first time an unfamiliar game (e.g., cricket, baseball, soccer, football). We don't know the rules, we are not clear about the purpose of particular moves or referee calls. We need to remember that we are to ask for what will please God. He will respond in ways that will amaze us into an everlasting existence.
- 2.7. What is the meaning of "a word went out" (23)
- 2.7.1. The ESV provides the most literal translation. The NIV has "the answer was given"; the NASB (KJV/NKJV, similar) has "the command was issued".
- 2.7.2. What word went out? How are we to interpret this?
- 2.7.3. If we understand it as a 'command' who did the command go to?
- 2.7.3.1. It could have been the command given to Gabriel to go to give Daniel the answer to his prayer by explaining what was to happen over the coming ~490 years.
- 2.7.3.2. Alternatively, it could have been the command (decree) that was issued by Cyrus allowing the return of the captives to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. This is the interpretation that Calvin gives.⁴⁵²
- 2.7.4. Alternatively the 'word' may be the prophecy that follows in verses 24-27, which the angel was sent to tell Daniel.
- 2.7.4.1. This seems to fit the context better, since the word that went out was what Gabriel was sent to tell Daniel ("and I have come to tell it to you") because he was greatly loved.
- 2.7.4.2. In other words, Gabriel was sent to answer Daniel's prayer by speaking a word of prophetic-future.
3. What was Daniel doing when he received the answer to his prayer? What can we observe about his act of prayer?
- 3.1. *Supplicating* – He was confessing his personal sin (along with that of the nation).
- 3.1.1. It may be surprising that Daniel was confessing his own sin.
- 3.1.1.1. He was among the holiest of men to walk the earth (Ezk 14.14).
- 3.1.1.2. He hadn't participated in the sins that had led his nation into captivity.
- 3.1.2. Even though he was a good man, he knew that he was still far from perfect (1 Jn 1.8), and it was only because of God's grace that he was kept from the great sins (idolatry, rebellion, and being unthankful) which had plagued Israel.
- 3.2. *Sustaining* – He was praying in the will of God—for the right thing.
- 3.2.1. His plea was on behalf of God's holy hill.
- 3.2.2. It is always a proper thing to pray for the Church and the advancement of the kingdom of God (Mt 6.10).
- 3.3. *Sacrificing* – His prayer went up at the time of the evening sacrifice (Ezra 9.5).
- 3.3.1. He was participating in an act of worship at the appointed time.

⁴⁵² Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.iv.xxviii.html
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- 3.3.2. Obviously there was no actual sacrifice since the Temple had been destroyed. However, prayer (Ps 141.2) and praise in the Psalms (Ps 27.6; Ps 69.30-31; Ps 107.22; Heb 13.15, 16; 1 Pt 2.5) are the permanent spiritual equivalents of the symbolic forms (e.g., incense and animal sacrifices) in the OT ceremonial system.
4. What are the reasons why Gabriel was sent to Daniel?
- 4.1. *Not* directly, or immediately, because Daniel was praying.
- 4.1.1. It might be a surprise that the reasons given do not arise from Daniel's prayer or from anything to do with Daniel himself. However, the evidence that this is the case is given in the account.
- 4.1.1.1. The order for Gabriel to go to Daniel was given as he *began* to pray (23). It wasn't Daniel's prayer that moved God to act.
- 4.1.1.2. Daniel didn't seek an answer to a question or an explanation of future events. His prayer was focused on asking God to forgive Israel and to restore her to her former land and glory.
- 4.1.2. Gabriel's appearance was not something Daniel had been looking for—in fact he probably would not have wanted Gabriel to appear, based on his previous exhausting encounter in which Gabriel had played a part (Dan 8.16, 27).
- 4.1.3. God responded to Daniel's prayer by directing Cyrus to act (Is 44.28; Is 45.21). It was God's appointed time to act.
- 4.2. *Revelation* – God's primary purpose for sending Gabriel was to reveal truth. (22)
- 4.2.1. God does not want mankind to be in ignorance about his nature, character, and purposes, so he reveals himself to men. He instructs men through various forms of revelation:
- 4.2.1.1. Innate – what we are born knowing, such as how to process language, what a smile or loving hug mean, and about the existence of God and his moral absolutes (Rom 1.19-20, 32)
- 4.2.1.2. Natural – what we learn about God as the intelligent designer from observing the beauty, complexity, and intricacy of his creative work (Ps 19.1; Ps 50.6)
- 4.2.1.3. Special – direct, extraordinary communication from God, including direct voices from Heaven, theophanies, visions, dreams, and angelic messengers
- 4.2.1.4. Personal – the revelation of God through Jesus Christ; who is the express image of God, in human form (2 Cor 4.4; Col 1.15; Heb 1.2-3)
- 4.2.1.5. Written (verbal) – a form of special revelation that was incorporated into a permanent record—the Bible (2 Tim 3.15-16)
- 4.2.1.6. Salvific – the work of the Holy Spirit in changing our hearts so that we no longer suppress the truth and come to know Christ in a saving way (2 Cor 1.22; 2 Cor 4.6).
- 4.2.2. If it were not for God being a revealer of truth, we could know nothing about the transcendent or supernatural. We would not, and could not, know about:
- 4.2.2.1. God himself – his spirit and tri-unity essence
- 4.2.2.2. Creation – how he created; this comes only from revelation in Genesis 1.1-31 and Genesis 2.1-25.
- 4.2.2.3. Our reason for existence – to glorify God
- 4.2.2.4. Why evil exists; and more importantly, why goodness exists – how sin arose through the rebellion of Adam and Eve
- 4.2.2.5. God's redemptive plan; including about the Redeemer himself – the Gospels are essential truth
- 4.2.2.6. Heaven and Hell – the truth of their existence comes only from the Bible.
- 4.2.3. Men think they are so smart and believe that they can learn everything they need to know from perception and empirical research guided by native reason. But in reality men would know, and could know, *nothing* at all if God didn't reveal truth.

- 4.2.3.1. Our ability to think and reason is dependent on God and our thinking his thoughts after him (Acts 17.28). Calvin opens his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with a consideration of knowledge and says, “[I]t is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”⁴⁵³
- 4.2.3.2. Man does not come into the world as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate), without any built-in mental content. God endows mankind with innate knowledge from basic animal-like instincts such as knowing how to breath and suckle, through the ability to structure language and communicate, to a knowledge of God’s existence (Rom 1.19-20), and of moral absolutes (Rom 1.32).
- 4.2.3.3. Even with innate knowledge and the extensive knowledge we can learn over time, we still need God’s revelation.
 - 4.2.3.3.1. Daniel had undoubtedly studied the Scriptures in great detail and was an eminently wise man—we have seen many examples of his wisdom as we have studied the events recorded in this book.
 - 4.2.3.3.2. Even so, Daniel needed to be given instruction from God to know about God’s redemptive plan before it was made manifest in history.
 - 4.2.3.3.3. If a man, as endowed and gifted as Daniel, needed to receive instruction from God, clearly we all need God’s instruction.
- 4.2.4. In this instance of special revelation, God wanted Daniel to have insight and understanding about his program for his people over the next half-millennium leading to the incarnation of the Messiah and Redeemer.
- 4.2.5. Does God send messengers like Gabriel to men today to reveal truth to them?
 - 4.2.5.1. There has been debate throughout the centuries about this topic.
 - 4.2.5.2. It seems best to conclude (without engaging here in a defence of the position), that while God is not limited and could send messengers like Gabriel to men today, he does not.
 - 4.2.5.3. The reasons for stating this view are primarily:
 - 4.2.5.3.1. The purpose of special revelation was to reveal the coming Christ and his redemptive plan. Once Christ had appeared and his work was recorded in Scripture, special revelation was complete and is now no longer needed.
 - 4.2.5.3.2. Only God’s word in Scripture is self-authenticating. Messages which men claim to receive today from God often contradict Scripture and contradict the messages which other men claim to have received. We cannot be certain that what men claim to have received from God is truth or a delusion.
- 4.3. *Recognition* – Gabriel was sent to Daniel because Daniel was greatly loved by God. (23)
 - 4.3.1. The Hebrew word translated here as ‘greatly loved’ doesn’t come from the root word which is commonly translated as ‘love’ or ‘loved’. The NIV and NASB translate the word as ‘highly esteemed’. The root word can have the meaning ‘desired’ or ‘precious’. The word is used to speak of the value of gold (Ezra 8.27) and costly garments (Gen 27.15).
 - 4.3.2. Daniel was considered to be a “very precious treasure” by God.
 - 4.3.3. Why was Daniel thought to be such a treasure by God or so greatly loved by God?
 - 4.3.3.1. We might want to posit that the reason was because Daniel was so holy, faithful, and useful contending for truth in the face of Babylonian and Persian paganism. In other words, God loved Daniel because of Daniel’s character and works.

⁴⁵³ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), book 1.1. 2, p. 37.

- 4.3.3.2. This is a dangerous position since it could lead to the idea of works-righteousness and merit-based recognition before God. Daniel's own prayer indicates otherwise. He considered himself a sinner who needed to confess his sins.
- 4.3.3.3. It is also a dangerous position since it misrepresents the love of God. God's love is graciously and freely offered. It does not depend on who we are or on what we have done, but on what God chooses to do (Dt 4.37; Dt 7.6-9; Jn 3.16; Jn 15.13; Rom 5.6, 8).
- 4.3.3.4. All of God's children, who have been saved by grace and adopted into his household are greatly loved by God (Rom 8.37; Eph 2.4; 2 Thess 2.16; 1 Jn 4.10, 19).
- 4.3.4. Gabriel wasn't sent to Daniel because Daniel was a favourite of Heaven, in some way more loved than other believers; nor was he sent to Daniel because Daniel's solemn prayer was particularly pleasing to God (he had barely opened his mouth and Gabriel was sent).
 - 4.3.4.1. We are not to conclude from this verse that even though God loves all his children, he loves some more. This would contradict the 'so loved' of John 3.16.
 - 4.3.4.2. Some people, however, might argue that Jesus loved John in a particularly intimate way (Jn 13.23; Jn 19.26; Jn 20.2; Jn 21.7, 20); and that God loved Daniel in this same way. These references are all from John's own account. He is probably not saying that he was loved *more* than the other disciples, but rather marvelling in the fact that he was loved at all—John is the disciple of love, using the term more than any of the other Gospel writers. Only Paul uses the term more often on a relative basis (i.e., as a percentage of total words).
 - 4.3.4.3. God's love is infinite and when it is directed toward us, it is an infinite love. There cannot be *more* love than 'infinite love' (Jer 31.3; Jn 15.9, 12; Jn 17.26; Rom 8.39).
- 4.3.5. Daniel was recognized as having been loved by God and thus as being a true believer in the coming Messiah. So God, at his appointed time, chose to favour mankind and send revelation about the future arrival-time of the Messiah, through the prophet Daniel.
- 4.4. Both of the reasons (revelation and recognition) for why Gabriel was sent to Daniel are based on God—his gracious desire to reveal and communicate truth to his people and to shower upon them his love.
- 5. What was Gabriel's command to Daniel?
 - 5.1. He was to consider and understand the vision.
 - 5.2. What vision was he speaking of?
 - 5.2.1. Possibly the one recorded in chapter 8. However, that was given to him about 12 years before this encounter with Gabriel.
 - 5.2.2. More likely it is the words which follow (24-27). They don't take the form of previous visions such as animals with horns; and Gabriel appears in human form. Therefore the 'vision' is a generic reference to revelation rather than to the specific form in which it was delivered.
 - 5.3. Gabriel wanted Daniel to pay careful attention to what was about to be revealed to him, because of the:
 - 5.3.1. *Content* – The content focuses on the coming of the Messiah. It is the most explicit statement in the OT about the time when Israel should expect the Messiah to arrive, even though it was announced almost 500 years before it happened.
 - 5.3.2. *Chronology* – The prophecy lays out extraordinarily explicit milestones that lead to, and conclude with, the crucifixion of the Messiah.
 - 5.3.3. *Challenge* – The prophecy, even from our *post hoc* perspective, causes much debate in

the Church. Aspects of it are difficult to understand. Before the events occurred the message would have been even more challenging to interpret.

6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 6.1. *Learning* – God wants man to know and understand the truth about himself.
 - 6.1.1. God is a God who desires to have his person and purposes known by his rational creatures. He is not an unknown, or unknowable, God.
 - 6.1.2. He has endowed man with a reflection (image) of his own nature and wishes men to learn about himself and come to love him. To that end, he provides ample revelation to make himself known.
 - 6.1.3. Therefore, we should take every opportunity and make every effort to learn about God from what he has communicated to us through general and special revelation. In particular, we should study the Bible. It would be good for us to heed Gabriel's words to Daniel, "therefore consider the word and understand," and make that our life's objective.
 - 6.2. *Love* – God loves mankind and displays his love through revelation of himself to us, through dealing providentially with us, and through hearing and answering our prayers.
 - 6.2.1. God hears and answers prayer—immediately.
 - 6.2.1.1. We may not be listening for the answer to our prayers or necessarily like the answer that we receive; but God answers prayer!
 - 6.2.2. In the context of this account we learn that God answers our prayers in ways we cannot expect, and goes beyond what we hope for.
 - 6.2.2.1. We may not see this now or believe it (for example, when we have been praying for the salvation of a friend, for healing of a friend, or for the lifting of a particular burden).
 - 6.2.2.2. However, sometimes in this life when we reflect upon past events we see how God has worked out events beyond what we could have imagined. For example, someone may have lost a job and God opened entirely different (and exciting) doors; we became ill and missed an important event, but God changed the course of our life.
 - 6.2.2.3. When we reach Glory and reflect back on the way God deployed his plan for our lives we will then truly say that God's love worked out all things for our good (Rom 8.28) and we will never cease to marvel at the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom 11.33).
 - 6.3. *Liturgy* – Daniel provides us with a model for prayer.
 - 6.3.1. We considered the content of his prayer in the previous section (4b-19).
 - 6.3.2. In this section we considered his act of praying. Our prayer should be like Daniel's and be:
 - 6.3.2.1. *Supplicating* – Our prayer should be based on a humble confession of our sins and unworthiness to receive any blessings from God.
 - 6.3.2.2. *Sustaining* – We should pray only for what is agreeable with the will of God.
 - 6.3.2.3. *Sacrificing* – Our prayer should be offered up as a spiritual sacrifice of worship.
 - 6.3.2.4. As the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* puts it (Q98): "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God *for things agreeable to his will* [2], in the name of Christ, with *confession of our sins* [1], and *thankful acknowledgement of his mercies* [3]."

Seventy Sevens (Dan 9.24-27)

1. What is the key measure of time in this passage?
 - 1.1. 'Seventy' and 'sevens', or 'seventy sevens'.
 - 1.2. The Hebrew text does not say 'seventy weeks', but rather 'seventy sevens' as in the ESV footnote.

- 1.2.1. The NIV has the opposite, the ‘seven’ in the body of the text and the ‘weeks’ in the footnote. The NIV has, in this instance, a more literal translation.
- 1.2.2. The Hebrew actually reads ‘sevens seventy’ with the ‘seven’ placed first for emphasis.
- 1.3. What measure of time is represented by the ‘seventy sevens’?
 - 1.3.1. A text (mostly in fragments) found at Qumran (in 1956) appears to give a Jewish eschatological interpretation as seven Jubilee periods; which would give either 343 or 350 years, depending on whether the Jubilee was assumed to occur in the 49th or 50th year of a Jubilee cycle.⁴⁵⁴
 - 1.3.2. Many interpreters, following the *traditional Christian messianic interpretation* (for example, presented in its essentials by Augustine) conclude that the seventy ‘sevens’ should be understood, not as a literal seventy weeks (i.e., a little under a year and half), but as 490 time elements—specifically 490 years.
 - 1.3.2.1. We might be challenged as to why we should not conclude that the seventy ‘sevens’ are not a literal seventy weeks, when in chapter 8 we concluded that the 2,300 days were a literal count of days.
 - 1.3.2.2. However, 490 days would not provide enough time for the events prophesied in this section to occur—we know from history that nothing like the events mentioned in 24-27 occurred within the time immediately following the date of this vision.
 - 1.3.2.3. If Daniel had meant for us to understand the time period as 490 *days*, he probably would have added ‘of days’ after the seventy ‘sevens’ as he does in Daniel 10.2-3, where he says ‘three sevens of days’ (i.e., ‘three weeks’).
 - 1.3.2.4. Also, we need to reject the idea that the period refers to 490 weeks of seven days (i.e., 3,430 days, or about 9 ½ years) for the same reason—i.e., no events corresponding to those prophesied in this vision occurred in the 9-10 years following the deliverance of the vision.
 - 1.3.2.5. The ‘years’ are assumed to be standard natural astronomical years, based on the revolution of the earth around the sun and not liturgical years (which were shorter by about 5 days). There is nothing in the text or in the book of Daniel which indicates that Daniel was measuring time based on a shortened Jewish liturgical calendar. Also Daniel, having been trained in the Babylonian literature and language (Dan 1.4), would have been fully knowledgeable of the concept of year having 365.25 days, even if the Jews or Babylonians did not use an exact solar calendar.
 - 1.3.3. Some interpreters conclude that the ‘sevens’ refer to an indefinite, symbolic, time period and that we do not need to attempt to find a literal fulfillment of the seventy ‘sevens’. Some reasons for not taking this view, include:
 - 1.3.3.1. The division of the seventy ‘sevens’ into parts (seven, sixty-two, and one) seems to imply that definite periods are under consideration.
 - 1.3.3.2. The period covered by the seventy ‘sevens’ should at least be representative of the periods covered by the visions elsewhere in Daniel—i.e., from Daniel’s day to the time of the Messiah—not to a shorter period (e.g., to the return from the Babylonian Captivity) or much longer period (e.g., to events which supposedly will occur in our future, before the return of Christ).
 - 1.3.3.3. The introduction of an explicit starting point, the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (25), indicates that the time period covers actual history with identifiable dates and not a symbolic framework for history.
 - 1.3.4. What are some reasons for interpreting the seventy ‘sevens’ as 490 years?
 - 1.3.4.1. Daniel knew of God’s plan for the Babylonian Captivity in terms of seventy years (Dan 9.2; Jer 25.11-12). So when he heard of seventy ‘sevens’ (lit. seven

⁴⁵⁴ Jack Finegan. *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998) p. 128.

- seventies) he likely thought in terms of seven times the period of the Captivity—i.e., 490 years.
- 1.3.4.2. The Jews had been given by God the concept of different sabbath rests: ‘seven days’ (a week), ‘seven years’, and individual feast days. The sabbatical year was every seventh year (Lev 25.1–8). Thus, 490 years would be required to complete 70 sabbatical years with one occurring every seventh year.⁴⁵⁵
- 1.3.4.3. As we will see, the events prophesied in this section point to the arrival of the Messiah—this occurred 490 years from the time of this vision given to Daniel.
- 1.4. It is important that we start with the correct interpretation of the seventy ‘sevens’ as we continue our study of this section.
- 1.4.1. This section is considered important by many because, if correctly interpreted, it shows the accuracy of Biblical prophecy.
- 1.4.2. This section seems to have generated the most controversy (based on the amount that has been written and the divergence of opinions) of any portion of the Book of Daniel, and possibly more than for any other four verses in Scripture.
- 1.4.3. Some interpreters attempt to use this passage to predict future events (relative to our time⁴⁵⁶), others claim that its failure as prophecy is ‘proof’ that the Bible is not accurate.⁴⁵⁷ We reject both of these interpretations and take the (simple) view that Daniel 9.24-27 provides an explicit prophecy about the coming Messiah and events primarily associated with his coming.
- 1.4.4. As we study this section, we will not systematically review the many divergent opinions that have been proposed for thousands of years on how it should be interpreted. We explicitly reject any premillennial or dispensational interpretation which leads to nothing but speculation (e.g. a gap of thousands of years between the sixty-ninth and seventieth ‘seven’ with the Church as essentially an ‘after thought’ in God’s mind) and ‘date setting’, which Jesus and the apostles warn us is not possible (Mt 25.13; Mk 13.32; Acts 1.7; 1 Thess 5.1-2; 2 Pt 3.10).
- 1.5. What does Daniel tell us about the seventy ‘sevens’?
- 1.5.1. They were decreed.
- 1.5.2. The particular word translated ‘decreed’ (ESV, NIV, NASB; ‘determined’ NKJV, KJV) appears here only in the OT.
- 1.5.3. In later (e.g., 2nd century BC to the early Middle Ages; in the Targum, Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and Midrashic literature) Hebrew/Aramaic writings the word appears to have the meaning ‘cut off’ or ‘cut out’.⁴⁵⁸
- 1.5.4. The implication appears to be that God has decreed (cut out) a specific period of time (i.e., 490 years) to bring to a conclusion the history of the Old (or Former) Covenant and the Jews (‘your people’, ‘your holy city’) for whom Daniel has prayed (4b-19), through the coming of the Messiah (as we will see below) and the introduction of the last/latter days, or the New Covenant era.
2. What things were to occur before the end of the seventy ‘sevens’? (24)
- 2.1. With whom, or what, is this prophecy primarily dealing?
- 2.1.1. This prophecy is concerned with the history of Israel and the city of Jerusalem (19, 24a) and not with general world history (e.g., the world empires as in chapters 2, 7, or 8) or NT church history and global geo-politics to the end of time, as many today propose.

⁴⁵⁵ Some commentators refer to 2 Chronicles 36.21 as providing additional evidence. However, if 1 & 2 Chronicles was composed by Ezra, then the concept of the seventy-year Babylonian Captivity providing a rest to make up for the sabbatical years which the Jews had failed to keep, was not known to Daniel, since Ezra wrote after the death of Daniel.

⁴⁵⁶ For example, to identify the antichrist within contemporary events; such as suggesting that Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan might be the antichrist; skipslighthouse.blogspot.ca/2013/09/my-guess-as-to-identity-of-antichrist.html?spref=fb

⁴⁵⁷ Chris Sandoval, *The Failure of Daniel's Prophecies* (2007); www.infidels.org/library/modern/chris_sandoval/daniel.html

⁴⁵⁸ R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999).

- 2.1.2. God planned to complete six things for the his people Israel. The basis of all of these accomplishments is the work of the Messiah (Christ) on the cross.
- 2.2. With sin: [1] “to finish the transgression,” [2] “to put an end to sin,” and [3] “to atone for iniquity [wickedness]”. What do these three clauses refer to?
 - 2.2.1. Numerous attempts have been made to read specific meaning into each of these separate clauses based upon detailed word studies and historical circumstances. However, all three are dealing with essentially the same thing—putting an end to sin, man’s rebellion against God. The three-fold repetition seems to be used to reinforce the completeness of what is to be accomplished.
 - 2.2.2. However, if there is differentiation and progression and not just reinforcement in these three clauses, then it may go from a consideration of a specific national act of rebellion to sin in general and to a climax of making reconciliation for iniquity through atonement.
 - 2.2.3. The prophecy does not say that ‘your transgressions’ or ‘your sins’ will be dealt with, but transgression and sin in general. Therefore, before the completion of the 490 years, something will occur which will deal, once and for all time, with the curse of sin.
 - 2.2.4. While it is true that at the end of time all sin on earth will be abolished, there is *only* one way that transgression (rebellion), sin, and iniquity (wickedness) can be finished, put to an end, and atoned for—it is the initiative and work of God through the substitutionary, atoning death of Christ on the cross (Jn 19.30; Heb 9.26).
 - 2.2.5. It was not Christ’s second coming (to judge, renovate the creation, and raise the dead), but his first coming (his death and resurrection) that was decreed to deal definitively with man’s sin.
 - 2.2.6. Of course, Christ’s work on the cross applies not only to the believers (true spiritual Israel) under the Old Covenant who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, but also to all believers (true spiritual Israel) under the New Covenant who look back on the coming of the Messiah as their definitive solution to sin.
- 2.3. With the inauguration of the New Covenant
 - 2.3.1. [4] “To bring in everlasting righteousness” – Sin being atoned for through the death of Christ, God will bring in everlasting righteousness. What could this mean?
 - 2.3.1.1. Literally, the phrase means “to bring in righteousness of ages”.
 - 2.3.1.2. Some (many) conclude that this refers to a millennial kingdom. However, neither premillennialists nor postmillennialists believe that there will be *absolute* righteousness during a millennial kingdom on earth and conclude that there will be some form of falling away before the end. It is not necessary to introduce a future (relative to us) 1,000 years to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of this passage.
 - 2.3.1.3. Jesus procured an *objective* ‘everlasting righteousness’ through his death. His death was a once-for-all payment for sin (Heb 10.12). Animal sacrifices which could not permanently remove sin (Heb 10.1-3) are no longer required.
 - 2.3.1.4. In addition, Christians living through faith in Christ, in the Church age (the latter days/last days) in which we now live are a fulfillment of this prophecy, having a *subjective* righteousness (Jer 23.5-6; Jer 31.33-34; Lk 1.70; Jn 16.8-10; Acts 3.18, 19, 26; Rom 1.16, 17; Rom 3.21, 22; Rom 4.3, 5; Rom 5.17; Rom 8.4; 2 Cor 5.21; Heb 10.16-17; 1 Pt 2.24).
 - 2.3.2. [5] “To seal up both vision and prophet [prophecy]” – What could this mean? It could mean either, or both:
 - 2.3.2.1. To fulfill or complete prophecy, with God’s seal of authentication (1 Ki 21.8; Est 3.12; Dan 6.17). Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of all the OT prophecies (Lk 24.44; Acts 3.24).
 - 2.3.2.2. To bring to an end prophecy, by sealing it as complete (Jer 32.10-15; Dan 8.26; Dan 12.4, 9). Jesus is the final prophet (Dt 18.15, 18; Acts 3.22-23; Heb 1.1-2)

- and the prophetic age came with the closure of the NT canon under the direction of his appointed apostles.
- 2.3.2.3. In either case, or in both cases, Jesus seals up vision and prophecy.
 - 2.3.3. [6] “To anoint a [the] most holy place [thing or one]” – What could this mean?
 - 2.3.3.1. The Hebrew does not specify what precisely is to be anointed. It reads “holy of holies” (or ‘holiness of holinesses’; קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשִׁים). The ESV (and NASB, in italics) adds the word ‘place’. The NIV (as with the NKJV/KJV, LXX and Vulgate) does not add the word ‘place’ and is more accurate, in this instance.
 - 2.3.3.2. A typical Jew reading this would have concluded that this was a reference to the most holy *place* (the inner-most room) in the Temple. So, many interpreters today conclude that this is referring to an inner room in a future temple to be built at the inauguration of a millennial age.
 - 2.3.3.3. However, Jesus refers to himself as the true temple (Jn 2.18-21; Rev 21.22). The “holy of holies” in the OT symbols pointed to Jesus. Nothing could be more holy than Jesus (Mk 1.24; Acts 4.27, 30). Therefore, it is possible and likely, that the reference here is to the anointing of the ‘most holy *one*’ (ESV footnote).
 - 2.3.3.4. Jesus was anointed through his baptism with the Holy Spirit (Is 61.1; Lk 4.18; Jn 1.32, 33; Acts 4.26; Acts 10.38). The very name he bears as Christ (Messiah, ‘anointed’; Jn 1.41) indicates that he is *the* anointed holy one.
 - 2.3.4. All these things were to be accomplished by the Messiah, and have been definitively accomplish.
 - 2.3.4.1. No other person or set of events in history can be the fulfillment of this prophecy.
 - 2.3.4.2. We do not need to wait for a future fulfillment in an eschatological millennial kingdom.
 - 2.4. The six things to be accomplished before the end of the seventy ‘sevens’ are all fulfilled in Christ Jesus. We have here a glorious prophecy of his coming. Although Leupold doesn’t agree with my interpretation of this verse (or the entire section) his declaration is valid, “In these six statements we have the sum of all the good things that God promised to men perfectly realized.”⁴⁵⁹
3. What was the starting point from which the time period was to be measured? (25)
- 3.1. The decree was to relate to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem; not only to the Temple or the walls.
 - 3.1.1. This follows from Daniel’s prayer (16), to which Daniel was given a speedy reply (19) by Gabriel.
 - 3.2. The most logical candidate for this decree is the one made by Cyrus to rebuild the Temple, which is usually considered to have been given 538⁴⁶⁰ BC (2 Chron 36.23; Ezra 1.1-4; compare with Is 44.28⁴⁶¹; Is 45.1, 13).
 - 3.2.1. It is clear that Daniel was expecting an immediate end to the captivity and a restoration of the city of Jerusalem when he asked the LORD not to delay (19), and Gabriel’s appearance to him while he was still praying (21) reinforces the imminent end to the captivity.
 - 3.2.2. In addition, there is extra-Biblical evidence that provides support for assuming that this decree of Cyrus is the one Daniel was expecting. The *Cyrus Cylinder* states, “I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, ... All the kings of the entire world from the Upper to the Lower Sea, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my feet

⁴⁵⁹ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 416.

⁴⁶⁰ Some place it in 537 BC; others in 536 BC.

⁴⁶¹ Note: The prophecies in Isaiah refer to rebuilding the city. However, it is clear from the account in Ezra 4.1-24 that the Jews had not been authorized to build the city walls, but only the temple. Thus, the decree given by Cyrus initiated the rebuilding of the city in terms of the temple and some dwelling units. Another decree was required to complete the building of city and its walls.

in Babylon. ... I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries which have been ruins for a long time. ... *I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations ... I endeavoured to repair their dwelling places.*" [emphasis added].⁴⁶²

- 3.2.3. A difficulty with using this decree as the starting point for the time period, is that 483 (69 X 7) or 490 (70 X 7) years from 538 BC results in a date of 55 or 48 BC. Nothing related to the arrival of the Messiah occurred in 55 or 48 BC.
- 3.2.4. However, it is possible, that the dates used to calculate the duration of the Persian Period are incorrect. If the Persian Period was only 123⁴⁶³ years instead of 205 years as in the traditional chronology, then the 483 years would end at the time of Christ. It is possible that Claudius Ptolemy's king records are mistaken since he wrote after the time of Christ.⁴⁶⁴ Using his records, gives approximately 80 years between the end of the Babylonian Captivity and the commencement of the prophecy, if the 490 years end at the time of Christ.
- 3.2.5. However, this suggested recalibration could have an impact on other dates, besides the dates for the Persian Period, such as the destruction of Jerusalem (traditionally 586 BC, and apparently well-attested through comparison of Babylonian astronomical data associated with the years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign⁴⁶⁵) and the date when Daniel was taken captive (c 606 BC)—otherwise Daniel would have been about 150 years old at the time of this prophecy. It would require a major undertaking to re-calibrate all the dates associated with events in the OT after about 800 BC—but they *may* need to be re-calibrated, since scholars *may* be using suspect secular historical accounts on which to structure the record of this period.
- 3.2.6. Floyd Jones provides an alternative, which accepts the basic sequence in Ptolemy's record, but is based on a different understanding of the dates associated with the reigns—in particular with the overlap of the reigns of Xerxes and his son Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) as coregents.⁴⁶⁶
- 3.3. Some date the starting point from 445⁴⁶⁷ BC (Neh 2.1-8) when Artaxerxes I (465–425 BC) allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to see how the re-building of Jerusalem was coming along.
 - 3.3.1. However the dates don't fit cleanly with the years given in this prophecy.
 - 3.3.2. Also, there does not appear to be an explicit decree to rebuild the city, issued in 445 BC.
- 3.4. A decree which could fit with our understanding that the prophecy is Messianic and the traditional chronology of the period, is the decree that was given by Artaxerxes I in 457⁴⁶⁸ BC (Ezra 7.7-26, in particular verses 13 and 21).
 - 3.4.1. This decree gave a general permission for any Jews to return with Ezra to the city and restore the city's administrative and religious functions and to rebuild it physically.
 - 3.4.2. The account in Ezra does not explicitly say 'rebuild the city'. However, When Nehemiah came to the city 13 years later in (the traditionally dated) 445/444 BC he was surprised and disappointed to see that Jerusalem's walls and gates were still in their broken and burned state (Neh 1.1-3). Ezra had authority to rebuild the city but had

⁴⁶² David Austin, in personal e-mail correspondence, 2011-03-24, quoting from: David Down, "Cyrus Cylinder on Horse Bones", *Diggings Journal*, (Oct. 2010, Vol 27 Num, 10), p. 6.

⁴⁶³ David Austin, "Is Darius, the king of Ezra 6:14-15, the same king as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:1?" *Journal of Creation*, 22(2) 2007, pp. 46-52. creation.mobi/darius-is-artaxerxes

⁴⁶⁴ He compiled his account in the late second century AD, yet offers dating for events from 747 to 137 BC. Refer to: Philip Mauro, *The Wonders of Bible Chronology*, Chapter XIV: The "Seventy Weeks" of Daniel — When Do They Begin and End?

sites.google.com/site/davidkeames2/thewondersofbiblechronology-chapterfourteen

⁴⁶⁵ *Astronomical diary VAT 4956*; la-via.es/english/archivo/vat4956en.htm; 2 Kings 25.2, 8 places the eleventh year of King Zedekiah in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, proving an absolute calendar date for the fall of Jerusalem.

⁴⁶⁶ Floyd Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 234-240.

⁴⁶⁷ Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*; www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/The.Coming.Prince.html

⁴⁶⁸ Floyd Jones gives the date as 454 BC, ending in 30 AD, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 221, 254.

- focused on the social and religious systems and had not rebuilt the city walls.
- 3.4.3. Sixty-two ‘sevens’ (483 years) from 457 BC is 25 AD (there was no year 0). According to some, Jesus was baptized in ~26 AD, and crucified in 30 AD. However a date of 30 AD for the crucifixion presents a significant complication, since Luke says that John began his ministry “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (Lk 3.1). Tiberius became emperor in 14 AD. The fifteenth year of his reign would have begun in 28 AD, dating the start of his ministry after the baptism of Jesus.
 - 3.4.4. A starting point of 457 BC fits with the first seven ‘sevens’, or 49 years, which would have ended in 408 BC. It has been estimated that 408 BC marks the end of the period of the rebuilding of Jerusalem covered in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah.⁴⁶⁹
 - 3.4.5. Jesus was ‘cut off’ at his crucifixion (likely in 30 AD or 33 AD).⁴⁷⁰ These dates fit reasonably well with the reference to the Anointed One being cut off half way through the 70th ‘seven’ (26-27), confirming a new covenant (v. 27; Jer 31.31; Heb 8.8; Heb 9.15) and putting an end to the OT sacrificial system (27).
 - 3.4.6. A major problem with using this decree, is that the start of the 490 years referred to by Gabriel, is delayed from 538 to 457 BC (81 years). This introduces a delay in the commencement of the seventy ‘sevens’, which seems to go against the tenor of Daniel’s prayer and the response and message God delivered through Gabriel.
 - 3.5. Regardless of which decree is correct (that of Cyrus based on revised dates or that of Artaxerxes I based on traditional dates), the terminus for the prophecy’s time period is without question the arrival of the Messiah.
 - 3.5.1. We take as our starting assumption that the Bible is entirely reliable and that the chronologies and dates it provides are the only objective absolute measure for human history.
 - 3.5.2. If the calculation of the date for the arrival of the Messiah, using this account, would have given any other time than that of Jesus, the Jews at the time of Jesus would have been quick to disavow him as the Messiah (as some people attempted to do by questioning if the Messiah could come out of Galilee; Jn 7.41). The fact that there is no record of Jews at the time of Jesus using calculations based on this section of Daniel to predict a different date for the coming of the Messiah is significant. Their silence is evidence that the terminus for this prophecy is Jesus Christ. Jewish writers *after* the time of Christ have come up with different interpretations of the 490 years.
 - 3.5.3. We do not take the dates provided by secular historians to be absolute and necessarily accurate.
 4. Who was the anointed one who was to come after sixty-nine ‘sevens’? (25)
 - 4.1. A total of sixty-nine ‘sevens’ (sixty-two ‘sevens’ + one ‘seven’) would pass, and then a significant event would take place.
 - 4.2. The translation ‘an anointed one’ (ESV) has also been translated as ‘the Anointed One’ (NIV) and as Messiah (NASB, NKJV, KJV).
 - 4.3. The Hebrew term (מָשִׁיחַ) could designate either a king or a priest, both of whom were anointed. Of course it could be a person who is both.
 - 4.4. This anointed one would be a prince (נָזִיר) or ruler (Is 55.4) of the Jewish people—Messiah the Prince.
 - 4.5. There should not be any doubt that the coming person identified in this verse is Jesus Christ, who is both a king and priest (Zech 6.13; Ps 110.4; Mt 27.1; Jn 19.19; Heb 3.1; Heb 4.14, 15; Heb 5.6), who was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism in 26 AD.
 - 4.6. Jesus is The Anointed One who would atone for sin and bring in everlasting righteousness

⁴⁶⁹ According to the Elephantine papyri, Johanan (mentioned in Neh 12.22-23) was high priest in 408 BC. Also the papyri mentions a different governor of Judah, implying that Nehemiah had passed from the scene. This seems to be the end of the Ezra-Nehemiah era.

⁴⁷⁰ James R. Hughes, *When was Jesus Born?* 2016; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

(24).

5. What was to happen during the sixty-two ‘sevens’—between the rebuilding of the city and the arrival of the Messiah? (25)
 - 5.1. The city was to exist for 434 years as a built city with squares (streets) and a moat (trench).
 - 5.1.1. The squares or streets refer to areas for folks to carry on commercial business and to hold assemblies.
 - 5.1.2. The ‘moat’ may be better translated as ‘trench’ (‘something cut out’) but may refer to a ‘conduit’ since the word has been found in one of the Dead Sea scrolls used in this way,⁴⁷¹ and may be a reference to a system of tunnels or aqueducts that supplied water to Jerusalem.
 - 5.1.3. Leupold suggests a translation of the two words together as: “extensively, yet within limits”.⁴⁷²
 - 5.1.4. The promise of a functioning city would encourage Daniel and the Jews at his time who knew of the city in its destroyed state—their holy city had a future ahead of it.
 - 5.2. The city was to exist for the 434 years through troubled times.
 - 5.2.1. Jerusalem and its inhabitants certainly suffered during the 434 years.
 - 5.2.2. It was subject to the Persian Empire and then to the Greek Empire.
 - 5.2.3. The time of Antiochus Epiphanes was certainly a ‘troubled time’ for the Jews and the city of Jerusalem.
 - 5.2.4. It is preferable to understand this reference to the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes than the struggles during the time of Nehemiah’s governorship (Neh 4.1-14; Neh 9.36–37) which occurred during the first seven of the seventy ‘sevens’ (49 years).
6. What was to happen to the anointed one? (26)
 - 6.1. He was to be cut off.
 - 6.1.1. The word translated as ‘cut off’ can refer to being killed (Gen 9.11; Ex 31.14; Lev 7.20; Jer 9.21).
 - 6.1.2. Isaiah used the same expression to refer to the Messiah: “he was cut off out of the land of the living” (Is 53.8; see also Jer 11.19).
 - 6.2. He would have nothing.
 - 6.2.1. The expression ‘shall have nothing’ is a translation of the literal expression ‘and [but] not to [for] him’.
 - 6.2.2. This is certainly not an easy expression to interpret.
 - 6.2.3. The NKJV (KJV) translates this as ‘but not for Himself’. Its rendering supports the idea that Jesus was cut off not for himself, but for others—which is certainly true. However, the expression appears to be an idiom for ‘not have’ (Gen 11.30; Is 27.4).
 - 6.2.4. The Septuagint seems to have the idea that Jesus was cut off unjustly, since no judgement was in him (καὶ κρίμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ). Again, this is certainly true, but may be reading meaning into the original.
 - 6.2.5. Some suggest that his having nothing was because he had been rejected by his own people (Jn 1.11). Others suggest that the reference is to the city and the Temple which became a desolate place (Mt 23.38) and therefore ‘nothing’ to Jesus.
 - 6.2.6. It may be best to understand this as referring to Jesus at the time of his death and his having nothing, in that he had no permanent residence (Mt 8.20), slept in gardens (Lk 22.39), his only clothes were divided among soldiers at his death (Mt 27.35), and he was forsaken by God the Father (Mt 27.46). The king of the universe died as a pauper with no apparent influence on the world.

⁴⁷¹ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester UK, Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 170; referenced in Stephen E. Jones, *Projects: Daniel's prophecy of the seventy 'weeks'* (Dan 9:24-27); members.iinet.net.au/~sejones/dn924-27.html

⁴⁷² H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 425.

- 6.3. When would this occur?
 - 6.3.1. The timing is not specified, but it is reasonable to expect that the cutting off was to happen soon after the sixty-ninth ‘seven’, and within the time frame of the seventieth ‘seven’.
 - 6.3.2. In fact this is what happened. Jesus was ‘cut off’ after three years of his ministry (about half way through the final ‘seven’) as he suffered the violent death of crucifixion.
 - 6.3.3. We reject the commonly accepted dispensational view that Jesus was cut off between the sixty-ninth ‘seven’ and the seventieth ‘seven’ (rather than during the seventieth ‘seven’) and that the seventieth ‘seven’ has been postponed during the Church age. The seventy ‘sevens’ of Daniel came to an end with the crucifixion of Christ.
- 7. Who is the prince, or ruler, and what would he do? (26)
 - 7.1. The prince (ruler) is probably Titus. We have already encountered him in the prophetic vision in chapter 7 (8, 25) as the ‘little horn’ who would speak against the Most High, oppress the saints of the Most High, and think to change the [set] times and the law[s].
 - 7.1.1. The *Commentary on Daniel*, by the presbyter Hippolytus, was written about 204 AD during a time of severe persecution of Christians initiated by Emperor Septimius Severus (reigned 193-211 AD) because the Christians would not worship the Unconquered Sun (*Sol Invictus*). The *Commentary on Daniel* is the first complete commentary on a single book of the Bible written by an orthodox writer. In this commentary Hippolytus deals with the topic of martyrdom from a pastoral perspective to encourage those facing persecution to be willing to die for their faith. Further, “Hippolytus ties together the prophecies about the fourth beast (Dan 7.1-8, 15-28), the seventieth week (Dan 9.24-27), and the beast of Revelation (Rev 13.1-18) by identifying the Antichrist as their common referent.”⁴⁷³
 - 7.1.2. I believe that Hippolytus is correct in tying together Daniel’s two prophecies (chapter 7 and 9), and we can conclude that Titus and Rome were a manifestation of antichrist—if not the specific antichrist.
 - 7.2. The people of the prince are the Romans who came with Titus and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.
 - 7.3. The end of the Jewish covenant era came with a flood as the Romans overwhelmed them with their armies, killing thousands and causing extreme desolation.
 - 7.3.1. ‘Flood’ is used here as a metaphor (Is 8.7-8; Is 28.2; Dan 11.10, 22, 26) to emphasize the magnitude of the devastation.
 - 7.3.2. This is what Jesus said would happen to the city (Mt 24.2; Lk 21.20-24).
 - 7.3.3. Josephus applied the prophecy of Daniel to the destruction of Jerusalem that he had witnessed, not to a future event that would be thousands of years in his future: “And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel’s vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had showed them to him, insomuch that such as read his prophecies, and see how they have been fulfilled, would wonder at the honor wherewith God honored Daniel; and may thence discover how the Epicureans are in an error, who cast Providence out of human life, and do not believe that God takes care of the affairs of the world, nor that the universe is governed and continued in being by that blessed and immortal nature, but say that the world is carried along of its own accord, without a ruler and a curator; which, were it destitute of a guide to conduct it, as they imagine, it would be like ships without pilots, which we see drowned by the winds, or like chariots without drivers, which are overturned; so would the world be dashed to

⁴⁷³ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyter’s Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 103.

pieces by its being carried without a Providence, and so perish, and come to nought. So that, by the aforementioned predictions of Daniel, those men seem to me very much to err from the truth, who determine that God exercises no providence over human affairs; for if that were the case, that the world went on by mechanical necessity, we should not see that all things would come to pass according to his prophecy.”⁴⁷⁴

- 7.4. Why were these desolations brought upon Jerusalem and the Temple?
 - 7.4.1. This destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple were decreed by God.
 - 7.4.2. They were the result of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah (Mt 23.37-39).
- 7.5. What is a possible objection to this interpretation?
 - 7.5.1. The destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 70 AD, not within the seventieth ‘seven’—which would have ended in 33 AD.
 - 7.5.2. However, Daniel does not state that the prince and his people would cause the desolation within the final ‘seven’. All other events in this section, up to this point are explicitly included within the time period of the prophecy. However, with respect to the prince, the text reads, “who is to come” (‘the coming one’). This allows for an arrival of the prince and his people at some point in the future, after the cutting off of the Messiah in the midst of the 70th week.
8. What is the covenant that was to be confirmed *for (in)* one ‘seven’? (27a)
 - 8.1. First, who is the ‘he’?
 - 8.1.1. It could possibly be the ruler mentioned in verse 26.
 - 8.1.1.1. Some argue that the antecedent of ‘he’ is “the prince who is to come”.
 - 8.1.1.2. Based on this idea, many interpreters infer that the covenant is a false covenant made by the antichrist—and that it is still in the future.
 - 8.1.1.3. However it is the *people* of “the prince who is to come” who are the subject in latter part of verse 26, not the prince or ruler. So, the ‘he’ doesn’t follow from the prince.
 - 8.1.2. Alternatively it could be the anointed one mentioned in verse 26.
 - 8.1.2.1. The ‘he’ probably refers to ‘the anointed one’.
 - 8.1.2.2. This would then refer to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
 - 8.1.2.3. This seems to be the most straightforward interpretation, since the entire passage is Messianic, starting with the blessing (24) to be brought about by the Messiah (25).
 - 8.2. The text reads literally, ‘and he will make strong a covenant’.
 - 8.2.1. The idea may be, as in the ESV, that he will make (or enact) a strong covenant. In this sense, the covenant that Jesus makes is strong because it is able to do what the old covenant could not do, provide everlasting salvation (Heb 8.6, 7).
 - 8.2.2. It could be that he will make (or enact), by strength, a covenant. In this sense, the covenant is enacted by the strength of the mediator, Jesus Christ.
 - 8.2.3. It could be that he will *confirm* a covenant—i.e., the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. In this sense, Jesus confirmed (made strong) the covenant by keeping the Law in its entirety and by acting as the ultimate sacrifice to fulfill the OT ceremonial system.
 - 8.2.4. In any case, Jesus is the one ‘making strong a covenant’.
 - 8.3. The covenant that is under consideration here is the new covenant in the blood of Jesus (Jer 31.31; Mt 26.28; Heb 8.8-13).
 - 8.3.1. The covenant is *not*, as many dispensationalists teach, a peace treaty in the Middle East that will be signed after the rapture of believers; and which will be followed by a period of peace for Israel, the battle of Armageddon, and the return of Christ.
 - 8.3.2. The covenant which Jesus made, was in the middle of the final seven.
 - 8.3.2.1. ‘In the middle’ (NIV/NASB/NKJV) or ‘in the midst’ (KJV); not necessarily

⁴⁷⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 10; chapter 11, paragraph 7; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-10.htm
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- ‘for half’ (ESV).
- 8.3.3. The covenant and sacrifice which Jesus made ‘put an end to sacrifice and offering’ (Heb 7.27; Heb 9.12, 26; Heb 10.10).
 - 8.3.4. At his death the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Mt 27.51), indicating the *official* end of the OT sacrificial system, but not the *actual* end, which occurred 40 years later in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple.
 - 8.3.5. The covenant was made with ‘many’, not ‘all’ or ‘most’.
 - 8.3.5.1. It is likely that this limits the covenant to those who are believers, not to all the nation of Israel.
 - 8.3.5.2. It could however actually be a broadening of the covenant people, to include the Gentiles—with the ‘many’ referring to others beside Jewish believers.
 - 8.4. What might be an objection to this interpretation?
 - 8.4.1. The text, as translated into English, implies that the covenant would be made “for one ‘seven’”.
 - 8.4.2. The contention of many interpreters is that this could not be the covenant made by Jesus at the time of his death because he didn’t make a covenant for only seven years—but for all time. So they argue that this was a covenant made (or that will be made) by someone else (e.g., the antichrist) that would be broken half way through the covenanted period.
 - 8.4.3. However, this is where looking at the original text is helpful.
 - 8.4.3.1. The Hebrew does not say ‘for one week’, all it has is ‘seven one’ (שִׁבְעֵי אֶחָד). The ‘for’ in the text appears before the ‘many’, i.e., ‘for many’ rather than ‘with many’.
 - 8.4.3.2. A valid, alternate, translation could be ‘in seven one’, or ‘in the seventieth seven’.
 - 8.4.3.3. Thus, the first part of verse 27 could be read as, “and he will make strong (confirm) a covenant for many *in the* one (seventieth) seven”.
 - 9. What was to happen at the end of the seventieth seven (the end of the 490 years)? (27)
 - 9.1. The text does not say. It only indicates that in the midst of the final seven years the Messiah would make an end to sacrifice and offering.
 - 9.2. It does not say that the events mentioned in 27b will occur *within* the seventieth week. We will consider them next. However, as a preview, these events occurred almost 40 years later in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies.
 - 9.3. So, what could be the terminal point for the 490 years?
 - 9.4. To answer that question we need to consider the context from the beginning of Gabriel’s comments, “Seventy weeks are decreed about *your people* and your holy city.” Gabriel seems to be speaking of the end of the Old Covenant, Jewish era.
 - 9.5. A possible explanation is that the remaining 3½ years, after the crucifixion, is the time when the majority of the Jewish people rejected the Messiah and persecuted the believing Jews (as recorded in Acts 5.17-41 and Acts 8.1-3). After Saul’s conversion (Acts 9.1-18) the Gospel was redirected from the Jews specifically to all peoples (Acts 9.15; Acts 10.9-16, 28, 34-35) and the Jewish era came to an end.
 - 10. What was to happen *after* the covenant was confirmed? (27b)
 - 10.1. An abomination of desolation would come.
 - 10.2. The text of 27b is very difficult to translate.
 - 10.2.1. The NIV’s translation is interpretive: “And on a wing *of the temple* he will *set up* an abomination that causes desolation, until the end *that is decreed* is poured out on him.” The translators assume that the abomination of desolation is the defiling of the Temple. Alternate translations are provided in the NIV footnotes.
 - 10.2.2. The ESV’s translation, “And on the wing of abominations shall come one who

makes desolate, until the *decreed* end is poured *out on the desolator*” adds the idea of a decree and speaks of the end of the desolator. The NASB’s translation is similar.

- 10.2.3. The NKJV (and KJV) have ‘determined’ instead of ‘decreed’ but make the object of the decree to be the ones being desolated, rather than the desolator.
- 10.2.4. A literal translation of the Hebrew could be: “and on a wing, abominations of one desolating [will come] and until cut off [completed, decided] and poured out on one desolating.”
- 10.2.5. So, one way to translate this is: “and on a wing, [will come] one making abominations of desolation until [they are] completely (decisively) poured out on the desolator.”
- 10.3. Jesus speaks of the abomination of desolation which was prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Mt 24.15). Comparing the Gospel accounts (Mt 24.15; Mk 13.14; Lk 21.20) we can conclude that the prophecy speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 AD—the same armies that are mentioned in 26b (the ‘people of the prince’). Jesus teaches that this destruction will be by:
 - 10.3.1. *Abominable Armies* – The expression ‘abomination of desolation’ is explained by most interpreters as either an ensign of the Roman armies being brought into the Temple; some form of pagan sacrifice in the Temple, such as the slaughter of a pig; or setting up of an idol in the, then existing, Temple by the Romans or in a yet to be re-built temple by some future evil ruler or false religious leader. These explanations miss the mark:
 - 10.3.1.1. The sign was given to the disciples so that they could escape the city *before* it was too late. By the time the pagan armies had reached the Temple, the city was destroyed and its inhabitants slaughtered.
 - 10.3.1.2. A Roman ensign or a pig sacrifice in the Temple may desecrate the Temple’s most holy place, but would not *cause* desolation (Dan 11.31; Dan 12.11).
 - 10.3.1.3. When we compare Luke’s account with that of Matthew and Mark, we see that the meaning of the term ‘abomination of desolation’ is explained as armies surrounding Jerusalem.
 - 10.3.1.4. Jesus provided his disciples with an explicit sign of the pending destruction of Jerusalem—a local event that occurred about 2,000 years ago—so that they would know when to leave the city. When the Roman armies began to surround Jerusalem in 70 AD most Christians apparently heeded the warning sign Jesus had given and fled from the city before the Roman siege-works were set up. Josephus, who acted as a mediator for the Romans with the Jews in the city, witnessed the siege and aftermath when negotiations failed, and in his *Wars of the Jews* claims that more than one million people were killed during the siege,⁴⁷⁵ of which the majority were Jewish.
 - 10.3.2. *Awful Anger* – Jesus predicted that the destruction of Jerusalem would be the most grievous punishment ever dispensed on a people. Josephus reported the devastation: “It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.”⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 6, “From the Great Extremity to which the Jews were reduced to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus”; chapter 9, paragraph 3; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-6.htm

⁴⁷⁶ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 7, “From the Taking of Jerusalem by Titus to the Sedition of the Jews at Cyrene”; chapter 1, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-7.htm

- 10.4. Many interpreters object to the idea that this prophecy is speaking of the Roman armies in 70 AD.
 - 10.4.1. One of the reasons they object is that the destruction of Jerusalem didn't occur *within* the seventieth 'seven'.
 - 10.4.2. However, there is nothing in the verse that indicates that the abomination of desolation had to occur within the seventieth 'seven'. The 'and' of temporality only indicates that after the covenant is made and sacrifices are ended, desolations will come. The text does not say how long after the events of the first part of the verse, these desolations will come.
 - 10.4.3. Also, as we saw above, Jesus teaches that the abominations of desolation referred to the Jewish armies that would destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD (Lk 21.20).
- 11. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 11.1. *Confirmation* – Properly interpreted, this passage confirms the accuracy of Biblical prophecy.
 - 11.1.1. It traces the course of history from Daniel's time until the coming of Messiah, followed by the arrival of Titus and the Roman armies which destroyed Jerusalem.
 - 11.1.2. It traces events associated with God's old-covenant people, leading to the end of their era—the time decreed for them.
 - 11.1.3. The accuracy with which it identifies the year in which the Messiah would begin his ministry is clearly not a matter of chance but of God; for no mere human prophet could predict events over 400 years into the future.
 - 11.1.4. It also is a witness to those who claim to be Jews today and are looking for the coming of the Messiah. This prophecy will be held before them to silence them and condemn them if they do not receive Jesus as the true Messiah.
 - 11.2. *Covenant* – This passage promises the arrival of the Messiah who will inaugurate a new covenant and begin his reign as mediator in his eternal kingdom.
 - 11.2.1. The promise of the Messiah went back about 3,500 years to the Garden of Eden (Gen 3.15). The Jews must have been wondering when the prophecies given through the patriarchs and prophets would be fulfilled.
 - 11.2.2. God chose to give them an answer at a low point in their history—the end of the Babylonian Captivity.
 - 11.2.3. Even though Christians wonder when Jesus will return, and scoffers deny that he will come at all (2 Pt 3.3), God has chosen not to give us explicit dates about the second coming (Mt 24.36; Mt 25.13; Mk 13.32; Acts 1.7; 1 Thess 5.1-2; 2 Pt 3.10).
 - 11.2.4. "[Hippolytus] knows that the people are anxious and curious, and that they are wondering when all these things will happen—when the antichrist will be revealed and when the day of the appearance of the Lord will come. He answers that he truly does not know, appealing to the model of faith provided by preceding martyrs: 'Why do you examine the times and search for the day, when the Savior has hidden it from us? ... If the martyrs, the one [sic] who shed their own blood for Christ, were requested to be patient and wait for a while, why cannot you too wait in patience, so that other people would be saved and the number of the called and the saints would be completed?'"⁴⁷⁷
 - 11.2.5. However, we have the evidence of his first coming to fulfill OT prophecies as proof that the time of his return is really drawing near. We can take encouragement from this. The return of the Messiah was announced almost 2,000 years ago and it is certain, in God's time, to be fulfilled.
 - 11.3. *Completion* – This prophecy teaches that the OT system of sacrifices will come to an end.
 - 11.3.1. As the writer of Hebrews indicates (Dan 10.5, 6), the Jews knew that the sacrifices

⁴⁷⁷ Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, IV.22.1, 4, quoted in: W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyterian's Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 107-108.

would end. This would not be a surprise to them since it was recorded in the Psalms (Ps 40.6-8). They knew that the sacrifices did not satisfy God's demands for justice, nor were they desired by him (although they were ritually soothing), and had to be replaced by a better system that would be truly pleasing to him—the once-for-all sacrifice of the Messiah.

- 11.3.2. But the completion of the OT sacrifices and old order of ceremonial worship does not mean that God has opened a free-for-all in worship, in which everyone can worship as he sees fit. Rather, Jesus established a second order, a replacing system (Heb 10.9b); not chaos, but order! God is jealous for his holy worship today, as he was during the OT administration.
- 11.4. *Comfort* – This prophecy is intended to encourage God's covenant people.
 - 11.4.1. It promised the Jews that their city, Jerusalem, would be rebuilt and that the city had a future, even though there would be difficult times ahead.
 - 11.4.2. The application of the encouragement which can be derived from this prophecy is broader than merely to the Jews. For example, the commentator Hippolytus, writing about 204 AD, used the prophecies of the book to encourage his contemporaries facing persecution under the Romans.
 - 11.4.2.1. "Through his interpretation of the biblical text, Hippolytus proposed a higher calling to persecuted Christians in his day: to submit themselves to God, to trust his providences unto death, to participate in God's plan of history, and to transcend spiritually over the physically oppressive Roman Empire."⁴⁷⁸
 - 11.4.2.2. "The readers of the *Commentary on Daniel* would see their circumstances modeled by God's people in Babylon, and they would understand themselves to be God's people in a new Babylon."⁴⁷⁹

Divine Theophany (Dan 10.1-19)

Setting (Dan 10.1-4)

- 1. What happened to Daniel in the third year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia?
 - 1.1. He received a word/revelation
 - 1.1.1. It was in the form of a vision; but apparently not through a dream.
 - 1.1.2. The content of this vision, and its interpretation are covered in the remainder of the Book of Daniel, from 10.5-12.3.
 - 1.1.3. This is Daniel's final vision. He received four revelations:
 - 1.1.3.1. Two, in the first and third years of Belshazzar (7, 8)
 - 1.1.3.2. Two, in the first and third years of Cyrus (Dan 9.24-27; Dan 10.5-12.3).
 - 1.2. He received this revelation in the third year of the reign of Cyrus.
 - 1.2.1. This would be 536 (possibly 535) BC by the traditional reckoning.
 - 1.2.2. By this time Daniel had been in Babylon for about seventy years. He lived throughout the entire time of the Babylonian Captivity. If we assume he was 13 when he was taken captive then he lived to be at least 83, but could have been older when taken captive and could have lived longer than this last dated event recorded in the book of Daniel.
 - 1.2.3. This revelation was given after the decree of Cyrus to permit the return of the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.
 - 1.2.4. It is likely that this revelation was given to Daniel after he had been placed in the den of lions. It appears that that trial occurred shortly after Cyrus came to power (Dan 6.1), but the revelation reported in this chapter was in the third year of Cyrus' reign.
 - 1.3. He received the vision on the 24th day of first month. (4)

⁴⁷⁸ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 7.

⁴⁷⁹ W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus – An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock/Paternoster, 2008) p. 69.

- 1.3.1. This would have been in the first month in the Jewish religious calendar; which was Nisan (Neh 2.1)/Abib (Ex 23.15). The Babylonians and Persians used a similar calendar, with Nisānu/Ādukanaiša being their first month.
 - 1.3.2. This month corresponded to our March–April timeframe. Daniel began his time of prayer and fasting three weeks prior (2, 3), on the 3rd of Nisan and continued through the time of the Passover (14th of Nisan) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15th–21st).
 - 1.3.3. Daniel may have been praying and fasting in conjunction with the observances of these ceremonial feasts.
 - 1.3.3.1. The feast of Passover represents deliverance, and the Jews were again suffering from bondage.
 - 1.3.3.2. As we will note, below, it is probable that his people were still not fully liberated. In addition their enemies in Judea and Samaria were hindering the work of rebuilding the temple and city.
 - 1.3.4. The ‘full three weeks’ (v. 3, ESV) is literally ‘three of sevens of days’. It appears that he adds the word ‘days’ to ensure that he is not misunderstood as speaking of 21 years, since in chapter 9 (24), the ‘seventy sevens’ refers to years.
 - 1.4. Why does he use the name Cyrus (also in Dan 1.21; Dan 6.28) here and not Darius as he did earlier (Dan 5.31; Dan 6.1, 6, 9, 25, 28; Dan 9.1, see also Dan 11.1)?
 - 1.4.1. As we noted (Dan 6.28) Cyrus and Darius are likely the same person.
 - 1.4.2. It may be that when Daniel first encountered him, he used his personal name (Darius); however in later accounts he used his royal assumed name (Cyrus).
 - 1.4.3. We should not make a big issue over the fact that Daniel uses both names for the one person. He does the same thing with his own names (Dan 10.1).
 - 1.5. Why does Daniel speak in the third person (1) and then the first person (2 and following)?
 - 1.5.1. Commentators believe that verse 1 acts as a summary statement or introduction and that the third person was chosen to indicate this.
 - 1.5.2. This is similar to an author of an autobiography putting his name on the book as the author—he does not say “by I”.
 - 1.6. Why does Daniel tell us his Babylonian name?
 - 1.6.1. He probably does this to make it clear that he is the same person that was spoken of at the beginning of, and throughout, the book.
 - 1.6.2. He is the same person who was taken captive seven decades before and trained in the civil service academy of Babylon.
 - 1.6.3. He may have felt that this reference to his identity was necessary because of the extraordinary nature of the revelation which he was about to document.
2. What does Daniel say about the nature of the vision, before he informs his readers of its contents?
 - 2.1. *Surety* – He avows that what he is about to relay is truth.
 - 2.1.1. It is almost as if he is swearing to the truthfulness of the account which he is going to record, about what he had seen.
 - 2.1.2. His word as a prophet and godly man should be sufficient, yet he feels it is necessary to inform us of the truthfulness of what he is going to say.
 - 2.1.2.1. His action is similar to what a person does when he is going to recount an event and he says, “I am telling the truth this is what happened, ...”
 - 2.1.2.2. John felt it was necessary to do the same thing in his Gospel (Jn 19.35; Jn 21.24).
 - 2.1.3. Why would Daniel have felt that it was necessary to declare his words to be true?
 - 2.1.3.1. What he was about to write down was so incredible in terms of the explicit nature of the detail that it is as if he was writing about the events as an eye witness of history, rather than foretelling them hundreds of years before they occurred.
 - 2.1.3.2. Nothing like what follows had ever been recorded in Scripture. In fact no other

part of the Bible has a similar form—many prophecies are symbolic in nature. This section (Dan 11.2-45) contains no symbols, but rather it provides a literal historical narrative told in the future tense.

- 2.1.3.3. The accuracy of what Daniel describes about the Greek Empire is almost so amazing that it would strain credibility to believe it possible for someone to know this level of detail before the fact—if it were not that God declares himself to be the God who can reveal the future in exact detail before it happens (Is 44.6-7).
- 2.2. *Summary* – He summarizes the content of the revelation as being about a great conflict that is to happen in the future.
 - 2.2.1. The Hebrew reads literally, “and war/conflict great”; with no verb included.
 - 2.2.2. The translations of this phrase varies widely.
 - 2.2.2.1. The ESV leaves the interpretation open in the main text, with an essentially literal translation; but provides an interpretive translation in the footnote: “and it was *about* a great conflict”. The NIV has a translation similar to the ESV’s footnote (with ‘*concerned*’).
 - 2.2.2.2. The NASB makes the conflict apply to the message, which was one of conflict—i.e., being challenging or difficult.
 - 2.2.2.3. The NKJV and KJV (following the Geneva Bible) translate this with a peculiar reference to time “but the time appointed *was* long”—implying that the word or revelation related to the distant future. They seem to interpret the word for ‘war’ or ‘conflict’ as ‘service’ and turn this into the idea of ‘time of serving’. However, it is difficult to support this translation from the Hebrew text (or the Septuagint, which has ‘great power’ or ‘great strength’).
 - 2.2.3. The revelation covers the ebb and flow of continual conflict throughout Palestine and Egypt (two of the four parts into which Alexander’s empire was divided after his death) until the time of Christ.
- 2.3. *Sense* – He declares that he has the ability to understand what was revealed and to provide an interpretation of what he had seen.
 - 2.3.1. He can appeal to his position as a prophet who has interpreted dreams and received other prophecies.
 - 2.3.2. He can appeal to the fact that the revelation was given in plain narrative form as history, rather than as symbolic prophecy, which made it easier to understand the meaning.
 - 2.3.3. He puts his understanding in the context of his prayer (2, 12) and as an answer to prayer.
 - 2.3.4. His use of synonymous phrases seems to reinforce the idea (through parallelism) that he understood the message clearly—there could be no doubt that what he was communicating was accurate.
- 3. What had Daniel been doing before he received the revelation?
 - 3.1. Mourning – He was confessing his sins and the sins of his nation (compare with, Dan 9.5-11) in prayer (12).
 - 3.1.1. The Hebrew word for ‘mourning’ contains the idea of ‘continually mourning’ or being in a state of mourning.
 - 3.2. Fasting – His mourning was accompanied by fasting.⁴⁸⁰
 - 3.2.1. Daniel’s abstaining from choice food (delicacies) like meat and wine implies that he limited himself to something like a diet of vegetables or bread and water. This indicates that fasting does not have to involve a complete cessation of food consumption.
 - 3.2.2. He also did not use grooming ointments to refresh his skin and protect against heat.

⁴⁸⁰ For more information on the Biblical approach to fasting, See: “Appendix N – Fasting” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 3.2.3. The point he is making is that he abstained from lawful pleasures and gave up any legitimate uses of God-given luxuries.
- 3.3. What was the purpose of his mourning and fasting?
 - 3.3.1. To mortify himself—to put to ‘death’ the things of the world and to heighten his experience of drawing near to God.
 - 3.3.2. Daniel was not against the balanced use of luxuries, as he implies by stating that he *abstained* from them for three weeks. Rather, he felt that the emergent situation required a special time of petitioning God.
- 3.4. What might have led to this behaviour on the part of Daniel?
 - 3.4.1. The state of the nation at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity may have concerned him.
 - 3.4.1.1. Two years had gone by since the decree to return and rebuild, but Daniel may have seen a lassitude and disinterest by many of the Jews who did not appear to be willing to return to Judea.
 - 3.4.1.2. Alternatively, he may have been distressed over the persecutions of his people by their enemies in Judea and Samaria who were hindering the work of rebuilding (Ezra 4.4, 5).
 - 3.4.2. Years later, Nehemiah (Neh 1.4) would also mourn (the same Hebrew word) over the condition of the Jews who had returned to Palestine.
 - 3.4.3. Perhaps it troubled him more that some who stayed in Babylon or Persia justified their actions on his own situation. Although they may not have had as valid a reason to stay behind as he had—his position of authority in the Persian government could have provided protection for the Jews throughout the empire.
- 4. Where did he receive this revelation?
 - 4.1. Standing on the bank of the Tigris.
 - 4.2. After the capture of Babylon in 539 BC, Daniel had been taken into the Persian administration and had proved to be a valued member of the civil service corps (Dan 6.2), even while being over 80 years old.
 - 4.3. His reference to the Tigris probably indicates that the revelation was given to him while he was in Susa, a capital-city of the Persian Empire, rather than in Babylon. Susa was situated on a tributary of the Tigris. Babylon was situated on the Euphrates.
 - 4.3.1. He had probably travelled with Cyrus as he surveyed the empire of his conquest.
 - 4.3.2. We noted previously (Dan 8:1-2) that Daniel may have become known to Cyrus while on diplomatic missions from Babylon to Persia in 551 or 550 BC.
 - 4.3.3. This may indicate why Daniel had not returned with the exiles. He may have felt that he could be of more value to the Jews by remaining in the capital and having an influence as an advisor to the sovereign.
 - 4.4. It appears that he was actually standing on the bank of the Tigris River, and not seeing it as in his vision in chapter 8 (2). Those with him didn’t see the vision (7).
 - 4.5. Why was he on the bank of the Tigris?
 - 4.5.1. He may have gone outside the city with fellow Jews so that they could have a time of uninterrupted prayer—a Synagogue in absentia (Acts 16.13). Alternatively, those with him may have been his servants or attendants.
 - 4.5.2. Even though he was with others he may have been at a short distance from them—as Jesus was in the garden on the night he was betrayed.
 - 4.6. It appears that God rarely sent direct revelation to crowds or multiple people at one time. In general, revelation appears to be sent to individuals alone, even when in groups (e.g., Paul with his travelling companions). Why this is, would be a topic for further consideration.
- 5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 5.1. *Prayer* – Daniel was a man of prayer. We have seen his approach to prayer elsewhere in our

- study of this book and the life of Daniel (Dan 1.3-7; Dan 6.10-18; Dan 9.1-19).
- 5.1.1. We should learn from his example about discipline and regularity in prayer—for example, in his three-times-daily prayer (Dan 6.10).
 - 5.1.2. We should also learn from his example that prayer should be a priority and not a second thought—for example his setting aside three weeks for mourning, fasting and prayer (Dan 10.2, 3) during an emergent time.
 - 5.1.3. It is a principle endorsed by the Reformers and Puritans: “Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for publick fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to his people.”⁴⁸¹
- 5.2. *Proscription* – Daniel prayed daily over a lifetime, but received (reported) vision *only* four times.
- 5.2.1. It wasn't his prayers that brought about visions and revelation, although they prepared him to receive revelation.
 - 5.2.2. Men cannot initiate visions and revelation through their acts of piety. God sends revelation when he wants, where he wishes, and to whom he wills.
 - 5.2.3. Men should not beg for special revelation. Revelation comes from God in accordance with his purposes, not in response to our perceived needs or degree of faith.
 - 5.2.4. Men should not make the reception of revelation into a sign of special favour from God or of extraordinary piety on the part of men. The fact that Balaam received revelation (Num 22-24) indicates that the channel for revelation is not determined by the supposed holiness of the recipient (2 Pt 2.15; Jude 11; Rev 2.14).
- 5.3. *Piety* – Daniel was a great man yet he felt it was necessary to mourn and fast for sin—his own and his nation's.
- 5.3.1. Daniel did not consider it beneath himself to be humble through fasting and bowing his face to the ground in prayer.
 - 5.3.2. Daniel did not consider a display of piety to be unmanly or a sign of weakness in a man with worldly authority and power.
 - 5.3.3. People emulate trend-setters in many areas (fashions, technology selections, political views, entertainment choices, economic theories) but rarely in the area of piety. We are, in worldly terms, mites and fleas in comparison to Daniel. Nevertheless, we should follow the example of this great man and create a viral trend in the Church.
- 5.4. *Prudence* – Daniel understood the role and application of fasting and had developed, by the Grace of God, the ability to govern and discipline himself.
- 5.4.1. In most instances in the Bible fasting appears to consist of complete abstinence from food and drink (possibly other than water) for an entire day. But Daniel's example, indicates that it could also consist of taking a limited amount of bread and water (Dan 10.2, 3) so as to abstain from legitimate gastronomic pleasures for a time.
 - 5.4.2. The OT ceremonial law called for an annual fast on the Day of Atonement. At that time it was a publicly observed act of worship. There were also additional public fasts called at important junctures in the life of the nation, church, families, or individuals.
 - 5.4.3. Since the NT endorses fasting as a voluntary act of worship it seems that we can call for times of fasting without *requiring* it. So, for example, the Elders of a congregation, presbytery, or denomination could call for a day of prayer and fasting, but they should not enquire into the fasting practices of the members of the congregation.
 - 5.4.4. Beyond that, fasting seems to be left to the discretion of the individual as an additional, voluntary, extraordinary act of private, personal worship.
 - 5.4.5. It is wrong, at least by my reading of Scripture, for a Church to *require* fasting of its members and to establish a regular (e.g., weekly; annual) fast, for example at Lent.
 - 5.4.6. Nevertheless fasting is a neglected aspect of worship in our hedonistic age. Many of us

⁴⁸¹ “An Appendix touching Days and Places of Publick Worship,” *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.
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probably need to think seriously about how we should apply the teaching of Jesus in our lives and how we can honour God through fasting.⁴⁸²

Solemn Sight (Dan 10.5-6)

1. What did Daniel see when he looked up from his prayers on the bank of the Tigris?
 - 1.1. He saw a ‘man’.
 - 1.1.1. He likely does not mean an actual human being.
 - 1.1.2. He probably uses the term ‘man’ to mean a person who appeared in human form (Dan 8.15; Dan 10.18).
 - 1.1.3. The description of the person is clearly of one who is a heavenly being, not an earthly human being.
 - 1.2. Daniel says that he looked up, implying that the person was above Daniel who was standing, probably appearing in the air, floating above the waters of the river (Dan 12.6).
2. How did Daniel describe this ‘man’?
 - 2.1. His appearance was glorious.
 - 2.2. He was dressed in linen. What might be the relevance of this?
 - 2.2.1. Linen is usually presented as being white, representing purity (Dan 7.9; Rev 3.5; Rev 6.11; Rev 7.9, 13; Rev 19.14).
 - 2.2.2. Priests were to be clothed in linen garments (Ex 28.42).
 - 2.2.3. The (white) linen is likely symbolic of holiness. Daniel was seeing a sanctified, sinless, person.
 - 2.3. He had a golden belt around his waist.
 - 2.3.1. Whether it was a linen belt embroidered with gold, or a belt woven of gold threads, or a belt made of gold chain-links (all have been suggested) is irrelevant.
 - 2.3.2. The ‘gold from Uphaz’ may refer to gold from a particular region (Jer 10.9; such as gold from Ophir, Is 13.12), however the location has not been identified. Some have suggested that the meaning is ‘gold, fine gold’. However, it is translated, we are probably to understand the meaning as pure, high quality, gold.
 - 2.3.3. The golden belt suggests a personage of authority—royal (Dan 5.29; 1 Macc 10.89; 11.58) or judicial.
 - 2.4. His body was like, or the colour of, beryl (ESV)/chrysolite (NIV) and gleaming like burnished bronze.
 - 2.4.1. The Hebrew word appears to be from the same word as is used for the region of Tarshish, i.e., it was a stone from Spain. Some therefore have suggested that the colour may have been based on the crystals of cinnabar from the mercury mines in Aldaden north of Cordova. These stones are bright red like rubies.
 - 2.4.2. Pure beryl is colorless. Traces of different impurities give it a different colour, including light blue, red, pink, yellow, orange, green, brown, or purple. The green variety is also known as an emerald.
 - 2.4.3. Chrysolite is generally yellowish-green or light golden-yellow.
 - 2.4.4. The word appears six other times in the OT. It refers to a stone included in the high priest’s breastplate (Ex 28.20) and to the colour of the wheels of the angels (Ezk 1.16).
 - 2.4.5. The colour may have been golden or amber, per Pliny.⁴⁸³ Some suggest that this is consistent with the KJV translation of ‘polished brass’ which is golden-yellow. However, the majority of other translations give it as ‘burnished bronze’ which is a brownish colour.
 - 2.4.6. A golden-coloured body would have been an impressive sight and could have been

⁴⁸² For more information on the Biblical approach to fasting, See: “Appendix N – Fasting” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁴⁸³ Pliny, *Natural History*, translated by John Bostock and H. T. Riley, vol. 6, book 37, “The Natural History of Precious Stones”, chapter 43 (London, Covent Garden: Henry G. Bohn, 1857), p. 435.

- symbolic of some form of glory.
- 2.5. His face had the appearance of lightening.
 - 2.5.1. God dwells in light and makes himself known through light (Ps 104.2), which speaks of holiness (Is 10.17) and knowledge (Ps 119.105).
 - 2.5.2. The light radiating from the man's face may have been innate, as in the case of Jesus (Mt 17.2) when he was transfigured on the mountain; or a reflected light, as in Moses' case after he came down from Mt. Sinai (Ex 34.29).
 - 2.5.3. This could be symbolical of knowledge and wisdom (Is 9.2; 2 Cor 4.6) as well as glory.
 - 2.6. His voice was like the sound of a multitude (a murmuring crowd).
 - 2.6.1. The voice was deep and loud.
 - 2.6.2. Similar references to a voice of this kind are attributed to Jesus in Revelation (Rev 1.15; Rev 14.2; Rev 19.6).
 - 2.6.3. This could be symbolical of power.
 - 2.7. The overall image is intended to inspire awe through a display of beauty and heavenly glory.
3. Who was this 'man'?
- 3.1. There have been two primary suggestions, each supported by many commentators, as to whom this man was.
 - 3.2. Some have suggested that it was Jesus in pre-incarnate form.
 - 3.2.1. What evidence supports this interpretation?
 - 3.2.1.1. The description of the 'man' seems to have some parallels to the description of Christ in Revelation 1.12–16.
 - 3.2.1.2. The expression 'son of man' used by Daniel (Dan 7.13) is applied to Christ.
 - 3.2.1.3. Daniel was distressed by the sight of the 'man' (7), implying that it was a new and extraordinary.
 - 3.2.1.4. Daniel referred to the 'man' as "my lord" (*adoni*) (16); however this may be nothing more than the respectful equivalent of 'sir'.
 - 3.2.2. What evidence suggest this interpretation may not be correct?
 - 3.2.2.1. This 'man' appears to have needed Michael's help to fight against demonic forces (13).
 - 3.3. Others have suggested that it was the angel Gabriel.
 - 3.3.1. What evidence supports this interpretation?
 - 3.3.1.1. The term 'like a man' is applied to Gabriel (Dan 8.15).
 - 3.3.1.2. Gabriel had been sent by God to reveal truth to Daniel previously (Dan 8.16; Dan 9.21).
 - 3.3.1.3. The 'man' was associated with the angel Michael (13).
 - 3.3.1.4. The 'man' was a messenger sent from Heaven (11, 12, 14).
 - 3.3.1.5. He swore an oath raising his right hand toward Heaven (Dan 12.7); whereas Christ would not have sworn by Heaven (Heb 6.13).
 - 3.3.2. What evidence suggest this interpretation may not be correct?
 - 3.3.2.1. Daniel knew Gabriel, having met him twice before. If it had been Gabriel who appeared to him at this time, it seems unlikely that he would have been distressed at his sight (7).
 - 3.4. An alternate suggestion is that the 'man' was an unnamed angel of the rank of Michael and Gabriel.
 - 3.5. Another suggestion is that there are actually two persons mentioned: the "man clothed in linen" who is Christ and an angel who provides the interpretation of the vision (10).
 - 3.5.1. In Revelation John encountered Christ himself (Rev 1.12–20), but at other times he was instructed by an angel (Rev 17.1–6).
 - 3.6. It is not easy to decide among the interpretations, and in particular to determine whether it was Christ or an angel.
 - 3.6.1. It probably isn't necessary to come to a conclusion on who the person was.

- 3.6.2. The necessary fact is that Daniel was given a message from Heaven that was of importance to his people and a witness to divine foreknowledge.
 - 3.6.3. In the remainder of our study of this vision, we will refer to the man who appeared to Daniel as an angel—‘angel’ is appropriate as it can mean, generically, ‘heavenly messenger’ and is at times applied to Christ himself.
4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 4.1. *Revelation* – The presentation of the revelation through the heavenly messenger (whether Christ or an angel) indicates that God desires to communicate his purposes to mankind.
 - 4.1.1. We have noted previously that God is not a silent, removed, God—the god of the deists—but is involved actively in governing his creation.
 - 4.1.2. God therefore chooses to be known by his rational creation—he is not only knowable, but makes himself known.
 - 4.1.3. He reveals his plans to men so that they can marvel in his amazing providences.
 - 4.2. *Reliability* – The appearance of the heavenly messenger shows the importance of what was to be revealed to Daniel and assured him that what was communicated would most certainly transpire.
 - 4.2.1. This assures us also that the account is stating truth.
 - 4.2.2. Since this revelation was delivered hundreds of years before most of the events transpired, this demonstrates that God’s word is entirely accurate and reliable.
 - 4.2.3. To the same degree, all of God’s word is accurate and reliable—from the accounts of creation and the Flood, through the account of the virgin conception and resurrection of Jesus, to the promise of the return of the resurrected Lord Jesus to this earth to bring about the consummation of all things.
 - 4.3. *Reward* – There is in this vision of the heavenly messenger a promise of the reward that awaits us in the glory of Heaven.
 - 4.3.1. The awesome appearance of the angel speaks of the glories of Heaven—wonders beyond description.
 - 4.3.2. The appearance of the angel also provides a promise of what our resurrected bodies will be like—not necessarily exactly like that described for the angel, but in terms of their beauty and glory (1 Cor 15.43)—for we will be given resurrected bodies like that of Jesus himself (Philip 3.21).

Shaken (Dan 10.7-9, 15-17)

- 1. Why did only Daniel see the vision? (7)
 - 1.1. Daniel is emphatic that he was the only one who saw the vision. He says, “I saw, I, Daniel, I alone”.
 - 1.2. What vision is he speaking of?
 - 1.2.1. The appearance of the angel.
 - 1.2.2. However, it also includes the words of revelation which the angel brought.
 - 1.3. He gives an overview of what happened to him (e.g., his swooning on hearing the difficult message), before he records the specific details of the revelation (mostly in chapter 11).
 - 1.4. There may be a number of reasons why Daniel alone saw the vision and heard the words of revelation.
 - 1.4.1. The men accompanying him may have been unbelievers.
 - 1.4.1.1. They may have been servants in his household or subordinate administrators, who accompanied Daniel on his walk outside the city. As such they would not have been able to understand what was going on in the vision or the meaning of the revelation. Without first having been converted by the Holy Spirit, the dazzling appearance of the angel would have merely frightened them and would not have led them to glorify God.
 - 1.4.1.2. Those accompanying Paul while he was travelling to Damascus (Acts 9.7; Acts

- 22.9) would have been as equally intent as he was on the destruction of the Church. So, God did not deliver his revelation to them as he was dealing with Paul in his conversion.
- 1.4.2. Even if there were believers in the true God (e.g., fellow Jews) among the men accompanying Daniel, they had not been prepared for the receipt of such difficult revelation.
- 1.4.2.1. To us, reading the revelation about 2,500 years after it was fulfilled, the account does not seem to be overwhelming. We read it as history rather than as an explicit account of the future.
- 1.4.2.2. Nevertheless, the kind of revelation delivered by the angel is unique in Scripture. The revelation (in Dan 11.2-45) contains no symbols, but rather it provides a literal historical narrative told in the future tense.
- 1.4.2.3. Daniel had been prepared to receive revelation of this kind by first having been given revelation in symbols and shadows.
- 1.4.2.4. Revelation of this nature would have ‘blown out the brains’ of the men with Daniel.
- 1.4.3. Some commentators suggest that the reason was the Daniel was ‘fit’ to be honoured with the revelation. Their comments seem to place the reason in Daniel’s holiness and piety. We should be cautious coming to such a conclusion since God prepares the instruments through whom he reveals his truth. There was nothing *innately* better in Daniel to be a recipient of this revelation. As we noted previously (1-4), Balaam received revelation from God and he was far from being considered holy or righteous.
2. What impact did the vision have on the men with Daniel? (7)
- 2.1. Even though the men with Daniel did not see the angel or hear the words he spoke to Daniel, they knew that something extraordinary was going on.
- 2.1.1. They may have seen an out-of-focus blur or a brilliant light and heard a rumble of thunder rather than the articulated voice of the angel.
- 2.1.2. The situation with Paul’s travelling companions (Acts 9.7; Acts 22.9) appears to have been similar and provides an idea of what the men with Daniel may have seen and heard.
- 2.2. The men were afraid and they fled and hid.
- 2.2.1. Whatever they encountered it was enough to seize them with fear and to cause them to shake with terror. Even an attenuated view into heavenly glories is sufficient to cause the most brave person to collapse like a statue made out of water.
- 2.2.2. They probably had to hide in the reeds or among the willows (Ps 137.2; Is 44.4) that grew along the edge of the Tigris river.
3. How was Daniel affected by seeing the vision and hearing the revelation? (8-9, 15)
- 3.1. *Separate* – He was left alone since his companions had deserted him, fleeing in fear.
- 3.2. *Sapped* – His strength deserted him. He became weak and collapsed to the ground.
- 3.3. *Stressed* – His face lost its colour as blood drained from it.
- 3.3.1. The Hebrew reads: “my splendour (or glory) changed upon me to destruction”.
- 3.3.2. A colloquial expression often used is: “as pale as a ghost”. However, since there aren’t such things as ghosts we could say, “he turned the colour of death”.
- 3.4. *Sleeping* – He fell asleep. The extreme stress caused exhaustion and a need for sleep. Or he may have fainted. John’s experience when he saw the vision was similar (Rev 1.17).
- 3.5. *Submissive* – He bowed his head to the ground, indicating the posture of a servant in complete submission.
- 3.6. *Speechless* – He could not speak. He was so frightened or perplexed that he couldn’t speak coherently (Ps 39.2, 9). All that could come from his throat was a gasping for breath (17).

4. Why did Daniel experience these things?
 - 4.1. We must remember that Daniel was an old man (~83) when this vision was given to him.
 - 4.1.1. From a merely human perspective, it is a wonder that he did not have a heart attack.
 - 4.1.2. God would not have given him the vision or revelation to kill him. But the physical stress caused by what he saw and heard was more than even a strong man could endure.
 - 4.2. Daniel wants us to understand how incredibly extreme this revelation was; like nothing ever seen or heard before by mere mortals.
 - 4.2.1. The glorious nature of the angel was extreme. His appearance seems to have had more splendour than the appearance of other angels (either angelic beings or theophanies) to this time or later, such as Gabriel's appearance to Mary. Although Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, saw similar visions of angels (e.g., chapter 1).
 - 4.2.2. We have already noted that the content of the revelation was more direct and explicit than anything about the future than had ever been revealed. Most Biblical revelations about the future are given in parabolic, symbolic, and cryptic form—what is often called apocalyptic—with the intention of veiling to some extent the force of the message.
 - 4.2.3. Daniel informs us of the physical effect that the vision and revelation had on him in order to emphasize the importance of the message. He is informing us that the message he heard, delivered by the glorious being, was nothing other than the very word of God.
 - 4.2.4. God is getting Daniel's and our attention. A modern advertising firm could only wish to command attention and have this kind of impact with its messages.
5. What did Daniel tell the angel? (16-17)
 - 5.1. We will look, in the next section, at how Daniel was strengthened by the angel and recovered his voice.
 - 5.2. He told the angel that seeing the vision and hearing the revelation had caused him to be overcome by weakness.
 - 5.3. Why did he tell the angel this?
 - 5.3.1. He needed someone to talk with. His companions had deserted him in fear. He needed to voice his fear and distress. This is a natural human reaction. We all say things like, "Oh, did that ever scare me!" and need to talk about a scary experience we have just had.
 - 5.3.2. Angels are ministering spirits for men, and Daniel was hoping for support and comfort from the Angel, which he did receive. If this angel is Christ, the same applies since Christ also will listen to his people and comfort them.
 - 5.4. Why did Daniel call the angel 'lord'?
 - 5.4.1. Some suggest that this means that the angel must have been Christ in a pre-incarnate form.
 - 5.4.2. It may have been. However, his use of *adoni* ("my lord") can be roughly equivalent to 'sir' in English. It may have been nothing more than a polite way of addressing one who obviously had great authority and glory.
6. What are some lessons that we can derive from these sections? (7-9, 15-17)
 - 6.1. *Scared* – If we really saw the glory of God, or angels, we would be scared to 'death'.
 - 6.1.1. The august majesty of God, Heaven, and heavenly messengers is so great that if we saw them in their full glory, in our sin-stained and un-glorified state, we might not be able to survive (Ex 33.20).
 - 6.1.1.1. If Daniel, who had experience with previous visions, could not bear this glorious vision, how could we?
 - 6.1.1.2. God has to attenuate the vision of his glory lest we die (Ex 33.22-23).
 - 6.1.1.3. God revealed his glory in human form through the person of Jesus Christ (Jn 1.14; Col 1.15, 19) so that mankind could gain an understanding of who God is

and how he works. If we got even a glimpse of his divine glory without knowing Christ in his human nature we would be unable to survive (Mt 17.2, 6, 7).

- 6.1.2. It is also a solemn reminder to the ungodly about whom they are dealing with—the Almighty God.
 - 6.1.2.1. Some men (e.g., professed atheists making a claim to autonomy) say that if God showed them that he was really there then they would believe.
 - 6.1.2.2. They have no idea about the consuming fire (Heb 12.29) they are attempting to play with. If God really showed his presence and power, they would believe all right, but they would be frightened to death.
 - 6.1.2.3. It is because God is gracious that the glory of his revelation is muted and he leads men with a whisper (Dt 4.33; 1 Ki 19.12).
- 6.1.3. Revelation from God to men in this life will not be understood by unbelievers. They need to be converted to receive revelation (they need to believe to understand). Men will not believe even if someone was raised from the dead (Lk 16.31). So they won't believe even a vision from Heaven, until they are dead—and then it will be too late!
- 6.2. *Silence* – At the revelation of God every mouth will be stopped (Rom 3.19).
 - 6.2.1. Through Daniel's experiences, we are reminded of the frailty of man in the presence of the holiness and greatness of God.
 - 6.2.2. This should engender in us an attention of courtesy before his majesty (Lev 10.3) and a humility which does not question his everlasting judgements (Ps 107.42).
- 6.3. *Solemnity* – These considerations should awaken in us an expectation of reality—the appearance of God on the Day of Judgement will overwhelm those who are not in Christ.
 - 6.3.1. On that day, all who do not know Christ will cower in abject fear (Is 2.19; Rev 6.16).
 - 6.3.2. On that day, all will be silenced before him (Rev 8.1).
 - 6.3.3. On that day, no one will have a reply when he asks: “Why did you not honour my holiness?”

Strengthened (Dan 10.10-14, 16, 18, 19)

- 1. What did the angel do when he saw Daniel on the ground? (10, 16, 18)
 - 1.1. He touched Daniel
 - 1.2. How many times was it necessary for the angel to touch Daniel to restore him to full strength?
 - 1.2.1. Three times.
 - 1.2.2. It was a gradual process as he was restored to consciousness and became able to stand. His affliction from fear, and being overwhelmed by the vision, was so great that he could not immediately arise.
 - 1.2.3. The first touch of the angel was not sufficient to bring Daniel to his feet.
 - 1.2.4. It often takes time for people who have been greatly distressed or frightened to calm down. For example people who have been crying heavily continue to convulse and sob even after the heavy crying has ceased. Daniel, after fainting, seems to have gone through somewhat of similar process of being restored to a calm state.
 - 1.3. What did the first touch accomplish?
 - 1.3.1. It enabled him to get to his hands and knees. But he was too weak to speak or stand up.
 - 1.3.2. We can picture an old man struggling in pitiable weakness to lift his head and pull his knees up under his body as he tries to push himself up with his arms.
 - 1.4. What did the second touch accomplish?
 - 1.4.1. The angel touched his lips and restored his ability to speak. (16)
 - 1.4.2. It calmed his trembling and panting (17) so that he could voice his complaint (16) and his readiness to hear the full message and meaning of the revelation (19), and continue presenting his petition.
 - 1.4.3. An angel used coals from the altar to touch Isaiah's lips (Is 6.7) as part of his commissioning as a prophet. The angel here touched Daniel's lips so that he could

- continue his role as a prophet.
- 1.5. What did the third touch accomplish?
- 1.5.1. On the third touch of the angel's hand (18), Daniel was finally strengthened so that he was again able to stand up (11).
- 1.5.2. It was only on being strengthened that he was ready to hear the message about the future.

2. How did the angel encourage Daniel? (11, 12, 19)

- 2.1. Twice he assured him of God's love.
- 2.1.1. When we considered 9.23 we noted that Daniel was considered to be a "very precious treasure" by God.
- 2.1.1.1. Not because of anything, innate, in Daniel; or even by redeemed practice. Daniel's piety and observance of regular prayers and his fasting were not the reason he was loved by God (Lk 17.10).
- 2.1.1.2. God's love is graciously and freely offered. It does not depend on who we are or on what we have done, but on what God chooses to do.
- 2.1.1.3. All of God's children, who have been saved by grace and adopted into his household are greatly loved by God.
- 2.2. Twice he told him not to be afraid.
- 2.2.1. In the second instance (19) he used three ways of emphasizing the fact that Daniel should not be afraid: "fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." The three-fold use of parallel words reinforces the imperative.
- 2.2.2. This triple command also may emphasize the fact that the revelation that follows is of unusual importance.
- 2.2.3. What are some other places in Scripture where we find God's people encouraged in the same way?
- 2.2.3.1. To Abram. God tells him that he is his "shield and great reward" (Gen 15.1).
- 2.2.3.2. To Israel when Moses is giving them the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.20).
- 2.2.3.3. Jesus speaking to his disciples (Jn 6.20; Jn 14.27).
- 2.3. He prepared him for the message by asking him to understand it; i.e., to consider it carefully. (11)
- 2.3.1. The angel is doing something similar to what people do when they say things like, "listen carefully," or "pay attention, this is important."
- 2.3.2. It is implied by the angel's statement that he is treating Daniel as a rational creature who has the intelligence to think and to act based upon his thoughtful consideration of information presented to him. God did not create mankind to be mere algorithm processors (computers) or creatures of pure instinct (brute-beasts). Rather, he endowed mankind with the ability to think, reason (Is 1.18), and act volitionally.
- 2.4. He challenged him to be strong and stand up straight. (11)
- 2.4.1. The Hebrew says, "stand up the stand of you." This could be an idiom for "being strong, be strong", meaning to be very strong.
- 2.4.2. It is probably somewhat equivalent to our saying "be a man", and could include a mild rebuke of Daniel as well as an encouragement.
- 2.5. He assured him that his request had been answered. (12)
- 2.5.1. The fact that the angel was sent in response to the prayer (words) of Daniel implies that heard prayer is answered prayer.
- 2.5.2. We noted, in our consideration of Daniel 9.23 that from the moment Daniel began to pray his prayer was answered.
- 2.5.3. Also, we noted (Dan 9.23) that the reason Gabriel was sent to Daniel did not arise from Daniel's prayer or from anything to do with Daniel himself. The order for Gabriel to go to Daniel was given as he *began* to pray (23). It wasn't Daniel's prayer that moved God to act. Daniel didn't seek an answer to a question or an explanation of future events.

His prayer was focused on asking God to forgive Israel and to restore her to her former land and glory.

- 2.5.4. We asked the question, “Is there such a thing as ‘unanswered prayer’?” and concluded that God *always* answers the true prayers of believers. However, some answers can be, “Yes.” “Yes, but in a way that you don’t expect.” “Yes, but in my time.” “No this is not according to my great plan for your good; but have faith, I am with you.” Sometimes God’s answer is ‘no’ to our legitimate needs, desires, hopes, and wishes.
- 2.5.5. One of the conditions for true prayer is that it arises from true faith that looks to and depends on God. That Daniel’s prayers arose from true faith is evidenced by both by his demeanour and by the content of his petitions.
 - 2.5.5.1. He humbled himself before God, acknowledging his dependence on his creator.
 - 2.5.5.2. His prayers consisted of sincere mourning over and confession of sin.
 - 2.5.5.3. In this instance, his prayer was accompanied by voluntary fasting (the abstinence from choice food or delicacies), which reinforces our belief that his prayer sprung from a true faith.
- 2.5.6. Even though the answer to his prayer (i.e., the sending of the angel with words of revelation) had been put into effect from the moment he voiced his petition, as with his previous prayer (Dan 9.20), there was a delay of three weeks (Dan 10.2) in his receiving the notification of its answer in this case.
 - 2.5.6.1. The angel will explain why he was delayed—we will consider that reason below.
 - 2.5.6.2. This tells us that there can be a delay from the point when we voice a prayer to the point when we see the manifestation of the answer to that prayer.
 - 2.5.6.3. This is one of the reasons that we *think* that there is such a thing as unanswered prayer.
 - 2.5.6.4. Why does God not always, and in fact often does not, make visible the immediate answer to our prayers? There may be many reasons for this, including:
 - 2.5.6.4.1. We may not be able to understand the implications of the answer. Because of our finite knowledge we simply are unable to comprehend the context and meaning of the answer.
 - 2.5.6.4.2. God may be training us to depend on him in faith.
 - 2.5.6.4.3. God may choose to provide the visible manifestation of the answer only at the end of time so that we, along with all the saints, will marvel at how he wove his intricate and amazing pattern of providence into the cloth of history and declare his praises in an everlasting existence.
 - 2.5.6.5. The fact that we are unaware that Heaven has already responded to the petitions sent in its direction, does not mean that the heavens are made of brass (Lev 26.19; Dt 28.23).
- 2.6. He told him that he been sent in response to his petition/prayer (12).
 - 2.6.1. The angel told Daniel that he specifically was sent to help Daniel. He says (emphatic in Hebrew: “I, I have come”). It is as if he says that not any angel was sufficient for this mission, but it had to be an archangel or Christ himself (depending on how we understand the identification of the person who is speaking, per verses 5-6).
 - 2.6.2. To know that God, the Sovereign ruler of the universe, pays that kind of attention to the prayers of his saints and cares enough to send the best comforter, should be a great encouragement to us.
 - 2.6.3. We can extend this thought by considering the greatest mission God ever undertook—to send Jesus to die for his people, and then to send the Holy Spirit as the comforter to be with them until he brings each one to Glory.
- 2.7. He had strengthened him physically through a touch and he strengthened him mentally and

- spiritually through words of encouragement.
- 2.7.1. After any physical or mental anguish—a traumatizing accident, a severe scare, deep disappointment, or grievous loss—we need to be comforted by both a touch and word.
 - 2.7.2. Since we are humans, with two constituent parts of body and spirit, we need both dimensions of our persons comforted when confronted with challenging circumstances. This comfort needs to come in two forms physical and mental/spiritual—for example a hug, a pat on the back, or firm hand placed on our arm or shoulder; and sincere words of love, sympathy, or condolence.
 - 2.8. What was the result of this encouragement? (19)
 - 2.8.1. Daniel was strengthened sufficiently to hear the message.
 - 2.8.2. Daniel asked the angel to proceed with the delivery of the message.
 - 2.8.3. The encouragement and comfort had had its intended effect and lifted Daniel from the ground.
 - 3. What was the explanation the angel gave for being delayed for three weeks in coming to Daniel. (13)
 - 3.1. He had been detained by the prince of the kingdom of Persia who had resisted him.
 - 3.1.1. The Hebrew reads, “he stood in front of me”.
 - 3.2. What was the resistance he faced?
 - 3.2.1. The form of resistance isn’t stated. However, without out doubt, what is recounted in this verse is one of the strangest and most mysterious in the Bible.
 - 3.2.2. We probably need to conclude that it was more than some form of mere physical detention since an angelic messenger (either an archangel or Christ himself) of the type portrayed in this chapter could not be detained by physical constraints—whether chains, walls, or armaments.
 - 3.2.3. So, the resistance was probably some form of spiritual opposition.
 - 3.2.4. This brief allusion opens a tiny crack through which we can get a peek into events happening in the supernatural realm. This verse (13) along with verses 20 and 21 provide some insight into spiritual warfare (Eph 6.12) occurring in the realm beyond the veil of space-time.
 - 3.2.5. The nature of the conflict appears to have related directly to events in the Persian Empire and not specifically to an attempt to prevent the angel from delivering the Message to Daniel, since the conflict continued after the message was delivered to Daniel (20).
 - 3.3. Who was the prince of the kingdom of Persia? (13, 20)
 - 3.3.1. Not Jake Gyllenhaal in Disney’s *The Prince of Persia: the Sands of Time*.
 - 3.3.2. It appears that the prince of Persia was a supernatural figure who was standing in opposition to God’s plans; a satanic adversary, a powerful demon of the corresponding rank to an archangel—possibly a fallen archangel.
 - 3.3.2.1. It is generally believed that, “[t]he angel that appeared to Daniel did not fight with the kings of Persia, but with a spiritual intelligence of a like nature, for the victory, or precedence with the kings of Persia.”⁴⁸⁴
 - 3.3.2.2. However, Tim Meadowcroft, a professor at an Evangelical Bible college in New Zealand, has argued that the ‘princes’ (13, 20, 21) “are as likely to be human figures as to be participants in some celestial battle.”⁴⁸⁵
 - 3.3.3. It seems that Satan has demons that he assigns to tempt and harass individuals. Thus, a high ranking demon was assigned to the dynasty (kings) of Persia.
 - 3.3.3.1. It may have been Satan himself who was working his evil in the Persian court.

⁴⁸⁴ C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch (2002). *Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Dan 10:12). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

⁴⁸⁵ T. Meadowcroft “Who are the Princes of Persia and Greece (Daniel chapter 10)? Pointers Towards the Danielic Vision of Earth and Heaven,” *Journal for the Study of the OT*, 29/1 (2004), 99-113;

www.cornerstoneborean.org/Ministries/BecauseGODIsBigger/Meadowcroft%20-%20Princes%20of%20Daniel%2010.pdf

- 3.3.3.2. Persia was the most important and powerful kingdom at that time. Satan may have attempted to influence decisions made in the Persian government to cause havoc throughout the rest of the Middle East.
- 3.3.4. That such angelic-demonic conflict could persist for 21 days indicates something of Satan's power and the power of at least some of his subordinate demons.
- 3.4. How was the angel assisted in overcoming the resistance?
 - 3.4.1. Michael an angelic prince assisted the angel (Gabriel?) speaking to Daniel to overcome the opposition of the satanic adversary and enabled the angel to continue his mission to deliver the message to Daniel.
 - 3.4.2. We receive brief glimpses into the extent of the conflict that is occurring in the supernatural realm in the other passages in which Michael is mentioned:
 - 3.4.2.1. Michael contending with the devil, as he was disputing with him about the body of Moses (Jude 9).
 - 3.4.2.2. A war in heaven in which Michael serves as the general over the forces of Heaven and defeats Satan and his forces and expels them from Heaven (Rev 12.7-9).
- 3.5. Who is Michael?
 - 3.5.1. Michael is referred to here as a chief prince, i.e., an archangel.
 - 3.5.2. Michael (whose name means 'who is like God?') appears to be one of the most powerful and important angels, and only one of two angels (along with Gabriel) mentioned by name in the Bible.
 - 3.5.3. He may have had specific responsibilities to serve as the protecting angel over Israel (Dan 10.21; Dan 12.1), to counter a demon who was assigned by Satan to cause trouble for Israel.
 - 3.5.4. Some interpreters suggest that Michael is another name for Christ, who is the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels.
- 4. What did the angel say that the vision concerned? (14)
 - 4.1. The future—days yet to come, the distant future.
 - 4.2. Specifically what was to happen to the Jews in the 'latter days'.
 - 4.3. What are the latter days?
 - 4.3.1. The final period of history when God established his kingdom under the Messianic king.
 - 4.3.2. The time covering the first coming of Christ to the end of time (Is 2.2; Acts 2.17; 1 Tim 4.1; 2 Tim 3.1; Heb 1.2; James 5.3; 2 Pt 3.3; 1 Jn 2.18).
 - 4.3.3. We live in the 'last days' or 'latter days' when time is wrapping up, and the world is quickly moving toward the Day of Judgement.
 - 4.3.4. Calvin said in commenting on this phrase, "The Scriptures in using the phrase, the last days, or times, always point to the manifestation of Christ, by which the face of the world was renewed."⁴⁸⁶
 - 4.4. Of course, the vision covers not only the days of the Messiah but the times leading up to the arrival of the Messiah. It covers the same 490 year period that was covered in the vision of the seventy sevens (Dan 9.24-27).
- 5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (10-14, 16, 18, 19)
 - 5.1. *Assistance* – God cares for his people and sends them assistance.
 - 5.1.1. We must not think that this assistance is reserved for mighty saints like Daniel, Moses, or Peter. All believers in Jesus Christ are saints, and are loved by God.
 - 5.1.2. We have no reason to be afraid of anything in this world because God loves us and is working out his purposes for our good (Rom 8.28) and his glory.

⁴⁸⁶ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.v.xv.html
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- 5.1.3. God's desire is that all his people have peace (Jn 14.27; Jn 16.33; Jn 20.19, 21, 26; Rom 5.1; Rom 15.13; 2 Thess 3.16).
- 5.2. *Angels* – Angels are real—both good and evil angels (we generally use the term 'demon' for the bad angels).
 - 5.2.1. Angels can influence the affairs of human beings—for good or evil.
 - 5.2.2. Satan and his demons work behind the veil of the visible world, attempting to influence for evil the kings of the nations.
 - 5.2.2.1. God ultimately controls events in the supernatural realm (1 Jn 4.4), as he does in the natural realm. He could overrule demonic attacks (as he did when Jesus cast out demons).
 - 5.2.2.2. However, demons are rational and volitional creatures and God permits, within limits (Job 1.12; Job 2.6), them to influence for evil and to rebel against his decrees; in the same way as he permits humans to exercise their intellects, emotions, and wills for evil.
 - 5.2.3. God's angels act on behalf of the saints. God charges his angels to protect his people (Ps 91.11, 12; Ps 34.7).
 - 5.2.4. There are great supernatural battles being waged between angels and demons that we are not aware of.
 - 5.2.5. We will be surprised to discover how many acts angels have performed on our behalf—from providing protection to giving comfort.
- 5.3. *Assurance* – God sends specific forms of assurance, comfort, and encouragement when his people are severely tried.
 - 5.3.1. We all need encouragement in every task that we undertake or difficulty we face.
 - 5.3.1.1. It is not sin to need encouragement—Daniel had done nothing sinful when he needed the encouragement brought by the angels touch and word.
 - 5.3.1.2. God understands that all of his people are sin-stained and weak and need encouragement sent from Heaven.
 - 5.3.1.3. He sends assurance so that we will not feel that we are alone when facing challenges.
 - 5.3.2. This assurance can come in many forms:
 - 5.3.2.1. Church leaders may encourage (as Moses did for Joshua) those starting out in new tasks or facing difficult challenges (1 Thess 5.14; 2 Tim 4.2; Titus 2.15).
 - 5.3.2.2. Believers encourage one another in the Church (1 Thess 4.18; 1 Thess 5.11; Heb 3.13; Heb 10.25).
 - 5.3.2.3. Angels may directly encourage us by prodding us with thoughts about God and Scripture passages.
 - 5.3.2.4. The 'angels' whom God sends may be other human believers or actual angels.
 - 5.3.3. The primary means of assurance are a touch and a word.
 - 5.3.3.1. We can give a hug or hold a hand when someone is hurting, or cry with him when he cries.
 - 5.3.3.2. We are to encourage in words (1 Thess 4.18) of counsel and encouragement, prayer, and Scripture reading.
 - 5.3.4. What are we to do when a fellow believer says, "Yes, but I am still hurting and not sensing any assurance from God"?
 - 5.3.4.1. We are to continue more sincerely to encourage by a touch and a word.
 - 5.3.4.2. This worked for Daniel and for Jesus (Mt 4.11), so it will for all believers. It is God's ordained means for us to provide assurance to our fellow believers.

Dolorous Times (Dan 10.20-11.45)

Support (Dan 10.20-11.1)

1. Why did the angel ask Daniel if he knew the reason for his coming? (20)

- 1.1. The angel asked a rhetorical question, not for the purpose of eliciting information, but to confirm that Daniel was fully recovered from his debilitating experience.
 - 1.1.1. He had already explained his purpose for coming (11, 12).
 - 1.2. He seems to be determining if Daniel was fully recovered—enough to receive the revelation of future events.
 - 1.2.1. His question may be similar to what someone might do after a friend has fainted or been knocked out when he holds up a number of fingers and asks his friend to tell him the number.
 - 1.2.2. He may be directing Daniel's attention to the revelation, by saying, in effect, "Focus Daniel, and recall why I have come, and listen as I explain what will happen!"
 - 1.3. He is now going to fulfill the promise he had made to Daniel to tell him what would happen to his people in the latter days (14).
2. What had been the angel's assignment before he came to Daniel? (1)
 - 2.1. The angel had been appointed to support and strengthen (or protect) Darius (that is, Cyrus).
 - 2.1.1. When Darius began his rule over Babylon, the angel had provided support to him.
 - 2.1.2. We are not told the type of support. However, we can infer (13, 20) that it may have involved some form of supernatural struggle. The angel may have been protecting Darius from Satanic attacks, in order to keep him from persecuting the Jews.
 - 2.1.3. It is likely that the spiritual conflict was intense since Michael (Israel's prince) also had to be involved (21).
 - 2.2. God used the angelic messenger as a second cause to effect his Divine plans.
 - 2.2.1. The first year of Darius (539 BC) was a monumental year for the Persian Empire:
 - 2.2.1.1. They conquered Babylon through ingenuity and possessed the city without destroying it.
 - 2.2.1.2. Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild the Temple and their city.
 - 2.2.2. Either (or both) of these events could have been the subject of the angel's intervention, and the angel was instrumental in bringing God's plan to realization.
 - 2.2.3. The prime objective was to provide protection for the people of God—the Jews.
3. What was to be the angel's next assignment after providing the revelation to Daniel? (20, 21)
 - 3.1. He would have to return to fight with the prince of Persia—i.e., to do battle with the demon (possibly Satan himself) assigned to tempt Cyrus to persecute the Jews and to cause destruction and mayhem throughout the Middle East. This battle would continue for 200 years (539-330 BC), until the ascendancy of Alexander the Great.
 - 3.2. He would be joined by Michael in this supernatural battle.
 - 3.2.1. Michael is the archangel who was assigned to protect the Jews ("your prince") and he was doing battle against the prince of Persia to keep him from influencing Cyrus and the kings which followed him to destroy God's people. Consider, for example, the destruction that Haman asked Ahasuerus to execute on the Jews at the time of Esther (Est 3.8-10).
 - 3.3. What does the angel mean when he says that none was at his side, or supported him, except Michael?
 - 3.3.1. It likely does not mean that no one else was available. God has legions of angels (Mt 26.53) who could have been called to protect the Jews and execute the mission of God.
 - 3.3.2. It is likely that no one else was required to do the job. The angel speaking, and Michel, were powerful enough angels to counter the worst that Satan could throw into the battle.
4. Who was to come after the prince of Persia? (20)
 - 4.1. The prince of Greece.

- 4.1.1. The demon assigned to tempt and influence Alexander the Great for evil.
 - 4.2. Daniel is reminded that the Persian Empire would come to an end and be followed by a Greek Empire. He had been shown this (Dan 8.21) in the vision he had received about ten years earlier (in 551 or 550 BC).
 - 4.3. The angel speaking with Daniel appears to be saying that his mission will extend to resisting the demon(s) assigned to the kings of Greece, after the defeat of the Persians.
 - 4.3.1. Much of the revelation in chapter 11 concerns the Greek period and, in particular, the persecution of the Jews that Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes would execute.
 - 4.4. Daniel is give a hint in this statement. “the prince of Greece will come”, of the future and a preview of the primary content of the revelation that follows.
5. What is the ‘book of truth’? (21)
- 5.1. Literally, this should be translated as “writing of truth”. This is how the Septuagint (LXX) translates the words into Greek.
 - 5.1.1. It is probably inappropriate to turn this into a proper noun as the NIV does, with ‘Book of Truth’.
 - 5.1.2. The reference is not to the Book of Daniel or to another specific book, such as the scroll of Deuteronomy, or to the Bible.
 - 5.2. The idea that is being expressed here could be:
 - 5.2.1. God’s plan and decrees for individuals (Ps 139.16), Israel, and the world.
 - 5.2.2. God’s truth, in general.
 - 5.3. The point seems to be that what God has decreed about the future is as firmly established as is an historical record of the past. The future and the past are one to God because he is not bound by time and the future has been fully determined by him.
6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 6.1. *Son’s Covenant* – This section reminds us that all of history pivots on the Messiah—in this instance moving toward the coming of the Messiah.
 - 6.1.1. The people of Israel needed protection because through that nation the Saviour of the world would be born.
 - 6.1.2. Satan and his hordes were desperately trying to prevent the nation from being recalled out of its captivity and being re-established, since they knew that if the city and royal line were recognized, then, as three follows two in the whole number system, the Lord’s anointed one would come.
 - 6.2. *Supernatural Conflict* – Unbeknownst to Cyrus, a great battle was raging in the angelic realm to influence him to persecute or to support the Jews.
 - 6.2.1. Satan and his demons were being confronted and challenged by archangels so that God’s purposes in his creation would be accomplished.
 - 6.2.2. Even though we are largely ignorant of the realm beyond the veil of time and space, there are powers in high places contending for the hearts and souls of humankind.
 - 6.3. *Second Causes* – We learn of God’s use of second causes through the angel’s account of his being engaged in this spiritual warfare on behalf of Israel.
 - 6.3.1. The overthrow of Babylon was accomplished through the mediation of an angel.
 - 6.3.2. Does this mean that God is dependent on creatures to fulfill his will?
 - 6.3.3. While God is the final cause of all events, he chooses to use second causes, through his creation, to govern his universe and to execute many of his plans. In particular, men and angels are given a role as the means—the channel—through which God accomplishes his work.
 - 6.3.4. He does this to recognize and reinforce the reality that his rational creatures are not mere automatons.

Sweeping Suzerainties (Dan 11:2-4)

1. How does the angel qualify what he is about to tell Daniel?
 - 1.1. He tells him that he is speaking the truth—i.e., what he is about to tell him is unequivocally accurate.
 - 1.1.1. There is a parallel with what Daniel does, himself (Dan 10.1), when he tells his readers that he is telling the truth.
 - 1.1.2. It is almost as if the angel swears to the truthfulness of what he is going to report.
 - 1.1.3. The word of an angel should be sufficient, yet he feels it is necessary to inform Daniel of the truthfulness of what he is going to say.
 - 1.1.4. His action is similar to what a person does when he is going to recount an event and he says, “I am telling the truth, this is what happened...”
 - 1.2. Why did he have to assure Daniel that what he was going to report was true?
 - 1.2.1. The future events reported sound fantastic and beyond the realm of the possible to know in advance and in detail.
 - 1.2.2. The events would transpire exactly as reported, and Daniel and the Jews who would live over the next four centuries were to look to this account to understand what would happen around, and to, them.
 - 1.3. It is possible that the angel’s reference to ‘truth’ relates to the ‘writing of truth’ (Dan 10.21) already mentioned.
 - 1.3.1. Thus, the angel is saying that the future events he would report were taken from the perfect plan for all of history established by God.
 - 1.3.2. He reminds Daniel, and us, that truth ultimately proceeds from God and his word.
2. What period of time is covered by the prophecy in this section? (Dan 11.2-12.3)
 - 2.1. From 529 BC when Cyrus’ son, Cambyses II, would ascend the throne to the arrival of the Messiah on the scene (4 BC-26 AD) and then, in more general terms, to the end of this created order (Dan 12.1-3) at the time of the second coming of the Messiah and the resurrection.
3. What kings were to follow Cyrus in Persia?
 - 3.1. Three, followed by a fourth.
 - 3.1.1. The three who ruled after Cyrus were:
 - 3.1.1.1. Cambyses II (530–522 BC), the son of Cyrus.
 - 3.1.1.2. Smerdis (pseudo-Smerdis) or Gaumata (522 BC). He reigned for only a brief time. Then, with the help of six princes (possibly six of the seven mentioned in Esther 1.14) Darius seized power from the usurper Gaumata and ascended the throne in 522 BC.
 - 3.1.1.3. Darius I – the Great (522-486 BC), son of Hystaspes a Persian noble. Darius held the Persian Empire at its peak. The empire extended into Greece and Macedon. Much of his history is known from Greek historians, and from a carving on a cliff called the Behistun Inscription, which is an autobiography and has linguistic significance. He build magnificent palaces in Persepolis and Susa. The decay and eventual downfall of the empire commenced with his death and the ascension of his son, Xerxes I.⁴⁸⁷ This Darius is mentioned in Ezra (Ezra 4.5, 24; Ezra 5.5-7; Ezra 6.1, 12-15); Nehemiah (Neh 12.22); Haggai (Hag 1.1, 15; Hag 2.10), and Zechariah (Zech 1.1, 7; Zech 7.1). He is not the same Darius (Cyrus) mentioned in Daniel (Dan 5.31; Dan 6.1, 6, 9, 25, 28; Dan 9.1; Dan 11.1). He was also probably the king (Ahasuerus) who married Esther (contrary to the common view that this was Xerxes).
 - 3.1.2. The fourth king who followed Cyrus was Xerxes I (486-465 BC).
 - 3.1.2.1. Xerxes was a son of Darius I and Atossa, a daughter of Cyrus. Even though he

⁴⁸⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia

wasn't the oldest son of Darius, he was 'born in the purple'⁴⁸⁸ through his mother's royal lineage (compared with his brother's lineage from a commoner). This is what inclined Darius to appoint Xerxes as his successor.

3.2. What particular attribute is identified about the fourth king?

3.2.1. He was very rich—far richer than the kings who preceded him.

3.2.1.1. Xerxes was the most powerful, influential, and wealthy of the four kings which followed Cyrus.

3.2.1.2. Like his father he held to the Zoroastrian religion which was the dominant religion in Persia from around 600 BC.⁴⁸⁹ In 484 BC he angered the Babylonians by confiscating and melting down their golden statue of Bel (Marduk, Merodach). This led to a Babylonian revolt.

3.2.1.3. Although his father had subjugated parts of Greece and Macedon, it is Xerxes' battles with the Greeks which are the most famous and important from Daniel's perspective (2). During his reign he fought wars against Greece, primarily to punish them for their part in the Ionian Revolt and their victory over the Persians at Marathon. From 483 BC Xerxes prepared his expedition. He dug a channel which crossed the isthmus of the peninsula of Mount Athos, stored provisions in stations on the road through Thrace and built a bridge of boats across the Hellespont. He assembled a vast army (with estimates of around a million foot soldiers) of many nationalities, including the Assyrians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Indians, Egyptians and Jews. Included in this army was a force of 10,000 elite warriors named 'Persian Immortals'. Xerxes was victorious during the initial battles. At the Battle of Thermopylae, a small Greek force led by the king of Sparta resisted the much larger Persian forces, but were ultimately defeated. After Thermopylae, Athens was captured and the Athenians and Spartans were driven back to their last line of defence at the Isthmus of Corinth, while Athens was evacuated. The sea battle of Salamis (September 29, 480 BC) was won by the Greek fleet, after which Xerxes set up a winter camp in Thessaly. Because of unrest in Babylon he had to take much of his army home. The army he left in Greece was defeated the following spring and the Persians, cut off from their supplies, had to retreat.⁴⁹⁰

3.3. Why are the kings which followed Xerxes in the Persian Empire until the arrival of Alexander (465-331 BC) not mentioned in Daniel chapter 11?

3.3.1. Why does the angel skip over 130 years

3.3.2. After their defeat at Salamis, Persia, was essentially politically dead. The rise of Greece to 'world' domination had begun. There was no need for the angel to report on events which would have no significant bearing on the rest of world history and the history of the Jews leading to the Messiah.

4. Who was the mighty king that was to arise? (3)

4.1. Alexander the Great.

4.1.1. Alexander III of Macedon (b. July 356 BC – d. June 323 BC), the son of Philip II. His tutor was Aristotle.

4.1.2. We first encountered Alexander in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan 2.32, 39) as the bronze belly and thighs, then in Daniel's first vision (Dan 7.6) as a winged leopard, and then in Daniel's second vision (Dan 8.21) as goat with a prominent horn.

4.1.3. He died (of malaria and complications from consuming too much alcohol) at the age of 32 in Babylon (in 323 BC), where he had been planning a military campaign against

⁴⁸⁸ We considered the association of purple robes with royalty when we studied 5.5-12—when Daniel was promised a purple robe if he interpreted the writing on the wall.

⁴⁸⁹ We noted some distinctives of Zoroastrianism when we studied 1.3-7.

⁴⁹⁰ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I_of_Persia

Arabia.

4.2. How was he to rule?

4.2.1. He would rule with great dominion or power.

4.2.1.1. Between 334 and 330 BC Alexander swept through the Middle East, conquering from Egypt to the borders of India. His armies accomplished the same conquests in about *five* years, that had taken the previous two empires about a century.

4.2.1.2. Alexander's army of about ~30,000 foot soldiers and 5,000-7,000 mounted soldiers defeated the much larger army of Darius III. In the final battle at Gaugemela (331 BC; east of Mosul in modern-day northern Iraq) Alexander's men killed ~100,000 Persians.

4.2.1.3. He created a vast empire in a shorter period than anyone before, or after, him (3.9 million square kilometers [Canada has ~10M kms²]).

4.2.1.4. Alexander's lasting legacy was not his conquests and the creation of a permanent empire, but the cultural diffusion his conquests engendered—leading to the dissemination of Greek culture and the Greek language throughout the Middle East, in preparation for the coming on the Messiah and the writing of the NT in Greek.

4.2.2. What is said here about Alexander?

4.2.2.1. He would do as he pleased.

4.2.2.2. Alexander believed that Achilles and the demigod Hercules were his ancestors, and thus claimed to be a descendant of the god Zeus, the father of Hercules. For political reasons, and out of pride, he required the provinces he conquered to worship him as a god.

4.2.2.3. Alexander founded many (>25) cities throughout the empire, most called Alexandria after himself.

4.3. What would happen to his empire?

4.3.1. His kingdom would be broken and divided into four parts; toward the four winds of heaven (Dan 8.8, 22).

4.3.1.1. After Alexander's death (323 BC) at the age of 33, his sons were too young to rule and the Empire was managed by four regents.

4.3.1.2. During the period of the regency, there were struggles among Alexander's principal generals, who are commonly designated as the Diadochi ("successors"), and his family.

4.3.1.3. His empire was divided into four parts (Dan 8.8, 22) by his generals: Seleucus Nicanor took Asia the Great (Phrygia to the Indus River); Lysimachus (Perdiccas?) followed by Antigonus took Asia Minor (Thrace and Bithynia); Cassander took Macedonia; and Ptolemy (Ptolemy) took Egypt and Palestine.

4.3.1.4. None of the four parts of the divided Greek Empire ever rivalled the strength of Alexander's undivided dominion; instead the remnants of his empire would be marked by division and weakness until it fell to the Romans.

4.3.2. His kingdom would not go to his posterity.⁴⁹¹

4.3.2.1. Alexander had at least two sons (Heracles and Alexander IV). Both were too young, at the time of his death, to have ruled.

4.3.2.2. During Alexander IV's nominal reign (323-309 BC; aged 4-19), four regents acted in his name. The final regent, Cassander, one of Alexander's generals, had both of Alexander's sons murdered in 309 BC.

4.3.3. His kingdom would be given to others.

4.3.3.1. What Alexander strove for, the world's largest empire in extent, he did not have time to enjoy and there ended up being no family to whom he could leave the

⁴⁹¹ Refer to the notes entitled Subjugation, on 8.3-12, 20-25 for more detailed information about the demise of Alexander's empire.

proceeds of his vain accomplishments.

4.3.3.2. Matthew Henry says: “Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shown more evidently than in the story of Alexander. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.”⁴⁹²

5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

5.1. *Truth* – As the angel declared (2) the word of God is true.

5.1.1. The details recorded here are given in the future tense, but are vindicated by the record of the past (Is 44.6-7). The amazing accuracy of the predictions recorded in this section, and the rest of the chapter, vindicate every portion of God’s word. What God says, from Genesis 1.1 to Revelation 22.21, is worthy of full acceptance because it is God’s breath to mankind.

5.1.2. What God says about the past and the future can be accepted by us as absolute truth. We do not have to doubt it, and must not question it. Daniel’s account gives us confidence that the yet-to-be fulfilled prophecies of Scripture (e.g., the visible return of Christ, the Last Judgement and the renovation of the cosmos) will happen as they are stated.

5.2. *Time* – God controls Time

5.2.1. God knows what will transpire in the future, not because he has looked into the future and seen how purely free agents will act but because he has planned the future in every detail.

5.2.2. God doesn’t exist in time, he exists above time. He created time as a constituent of the universe (Gen 1.1). Time is not absolute—but a created phenomenon, and even relative when considered by modern physics.

5.2.3. Not only does God not look into the future. The future doesn’t exist as a separate entity from his perspective. It is merely a construct of time-bound creatures. Past, present, and future are all co-extensive (i.e., they are one) from God’s viewpoint

5.3. *Tempo* – There is a sameness to human history, with minor variations.

5.3.1. Kingdoms come, kingdoms go. There are political marriages, alliances, deceptions and intrigue, and wars. We see this as the angel passes quickly through his account of five kings, even ‘great’ ones, as if they were nothing more than lint on fabric.

5.3.2. The events in the news, which we think so important today, fade into near nothing tomorrow. I often thought of this when a dated copy of the *Economist* arrived in my mailbox—now I get it electronically. It is interesting to read their analysis of an upcoming event (e.g., an election) after the event has occurred. Trying to stay up with the news can be a time waster, especially since much of the information in the news becomes almost background noise so quickly.

5.3.3. This, of course, does not mean that man’s existence is meaningless. Rather it shows that lives lived without a focus on an everlasting existence and a desire to glorify God are merely the pulse of dropping grains of sand in the quickly emptying hourglass of time.

Seleucid Stage (Dan 11.5-20)

1. What are some themes that run through this section?

1.1. Two kingdoms filled with human pride striving for domination.

1.2. Build-up of armies and fighting of wars (7, 9-13, 15, 18).

1.3. Court intrigues and disrupted dynastic successions (5-7, 19, 20).

1.4. Pride and hubris (12, 16, 18).

1.5. Alliances through marriage treaties (6, 17).

1.6. pompous man (8, 20).

1.7. Rebellion (14).

⁴⁹² Mathew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Da 11.1-4). (Peabody: Hendrickson. 1996, c1991).

2. What are the kingdoms of the ‘south’ and the ‘north’?
 - 2.1. This account covers the struggles between two dynasties founded by two of Alexander the Great’s generals.
 - 2.1.1. The empire of Alexander was divided into four parts by his generals, as foretold in two of the visions given to Daniel (Dan 7.1-14; Dan 8.3-12, 20-25); and foretold by the angel (Dan 11.4).
 - 2.1.2. The particular kingdoms under consideration in these verses are: the Ptolemies (Egypt; the south) and the Seleucid (Syria; the north), both Greek-speaking.
 - 2.1.3. The focus is on the parts of the former empire that have an immediate bearing on the life of the Jews in Palestine. Israel lay between Syria and Egypt and was subject to takeover by first one and then the other kingdom.
 - 2.1.4. The period covered (verses 5-20) is *between* the death of Alexander (323 BC) until the ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the “little horn” of Daniel 8.9 (he ruled Syria and Palestine from 175-164 BC). Therefore, these verses cover a period of ~150 years, and set the stage for the arrival of the tyrannical Antiochus IV.
 - 2.1.5. The Seleucids ruled until annexed to Rome during Pompey’s conquests in 63 BC. The Ptolemy’s ruled until annexation to Rome in 30 BC.
 - 2.2. Without an extensive working knowledge of the history of this period it would be difficult for a person to know who is each person who is referred to in these verses.
 - 2.3. Given the nature of the content in this section and the need to have detailed historical knowledge, it would be difficult to study it as we have studied previous sections. Therefore, we will, instead, review an outline of the history covered by verses 5-20 and observe how accurately historical events fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel. We will apply the following guiding principles:
 - 2.3.1. The account must be understood as a review of events which would occur between the time of Daniel and the arrival of the Messiah.
 - 2.3.2. The account deals with events relevant to the Jews.
 - 2.3.3. The account is not to be understood as speaking about events to occur in our future; in contrast to interpretation of many today.⁴⁹³

Verses	Principal Actors	Significant Events Fulfilling the Prophecy of Daniel	Dates
5	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy I Soter, a Macedonian and general who served under Alexander, who assumed rule over Egypt in 323, and was proclaimed king in 304. He ruled until 282. <i>Prince/Commander, King of North:</i> Seleucus I Nicator, also a general who served Alexander, became satrap of Babylon, Syria and Media ~320. He assumed the title of king in ~304 and ruled until 281.	Establishes the existence of two rival kingdoms and dynasties (Ptolemies and Seleucids); mentioning only a king and prince (Ptolemy I and II) of the south (5). ⁴⁹⁴ <i>Ptolemy shared rule with his son Ptolemy II in 285 BC. He devoted his retirement to writing a history of the campaigns of Alexander. He died in 283 BC at the age of 84.</i> <i>In 316 BC Babylon was attacked by Antigonus, another general under Alexander who ruled in Asia Minor (Thrace and Bithynia). Seleucus I sought help from Ptolemy I. They defeated Antigonus in 312 BC at Gaza.⁴⁹⁵ Seleucus resumed his rule of Babylon, increased his power, and eventually controlled more territory than Ptolemy. Seleucus was murdered (281 BC).⁴⁹⁶</i> Nothing is said about these events in Daniel; implying that from a Jewish perspective they were unimportant.	323-285 BC
6	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Ptolemy I’s son, (ruled 285-246) <i>[King of North:</i> Antiochus I Soter (ruled 281- 262)]	A period of history is passed by (“after some time”). Ptolemy II and Antiochus II were bitter enemies but entered into an alliance (~250 BC). The alliance was sealed by the marriage of Ptolemy II’s daughter Berenice to Antiochus. Antiochus divorced his wife, Laodice, to marry Berenice. Two years later, Ptolemy died and Antiochus divorced Berenice and	285-246 BC

⁴⁹³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_11;

⁴⁹⁴ Paragraphs in normal font relate directly to the account given by the angel to Daniel. Paragraphs in italic font provide additional historical context.

⁴⁹⁵ Kevan Barwise, *Battle of Gaza* (312 BC); www.fanaticus.org/DBA/battles/gaza312bc.html

⁴⁹⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucus_I_Nicator

Daniel – The Man who Feared God

Verses	Principal Actors	Significant Events Fulfilling the Prophecy of Daniel	Dates
	<i>King of North:</i> Antiochus II Theos (i.e., 'god'), Seleucus' grandson (ruled 262-246) Ptolemy II's daughter, Berenice	took back Laodice. However, Laodice out of jealousy, poisoned Antiochus and had Berenice and her infant son killed. Laodice then appointed her son, Seleucus II Callinicus, king (246-227/226). Laodice ruled as queen-regent during the minority of her son. <i>According to tradition, Ptolemy II had the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek (called the Septuagint).</i> ⁴⁹⁷	
7-9	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy III Euergetes, brother of Berenice ("from a branch from her roots/family line"), (ruled 246-221) Note: verse 8 is the only verse in this chapter that identifies Egypt as the kingdom of the south. The Septuagint names Egypt in multiple verses in this chapter. <i>King of North:</i> Seleucus II Callinicus, son of Antiochus II (ruled 246-226)	Ptolemy III set out with a large army to avenge the murder of his sister. After five years of war (246-241 BC) he was victorious over the Syrian army and killed Laodice. During the conquest he captured and looted the Seleucid capital of Antioch, and returned to Egypt with much spoil (40,00 talents of silver and 2,500 idol statues ⁴⁹⁸). Among the spoil was Egyptian treasures, including idols, that had been taken by the Persian monarch Cambyses II in 524 BC. For returning the idols, the Egyptians gave Ptolemy the title 'Euergetes', meaning 'well-doer' or 'benefactor'. Ptolemy made a peace treaty with Seleucus II in ~240 BC because he wished to pursue conquests in the Aegean and had to maintain peace in his own realm. After his humiliating defeat, Seleucus tried to invade Egypt but was unsuccessful. He died after falling from his horse after returning to Syria. <i>Ptolemy decreed the insertion of a leap-day in the Egyptian calendar of 365 days.</i> ⁴⁹⁹	246-226 BC
10	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy III Euergetes, brother of Berenice (ruled 246-221) <i>King of North:</i> Seleucus III Soter, son of Seleucus II (ruled 226-223) <i>King of North:</i> Antiochus III the Great, son of Seleucus II (223-187)	<i>Seleucus III Soter was weak and was poisoned by conspirators while on a military campaign in Asia Minor. His brother, Antiochus III the Great, became the ruler in 223, at 18 years of age and reigned for 36 years.</i> Antiochus assembled a large army and attacked Egyptian outposts in a campaign from 219-217 BC. Egypt had controlled all the territory to the borders of Syria, including the land of Israel. Antiochus drove the Egyptians back to the southern borders of Israel, attacking their fortress in Gaza.	226-217 BC
11-13	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy IV Philopater, son of Ptolemy III Euergetes (ruled 221-203) <i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy V Epiphanes, son of Ptolemy IV (ruled 203-180) <i>King of North:</i> Antiochus III the Great, son of Seleucus II, (ruled 223-187)	Ptolemy IV Philopater had been engaged in wanton indulgence when Antiochus III had started his campaign to the southern border of Israel. But he became angry and raised an army of 70,000 foot soldiers, 5,000 mounted cavalry, and 73 African elephants. He faced off with Antiochus III's forces, which consisted of 62,000 foot soldiers, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 Indian elephants, at the Battle of Raphia (217 BC) in Palestine. ⁵⁰⁰ Ptolemy won the battle. According to Polybius, the Syrians lost about 10,000 foot soldiers and, about 300 horse and 5 elephants, and 4,000 men were taken prisoner. The Egyptian losses were 1,500 foot soldiers, 700 horse and 16 elephants. Most of the Syrian elephants were taken by the Egyptians. Ptolemy IV became proud and insolent after defeating the Syrians. He went into the Temple in Jerusalem and, in defiance of the law, entered the most-holy place. After some time (fifteen years, 202 BC), Antiochus III returned with a much larger, and better equipped, army and turned back the Egyptian forces, which at this point were under the nominal command of the young king Ptolemy V Epiphanes (he was about 5 years old). Antiochus again captured the fortress of Gaza (201 BC).	217-201 BC
14-17	<i>King of South:</i> Ptolemy V Epiphanes, son of Ptolemy IV (ruled 203-180) <i>King of North:</i> Antiochus III the Great, son of Seleucus II (ruled 223-187)	<i>Philip V of Macedonia joined with Antiochus III against Egypt.</i> Some Jews ('your own people'; see: Dan 9.24; Dan 10.14), led by a Tobias, joined Antiochus' forces against Egypt. Antiochus consolidated control over Palestine and occupied the glorious/beautiful land—i.e., Israel (Dan 8.9; Dan 11.41). His forces defeated the Egyptian forces, led by General Scopas, at a battle near Caesarea Philippi, in 199 BC. Palestine would become the permanent possession of Syria. This brought Palestine under full Seleucid control, which would set the stage for the tyrant of verses 21-35—Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Ironically many of the Jews	200-198 BC

⁴⁹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_II_Philadelphus

⁴⁹⁸ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/jerome_daniel_02_text.htm

⁴⁹⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_III_Euergetes

⁵⁰⁰ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Raphia

Daniel – The Man who Feared God

Verses	Principal Actors	Significant Events Fulfilling the Prophecy of Daniel	Dates
		<p>welcomed Antiochus III as a deliverer and benefactor since he provided funds for the Temple and released the religious leaders from having to pay taxes; not realizing that his son, Antiochus IV would, in twenty years, become their persecutor.</p> <p>General Scopas retreated to Sidon, the well-fortified city which Antiochus besieged and then captured in 198 BC. During the siege the Egyptians sent three other generals with their armies, but they could not prevail over Syria and help their besieged compatriots.</p> <p>Antiochus attempted to establish peace between Egypt and Syria by giving his daughter, Cleopatra I, in marriage to Ptolemy. At this time, Ptolemy was still a boy (about 9 years old) and the consummation of the betrothal didn't occur until a few years later. This attempt to create an alliance would ultimately fail because Cleopatra would love her husband and support the Ptolemaic cause against her father.</p>	
18-19	<p><i>King of North:</i> Antiochus III the Great, son of Seleucus II (ruled 223-187)</p> <p><i>Commander:</i> General Lucius Cornelius Scipio</p>	<p>Antiochus III turned his attention to Asia Minor in 197 BC and Greece in 192 BC. However Scipio was sent from Rome, in 191 BC, to turn back Antiochus. The Romans, with their Greek allies, defeated the Syrians at Thermopylae⁵⁰¹ and forced them to flee to Asia Minor. Thirty thousand Roman troops pursued Antiochus and defeated his larger army of seventy thousand at the Battle of Magnesia⁵⁰² near Smyrna (in Turkey) in 190 BC.</p> <p>The Romans forced Antiochus to sign the Treaty of Apamea⁵⁰³ in 188 BC. Polybius reported that the Syrian king was ordered to pay heavy fines,⁵⁰⁴ surrender territory⁵⁰⁵ and much of his army, and deliver twenty hostages⁵⁰⁶ (including Hannibal and his son, Antiochus IV). He returned to his own country and was killed a year later when he attempted to plunder a temple of Zeus (i.e., Bel) at Elymais to assemble funds to pay his indemnity payments to Rome.⁵⁰⁷ He died with his dream of reuniting Alexander's empire under his authority unrealized.</p>	197-187 BC
20	<p><i>King of North:</i> Seleucus IV Philopator, the second son of Antiochus III (ruled 187-175)</p> <p><i>Exactor of Tribute:</i> Heliodorus, his treasurer</p>	<p>Seleucus IV taxed his people heavily to pay the annual indemnity to Rome, required by the treaty made by his father.</p> <p>According to 2 Maccabees 3.7–40, Seleucus sent Heliodorus to plunder the Temple in Jerusalem in order to provide funds for his treasury. He saw a vision of angels which stopped the sacrilege.</p> <p>Seleucus was poisoned (not killed by an angry mob like his father or in battle) by Heliodorus after he returned from Jerusalem, who then seized the throne. Heliodorus was in turn ousted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the younger brother of Seleucus, who had been released by Rome, probably when the true heir, the son of Seleucus, became a hostage.</p>	187-175 BC

3. Why was there so much conflict between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids?
 - 3.1. Both dynasties believed that they should have been the inheritors of Alexander's empire.
 - 3.2. Each wanted to restore the former glory of the empire and have sweeping control from Europe to India.
 - 3.3. They could not stand the thought of the other gaining the ascendancy.
 - 3.4. They were power crazed—treating their subjects as mere pawns in the their games of intrigue.
 - 3.5. They did not have the slightly more noble aspiration to be empire-builders as Nebuchadnezzar did, but were merely empire-usurpers as their former king, Alexander. This is one of the reasons that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, whereas the other kingdoms which followed were symbolized by inferior metals.

⁵⁰¹ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thermopylae_\(191_BC\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thermopylae_(191_BC))

⁵⁰² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magnesia

⁵⁰³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Apamea

⁵⁰⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 21.17;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D21%3Achapter%3D17

⁵⁰⁵ Polybius, *Histories*, 21.13, 14;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D21%3Achapter%3D13 and

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D21%3Achapter%3D14

⁵⁰⁶ Polybius, *Histories*, 21.17;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D21%3Achapter%3D17

⁵⁰⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_III_the_Great

- 3.6. At root the problem was that the heart of man is desperately wicked (Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9)
4. Who rose up against the king of the south? (14)
- 4.1. “The violent men among your own people”.
 - 4.1.1. Literally “sons of violent ones.” The word for ‘violent one’ is used in the OT to speak of robbers and murders (Jer 7.11; Ezk 7.22; Ezk 18.10).
 - 4.1.2. They were rebels from among the Jews; led by a certain Tobias.
 - 4.2. What did they do?
 - 4.2.1. They joined Antiochus III’s forces against Egypt.
 - 4.3. Why would they be labelled as ‘violent’ and those who ‘lift themselves up’ or ‘rebels’?
 - 4.3.1. Because they took sides against the king of Egypt who had been their suzerain. It was wrong for them to have taken up arms against the king whom God had appointed (1 Sam 24.6; Rom 13.2). This does not mean that it is wrong for a Christian to take up arms in defence of his country, but rather that he is not to become a traitor.
 - 4.3.2. Because they took sides in a conflict that they should have stayed out of (Rom 12.18).
 - 4.4. Why did they rebel?
 - 4.4.1. They may have hoped to gain independence from both Egypt and Syria.
 - 4.4.2. They may have been trying to bring to fulfillment the visions in Daniel 8.1-27 and Daniel 9.24-27. Ironically, they didn’t speed up the coming of the Messiah but did fulfill the prophecy of verse 14.
 - 4.5. What happened to their rebellious scheme?
 - 4.5.1. It came to nothing—it failed and had no success.
 - 4.5.2. This illustrates the danger of trying to force God’s hand or to bring about the fulfillment of a prophecy through our own means, rather than waiting for it to be fulfilled in God’s time and in his way.
 - 4.5.3. What are some other examples of people trying to fulfill God’s promises in their own way?
 - 4.5.3.1. Sarah giving her servant Hagar to Abraham as a concubine to raise up an heir, rather than waiting for God miraculously to fulfill his promise in Isaac (Gen 16.1-16). Jacob’s wives did the same thing when they gave their maids to their husband.
 - 4.5.3.2. Saul sacrificing animals instead of waiting for Samuel to come (1 Sam 13.8-14).
 - 4.5.3.3. Christians today often do this same thing, for example marrying unbelievers because they can’t wait for God to give them a spouse; or using assisted reproductive technologies such as donor eggs or in vitro fertilization, or using surrogate mothers, rather than living within God’s will for their lives.
 - 4.5.3.4. In contrast, David refused, twice, to take advantage of opportunities to kill Saul, and to wait for God to deal with Saul so that he could take possession of the throne.
5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (5-20)
- 5.1. *Perversity* – The hearts of men are full of wicked lusts which make this world a bed of misery from their wars. Yet their grand schemes are nothing more than shadows and darkness. The Ptolemies and the Seleucids thought they were grand, their aspirations good, and accomplishments great. Yet their perspiration and the lives they destroyed resulted in one more vain attempt at building the City of Man when the City of God must have the ascendancy.
 - 5.2. *Providence* – God rules in providence and, even as Daniel said (Dan 2.21), raises up kings and puts them down as he wills.
 - 5.2.1. This portion of the prophecy set the stage for the arrival of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, who would persecute the Jews. This in turn would lead the Jews to rebel against

their overlords (under Judas Maccabeus) and condition them against occupying nations—leading to their antipathy to Rome at the time of Jesus.

- 5.2.2. The account covers a period of almost 150 (323-164 BC) years, as God was directing history toward its conclusion—in the revelation of his Anointed One.
- 5.3. *Planned* – All the events that unfold in this world, whether of great revolutions, mighty battles, marriages among the world's elite, and the assassination of monarchs; or the most minute event such as the bite of a malaria-carrying mosquito or the fall from a horse, are perfectly and eternally planned by God.
 - 5.3.1. Thus God does not foresee events in the sense of looking out to see what might happen in a contingent future, but foresees in the sense of describing what he has planned.
 - 5.3.2. God's plans include the sinful acts of men which he uses to bring about the unfolding of his great purposes to his glory; yet without making him the author of sin.
- 5.4. *Promised* – What God says will be, will be. No word of his can fail. What he has designed, decreed, and declared will infallibly come to pass.
- 5.5. *Precision* – The prophecy in verses 5-20 describes precisely events as they actually unfolded in history. There cannot be disagreement between what God says in his word and what secular history records (when correctly interpreted)—because God speaks only truth. So, when God records history (e.g., in Genesis 1-11) his word is to be understood as truth. Secular history, whether derived from cosmology, geology, palaeontology, or archaeology; when rightly interpreted will only ever confirm the Bible, never contradict it or disprove it.

Subjugator's Subterfuge (Dan 11.21-30a)

1. Which king was to arise in the northern kingdom? (21)
 - 1.1. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC), the son of Antiochus III, and younger brother of Seleucus IV.
 - 1.1.1. More is written in this prophecy about this king, than any of the others. Obviously this is because the Jews had more interaction with this king than any of the others.
 - 5.5.1. He hated the Jews and their religion and would persecute the Jews; who in turn would rebel, under Judas Maccabeus. The first attacks against the Jews are mentioned in these verses. More serious outrages follows, in the subsequent sections.
 - 1.1.2. He is the “little horn” of Daniel 8.9
- 1.2. How is Antiochus described?
 - 1.2.1. As a ‘contemptible person’. He was contemptible from God's standards and even from a debased human perspective.
 - 1.2.1.1. From God's perspective his treatment of the Jews was contemptible.
 - 1.2.1.2. From a mere human perspective, he was viewed as vile and rude, and untrustworthy with wild whims. For example, he would sneak out of the palace, incognito, and cavort with the debased.⁵⁰⁸
 - 1.2.2. He gave himself the name *Epiphanes* which means ‘illustrious one’ or ‘manifest god’ and demanded worship of himself. But even during his lifetime men called him *Epimanes* which means ‘madman’.
- 1.3. How was he to become king?
 - 1.3.1. The throne rightly belonged to Demetrius I Soter, a son of Seleucus IV Philopator who was murdered by his tax collector, Heliodorus. Antiochus connived to have Demetrius replace him as a hostage in Rome and ousted Heliodorus. He then seized the throne and had himself proclaimed king. Thus the royal majesty was not given to him by right, but stolen.
 - 1.3.2. He used intrigue (NIV), better than ‘flattery’ (ESV); from the Hebrew for ‘slipperiness’ or ‘smoothness’, to seize power when Syria was feeling secure under Heliodorus.

⁵⁰⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 26;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D26%3Achapter%3D1

2. What did Antiochus do with the prince of the covenant? (22-23)
 - 2.1. The Hebrew has ‘prince of a covenant’, so it may not be a specific covenant such as that made with Moses.
 - 2.2. Some understand this to be the removal from office, and probable murder, of Onias III, the high priest. This might be a parallel to the reference to the ‘the Prince of the host’ (Dan 8.11).
 - 2.2.1. However, Antiochus didn’t sweep away Onias with Armies.
 - 2.3. Others believe that this is a reference to Ptolemy VI Philometor (he ruled Egypt with his mother and then with his sister-wife and younger brother, from 181–145 BC) because he had made a covenant with Antiochus hoping that he would help him regain sole possession of the throne from his younger brother.
 - 2.4. Others believe that it is Ptolemy VI, but that the covenant Antiochus made was with Ptolemy’s nephew. There is confusion about this period of history in Egypt.
 - 2.5. The answer appears to be provided in verse 23.
 - 2.5.1. It appears that this refers to Antiochus’ first expedition into Egypt. He went as a supporter of Ptolemy VI who was trying to seize power.
 - 2.5.2. Antiochus’ motive was to use the alliance to give him a base at Pelusium, a fortress on the border of Egypt.
 - 2.5.3. With Syrian help, Ptolemy seized the throne. If this is the case, then the ‘prince of the covenant’ is Ptolemy VI, and the covenant was between him and Antiochus.
 - 2.5.4. However, Ptolemy then broke his agreement with Antiochus and allied himself with his brother to dislodge Antiochus’s troops from the fortress at Pelusium.
 - 2.5.5. Thus the reference to ‘he shall act deceitfully’ appears to apply to Ptolemy rather than to Antiochus. It may also be that the second part of verse 23 refers to Ptolemy, who regained his throne with a small force. However, most interpreters apply this Antiochus.
3. How did Antiochus abuse his power? (24)
 - 3.1. Verse 24 appears to refer to Antiochus.
 - 3.2. He plundered the rich provinces, when they felt ‘secure’ (or ‘without warning’), and distributed wealth to his cronies.
 - 3.3. It appears that he broke with tradition, for this was not something his forefathers had done. This would not have made his provinces (e.g., Judea) friendly toward him.
 - 3.4. Antiochus maintained an expensive, debauched, life style.⁵⁰⁹
4. What ‘grand’ scheme did Antiochus pursue? (24-26, 28)
 - 4.1. He devised plans to conquer fortresses in Egypt. His ambition was to re-build the former empire of Alexander by, first, conquering the Southern kingdom.
 - 4.2. He invaded Egypt in 170 or 169 BC and was met by Ptolemy VI with an army and then by an even larger army at Pelusium near the Nile delta.
 - 4.3. However, Antiochus was successful in defeating the Egyptians and slaughtering many of the opposing forces and captured Ptolemy as a hostage.
 - 4.4. What contributed to the defeat of the Egyptians?
 - 4.4.1. Ptolemy was betrayed by his own counsellors—i.e., those ate at his table—having been bribed by Antiochus.
 - 4.5. Antiochus returned to Syria with much plunder and with tribute money.
5. What did Antiochus do once he had defeated Egypt? (27)
 - 5.1. He feigned peace and professed friendship with Egypt.
 - 5.2. He sat down at a treaty table with the king of Egypt. There are two views on which king he met with.

⁵⁰⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 26;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D26%3Achapter%3D1

- 5.2.1. He met with Ptolemy VII Euergetes (Physcon), the brother of Ptolemy VI Philometor who was held prisoner by Antiochus. If this is the correct view, Antiochus claimed a willingness to maintain peace for personal gain, and Ptolemy wanted to keep the powerful Syrians from trying to take his territory. These seems to fit better with the context of verse 29.
- 5.2.2. He met with Ptolemy VI Philometor, his hostage, to plan how Ptolemy could regain the Egyptian throne. If this is the correct view, Antiochus was willing to support Ptolemy for personal gain, and Ptolemy made promises to receive help from the Syrians.
- 5.3. Neither king was sincere in the negotiations since both were not interested in a lasting peace settlement but in advancing their personal agendas. They both made promises that they did not plan to keep.
- 5.4. Their sitting at a table to make the treaty is significant because their deception abused the practice of Middle Eastern hospitality, and was considered to be despicable.
- 5.5. Antiochus then broke the treaty covenant and invaded Egypt again.
- 5.6. When did he break the covenant and invade Egypt?
 - 5.6.1. The NIV might be a little clearer than the ESV: “because an end will still come at the appointed time.”
 - 5.6.2. At the appointed time, which was in 168 BC.
 - 5.6.3. The reference to ‘time appointed’ seems to be a reminder that in spite of Antiochus’ proud schemes he was ultimately fulfilling God’s plans.
 - 5.6.4. This probably refers to the fact that in God’s appointed time Antiochus had yet to meet the armies of the Roman Republic.
6. Why were his plans against Egypt ultimately unsuccessful? (29-30)
 - 6.1. A military force from Kittim (Cyprus) came to help the Egyptians.
 - 6.2. The reference to Kittim may be interpreted as ‘the western coastlands’, meaning the Mediterranean islands and coasts of Greece and Italy—i.e., Rome (as one of the editions of the Septuagint has), who had made a treaty with Egypt.
 - 6.3. In 168 BC, the Roman senate sent an ambassador, Popilius Laenas, who met Antiochus at Alexandria and demanded that he lift the siege and stop his assault on Egypt or face war with Rome.⁵¹⁰
 - 6.3.1. Antiochus asked for time to consider Rome’s demand.
 - 6.3.2. Laenas then drew a circle in the sand around him, telling him that he had to reply to the Roman Senate before he stepped out of the circle or he would be considered at war with Rome. This is the origin of the metaphorical phrase, ‘line in the sand’.
 - 6.4. Antiochus backed down rather than begin a fight with Rome.
 - 6.5. Antiochus knew of the military might of Rome since he had been their hostage after his father’s defeat at Magnesia near Smyrna (in Turkey) in 190 BC, so he grudgingly submitted to Rome’s demands, raised the siege, and pulled out his armies, because he did not want to be at war with Rome.
 - 6.5.1. This was a humiliating defeat for Antiochus, thus he was afraid, or lost heart.
7. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 7.1. *Tyrants* – This section teaches us much about petty tyrants throughout history; whether ancient ones like Antiochus or today’s like Robert Mugabe or Kim Jong-un.
 - 7.1.1. Tyrants come and they go. They are, given man’s sinful dispositions, ‘a dime a dozen’. This is reality in this theatre of God’s providence until he wraps up time.
 - 7.1.2. However, their aspirations and ambitions come crashing down.
 - 7.1.3. In the ancient world, empires were often very large and kings often ruled for a lifetime—consider for example the Nebuchadnezzar and his empire. In contrast, as

⁵¹⁰ Polybius, *Histories*, 29.27;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D29%3Achapter%3D27

history progressed, empire-building became considerably more difficult and tyrants controlled smaller territories and (generally) for shorter periods.

- 7.1.4. Thus, we can say, ‘just wait a few years’ and in reality the tyrants will meet their demise.
- 7.2. *Treachery* – This section teaches us that peace-treaty negotiations among the leaders of the world are often filled with duplicity.
 - 7.2.1. “Quite a picture [11.27], isn’t it? A deadpan description of the typical geo-political summit, business meeting, or session of Congress—leaders sitting around a table lying to each other. And in this prophecy of the end times, we learn that as it has ever been since Adam and Eve, so will it ever be till the last curtain.”⁵¹¹
 - 7.2.2. We therefore can be sceptical about Camp David Accords, Israeli-Palestinian discussions, and other peace negotiations. In general they are worth little. This is particularly the case when the ‘peace’ treaties are between nations that have no fear of God and are steeped in the wickedness of false religions such as Islam, Hinduism, or Materialistic Naturalism.
- 7.3. *Time* – In spite of all the plans made by human leaders, God is sovereign over their times.
 - 7.3.1. For all their grand ambitions, their end will come at the time God has appointed (24, 27, 29).
 - 7.3.2. God created time (Gen 1.1) and controls it as surely as he does the events which occur in time, and the hearts of men who take action.
 - 7.3.3. We are reminded that God is the Sovereign and that no king, including Antiochus, can exceed the limits in time (space and authority) which the Lord of history has allotted to him.

Satanic Sacrilege (Dan 11.28, 30b-32a)

1. What did Antiochus IV Epiphanes do on returning from his first campaign against Egypt? (28)
 - 1.1. He took out vengeance against the Jews.
 - 1.2. In this instance (169 BC), he raided the city and Temple treasury—although he did not specifically desecrate the Temple sanctuary—and he slaughtered many Jews [1 Macc 1.20-28].
2. What may have been his reason for this action?
 - 2.1. Some suggest that the reason he did this was because some Jews staged an uprising against his rule.
 - 2.2. Others suggest that he was disappointed or frustrated with the results of his campaign in Egypt—not having conquered it all. So he lashed out against the most convenient helpless people—the Jews—as he passed through their land on the way back to Syria.
 - 2.3. Reference is made to his setting his heart against the holy covenant.
 - 2.3.1. This means he was antagonistic against the covenantal relationship between God and his people.
 - 2.3.2. He also had a strong dislike for the entire Mosaic system (the holy covenant), including the laws of God.
 - 2.4. It is possible that his reaction against the Jews was not so much because of his disappointment with his efforts in Egypt, but rather the opposite. He was engaged in an orgy of wanton destruction.
 - 2.5. The Jews stood as a witness against his hedonism and heathenism and he saw their existence, which pointed to God, as a challenge to his authority and ambitions and power and plans.
3. What did Antiochus do after returning from his second campaign against Egypt? (30b-32a)
 - 3.1. Took action against the holy covenant.

⁵¹¹ Andrée Seu, “Kings at the table,” *World Magazine blog*, 2010-10-21; online.worldmag.com/2008/10/21/kings-at-the-table/
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- 3.1.1. For a second time he attacked the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple.
- 3.1.2. Again, this is stated as being action against the holy covenant.
- 3.1.3. In this instance (167 BC), he sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers into Jerusalem on a purported peace mission. But the army attacked Jerusalem on the Sabbath; plundered, burned the city, and pulled down many of the buildings; killed thousands; and took many women and children as slaves [1 Macc 1.29–40; 2 Macc 5.23–26].
- 3.2. Showed favour to those who forsook the covenant.
 - 3.2.1. Some of the Jews allied themselves with Antiochus, because Antiochus offered them a reward if they would reject the worship of God and accept the worship of false gods [1 Macc 1.11–15, 41–43]. In particular were:
 - 3.2.1.1. Jason, the brother of Onias the high priest, who bribed Antiochus and established a school in Jerusalem for the training the youth in the practices of the pagans (2 Macc 4.7– 23)
 - 3.2.1.2. Menelaus, who aligned with the interests of Antiochus, and was the man that helped him enter Jerusalem on his return from Egypt
- 3.3. Desecrated the Temple.
 - 3.3.1. On December 16th, 167 BC Antiochus desecrated the Temple by dedicating it to the worship of Zeus. He erected an altar to Zeus and, according to history (or legend), had a pig offered on the altar [1 Macc 1.47; 2 Macc 6.1–6].
 - 3.3.2. What ‘fortress’ is mentioned along with the Temple?
 - 3.3.2.1. It may refer to the citadel of the old city of Jerusalem around the Temple mount.
 - 3.3.2.2. Alternatively, the Temple may be called a fortress, or refuge.
- 3.4. Abolished the daily sacrifice.
 - 3.4.1. Antiochus wished to exterminate the true religion and worship. So he forbade the ceremonial practices (including the festivals and circumcision) instituted by Moses, commanded that copies of the Scriptures be burned, replaced true worship with pagan ceremonies, and had the Jews offer a pig on the 25th of each month [1 Macc 1.41–50].
- 3.5. Set up the abomination that makes desolate.
 - 3.5.1. There have been a number of different translations offered for the phrase (“that makes [causes] desolate”), from ‘to be/make desolate’ or ‘to be appalled’. Calvin notes ‘astonishment’ as an alternate; suggesting that the astonishment is because God didn’t stop the pagan action.⁵¹² The root of the word translated here as ‘desolate’ is translated as ‘desolate’ elsewhere (Gen 47.19), but also as ‘deserted’ (Lev 26.22) and ‘appalled’ (Lev 26.32; Ezra 9.3, 4). When the word is used in Ezra 9.3, 4 it has an identical form (מִשְׁוֹמֵם) as here. It may be best to translate the phrase as, ‘appalling idol’.
 - 3.5.2. What is the ‘abomination that makes desolate’?
 - 3.5.2.1. The majority of commentators on this passage take the view that it is speaking of Antiochus’ setting up of the altar and statue of Zeus in the Temple [1 Macc 1.54, 59]—i.e., an appalling idol.
 - 3.5.3. Where did we encounter a similar concept in Daniel?
 - 3.5.3.1. When we studied 9.27 we considered the phrase, “on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate”.
 - 3.5.3.2. We noted that many apply this to the Roman armies (under Titus) bringing their ensign into the temple, setting up a pagan altar in the temple, or sacrificing a pig in the temple. However, we concluded that this was a reference to the Roman armies themselves surrounding the city, per the explanation given by Jesus in Luke 21.20.
 - 3.5.3.3. Daniel (the angel explaining the vision) chose to use similar words when

⁵¹² Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vi.xxxviii.html
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speaking of what Antiochus did. However, Daniel 11.31 is speaking of a different event (carried out by Antiochus) than what is referred to in Daniel 9.27 and 12.11 (the Roman armies under Titus).

3.5.3.4. Thus, so that 11.31 is not confused with 9.27 and 12.11, it is best that we translate the expression here as ‘appalling idol’ rather than the traditional ‘abomination that makes desolate’—particularly since an idol doesn’t cause desolation, but rather *deseccration*.

3.6. Seduced with flattery.

3.6.1. Antiochus used promises (‘flattery’) of payment, rewards, and favour to entice people to support his policy of replacing God’s ordained worship ceremonies with pagan rituals [1 Macc 2.18; 2 Macc 7.24].

4. What may have been the reasons he took these actions?

4.1. Many have suggested that it was out of frustration and bitterness with being sent back by Rome, that he took out his hostility on Jerusalem.

4.2. However, this cannot be the primary explanation, since he didn’t perpetrate this kind of evil on any of the other provinces within his kingdom.

4.3. The root cause was his antipathy and hatred of true religion. The Jews who were faithful to God’s Law were a witness to his hedonism and heathenism.

4.4. He hated the exclusiveness of the Jewish covenant—their claim to be God’s sole people—God’s law, and the true worship of God.

5. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

5.1. *Provocation* – The very existence of Christianity provokes a pernicious reaction from evil men.

5.1.1. The heart of man is inclined to wickedness at all times (Gen 6.5). Without the mediating savour of God’s general grace, the world would implode in a self-destructive orgy of violence.

5.1.2. Christians and Christianity appear as a roadblock to the natural man’s intent on continually carrying out the wicked intentions and thoughts of his heart.

5.1.3. What are the visible aspects of Christianity which inflame the antagonistic passions of all God haters?

5.1.3.1. God’s legal provisions: Man’s demand since his fall into sin, in the Garden of Eden, has been for autonomy. Men wish to be like God and wish to define their own rules. They despise the imposition of God’s law on them, and particularly hate his prescriptions for penal sanctions—e.g., capital punishment for murder.

5.1.3.2. Christ’s claim to uniqueness: The invented religions of men (all religions but Biblical Christianity) espouse human effort as the path to achieve paradise. They cannot tolerate the claim that Christ makes, to be the exclusive means of being reconciled with God (Jn 14.6).

5.1.3.3. The Christian lifestyle: Where God’s law is practiced prosperity follows. It is an inevitable correlation. God’s law instils responsibility and discipline which inevitably lead to material improvements. Men are of two minds on this. They are attracted to the results, but are also jealous of them. It is easier to rob the hard working and disciplined than to live their life. This is one reason why socialism is antithetical to Christianity—it rewards behaviours which are contrary to living responsibly.

5.1.3.4. Envy That which is the hope and joy of the people of God is the envy of their neighbours, and that is the holy covenant. Esau hated Jacob because he had received the blessing. Those that are strangers to the covenant are enemies to it.

5.1.4. What are examples of how Christianity, by its existence, provokes God haters today?

5.1.4.1. False religions: The adherents of Islam and Hinduism, in particular, are today

- focused on the annihilation of Christianity. They see the advance of Christianity as the major threat to their ascendancy. The list of the evils perpetrated by the adherents to these religions against Christians is almost endless, including: outlawing the Bible, bombing churches, killing Christians.
- 5.1.4.2. False philosophies: Although Materialistic Naturalism (including Evolution and Scientism) is at core a religion, it is also a philosophical system—and the epitome of all human philosophies. Proponents of Materialistic Naturalism are as antagonistic to Christianity as are the world's false religions. While they espouse rationality and empiricism, they display an extreme irrationality in their denial of, and arguments against, the supernatural, evidence for design in natural systems, and the necessity of first causes. The evils perpetrated by the champions of Materialistic Naturalism include: expelling from academia anyone who posits Intelligent Design or raises questions about the evidence for Evolution, and ridiculing anyone who does not accept their unsupported theories such as anthropogenic global warming or speciation by the random addition of increased genetic complexity.
- 5.1.4.3. Heathenism: Organizations such as the ACLU in the US or HRCs in Canada make it their primary mission to undermine Biblical standards. Their evils include: demanding that Christianity not be permitted to have any influence on public discourse or morality; and supporting any form of deviance from God's Law such as sexual perversions, homosexual 'marriage', and abortion.
- 5.1.5. Because Christ, Christianity, and Christians stand as visible reminders to God and his righteous demands, men strive to suppress truth (Rom 1.18) and destroy that which gets in the way of their autonomous, God-hating, lives.
- 5.2. *Perfidious* – Within the covenant community there are always going to be those who are disloyal, false, fickle, and faithless traitors.
- 5.2.1. Jesus teaches that until his return to consummate history, the covenant community is going to include those who are not of the true Israel (Mt 13.24-30, 36-43).
- 5.2.2. True believers cannot fall away. However, there are those in the Church who have feigned faith and will compromise with the purveyors of evil rather than face persecution for the cause of Christ.
- 5.2.3. The fact that there are traitors in the Church should not discourage us. Christ is building his Church in spite of human failings and fallings. He is saving a vast multitude that no man can number, and filling Heaven with those who will sound his praises in an everlasting existence.
- 5.3. *Persecution* – Those who espouse Christ will be subject to persecution.
- 5.3.1. One evidence of a professing Church is persecution. Therefore, those who live righteous lives must expect persecution (Mt 5.10-12).
- 5.3.2. Sometimes persecution comes in the form of property confiscation, imprisonment, beatings, and execution. In God's Providence we are not, at this time, persecuted like the early martyrs, Reformers, Covenanters, Huguenots, and Puritans; or like many Christians today who suffer under Buddhist, Islamic, or Hindu oppression. But we all still must face persecution of one kind or another (Jn 16.33; Acts 14.22; 2 Tim 3.12). Christianity cannot be challenged rationally, so persecution will come in one of two forms—either with farce or force, scoffing or scourging, ridicule or repression—because there are only these two ways that pagans can persecute Christians.
- 5.3.3. The more Christ is displayed in the lives of Christians the more there will be persecution against them.
- 5.3.4. When we suffer because of righteousness we should not be concerned; rather, we should rejoice (James 1.2) because this persecution reminds us that we are:
- 5.3.4.1. Living lives that honour Christ. Only Christians suffer because of righteousness. We must be having an impact on society if people care enough

- to hate us for the sake of Christ (1 Pt 4.14, 16).
- 5.3.4.2. Considered worthy to share in Christ's suffering (Phil 1.29; Acts 5.41) and the suffering of the prophets and apostles. This means that we are not weaklings but champions.
- 5.3.4.3. On our way to Heaven (2 Cor 4.17, 18). A non-Christian will do all he can not to think of Christ, death, and an everlasting existence. But this is not the case for a Christian. The more he knows of Christ, the more he longs for death (not with a death-wish!) so that he can have an everlasting existence with his Lord (Phil 1.23).
- 5.3.5. However, it is not proper for us to provoke unbelievers and to go out of our way to seek persecution or martyrdom. It is permissible, and proper, for Christians to avoid persecution—not by giving up on the Faith and compromising Truth, but by avoiding the persecutors. For example, we are to live humble, peaceful lives which do not cause provocation (Rom 12.18; 1 Thess 4.11-12 ; Heb 12.14). Also, when opposition to Christ and his people becomes severe, we can go elsewhere (Mt 10.14; Lk 9.56).

Steadfast Saints (Dan 11.32b-35)

1. Who are the people who stood firm? (32b)
 - 1.1. Those who knew their God.
 - 1.1.1. A small remnant of the Jews who were true believers in the coming Messiah.
 - 1.1.2. Even in the darkest periods of persecution of the Church there are true believers who will remain firm to the principles of truth.
 - 1.1.3. In particular, they refused to participate in the abominable practices of false worship, including refusing to eat meat sacrificed to idols, even to the point of death [1 Macc 1.62–63].
 - 1.1.3.1. This is an interesting development in light of Daniel's own experience when he was a young person taken captive from Jerusalem (Dan 1.8-16).
 - 1.2. What does it mean to *know* God?
 - 1.2.1. They are true believers in God and his Son, the Messiah.
 - 1.2.2. They know what God has revealed about himself, but they also know God in a personal way—having God as their friend and faith-anchor.
 - 1.2.3. They know what God wants from his people and they desire to please him in the way of obedience—they refuse to engage in unlawful practices of worship.
2. What did they do in response to Antiochus' persecution? (32b)
 - 2.1. They took action (ESV) or firmly resisted him (NIV).
 - 2.2. How did they resist?
 - 2.2.1. Passive: by refusing to participate in the pagan sacrifices.
 - 2.2.2. Active: The Jews, led by the Maccabees, successfully overthrew their Syrian masters through a series of decisive military victories against Antiochus's forces [more, below, on the Maccabees and on the question of active resistance].
3. What did the wise do? (33)
 - 3.1. Instructed the people to encourage them to stand firm.
 - 3.2. Who were the wise?
 - 3.2.1. They were those who "cause to be wise," that is, teachers.
 - 3.2.2. They may have been the Hasideans or 'godly ones' who were devoted to the law [1 Macc 2.42]. They were distinguished from the Hellenizing faction who compromised with Syria and accepted the cultural mores of their overlords. Hasidic Judaism from the 18th century AD derived its name from this group, but has no real connection with the godly Jews during the 2nd century BC.
 - 3.2.3. They may have been part of the priestly or scribal class, and were probably the

- precursors of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. However, many of the Hasideans were true believers whereas the Pharisees were moralistic legalists. The Hasideans were to the Pharisees what the New England Puritans were to the later Unitarians.
- 3.3. In what did the wise instruct the people?
 - 3.3.1. True Biblical wisdom—the knowledge of, and ways of, God.
 - 3.3.2. Those who are truly wise, in the Biblical sense, are those who fear God and obey his commandments (Prov 1.7; Prov 9.10).
 - 3.4. How successful were they in their instruction?
 - 3.4.1. They helped many to understand:
 - 3.4.1.1. What was happening, in God's greater plan, to reveal the Messianic Kingdom.
 - 3.4.1.2. Why God was permitting these persecutions.
 - 3.4.2. We can expect that one of the particular books of the Bible that they used was the Book of Daniel. By studying this chapter they would see God's controlling hand over world events occurring around them and would know that the persecutions would end soon, in God's appointed time (35). They may have also used the book of Job to help them deal with the theodicy of suffering.
 4. How did Antiochus persecute the faithful Jews? (33)
 - 4.1. He murdered some, executing them with sword or burning.
 - 4.1.1. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered in these persecutions.
 - 4.1.2. Hebrews 11.34, 35 probably refer to the murders under Antiochus. Hebrews 11.35 probably refers to the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons. They were tortured and then burned (as reported in 2 Macc 7.1–41).
 - 4.2. He also imprisoned some and plundered their possessions.
 - 4.2.1. Many of the ones who were imprisoned were sent into slavery.
 - 4.3. In general the Jews who were faithful to the holy covenant (30, 32)—i.e., to God—suffered severely.
 - 4.4. Why did he use these methods against the faithful Jews?
 - 4.4.1. We considered the possible motives previously (28, 30b-32a).
 - 4.4.2. As we have noted unbelievers can only challenge Christianity with either force or farce. They cannot challenge Christianity with rational argument, because sin and pagan religious and philosophical systems are irrational.
 - 4.4.3. It is inevitable that Christ-haters will resort to physical persecutions against any who resist the imposition of their wills or evokes a challenge against their schemes. Cain's murder of Abel is the first instance of the rebels' reaction against the righteous.
 - 4.5. What periods of persecutions in later history appeared to be similar to the persecutions wrought by Antiochus?
 - 4.5.1. Roman martyrs
 - 4.5.2. Protestants under the Inquisition
 - 4.5.3. Covenanters during the Killing Times in Scotland (1660-1688).
 - 4.6. How long did the persecutions last?
 - 4.6.1. For some days (ESV), or a time (NIV)—about four years, 167-163 BC. Antiochus died during a campaign in Persia in 163 BC.
 - 4.6.2. Though intense, the duration of the persecutions was relatively short.
 - 4.6.2.1. God seems often to bring to an end the tyranny of individuals when they persecute the Church.
 - 4.6.2.2. For example:
 - 4.6.2.2.1. The persecutions under Nero lasted for less than four years and then he took his own life.
 - 4.6.2.2.2. Hitler lasted only a few years from the time he began to persecute Christians until the time of his suicide in his Führerbunker in Berlin, in 1945.

5. What help did the faithful receive? (34)
 - 5.1. The text does not say specifically what the help was.
 - 5.2. From whom did they receive the help?
 - 5.2.1. Most interpreters believe that the help that was provided to the Jews, who were standing firm and suffering, was that provided by the Maccabees.
 - 5.2.2. A priest named Mattathias the Hasmonean, from a town (Modin) near Jerusalem, killed a Hellenistic Jew who tried to offer a sacrifice to an idol. Mattathias and his five sons fled to the wilderness of Judea. Three of these sons (Judas, Jonathan, and Simon) became known as the Maccabees (suggested meaning: ‘hammer’ or an acronym from מִי־כְקָדָה בְּאַלֹהִים יְהוָה in Ex 15.11, “who like/as you among gods, LORD”), [1 Macc 2.1–14].
 - 5.2.3. After Mattathias’ death, his son Judas Maccabeus raised a resistance army which fought (from 166-160 BC) using mostly guerrilla warfare against the Syrians who were led by various military commanders, Apollonius, Seron, Gorgias, and Lysias [1 Macc 3.10–4.35].
 - 5.2.4. Judas became famous for restoring and rededicating the Temple on the 25th of Chislev (December 14) 164 BC [1 Macc 4.52-58].
 - 5.2.5. During this period of revolt, many Jews died fighting for their liberty from Syria. An elephant [1 Macc 6.43–46] crushed one person named Eleazar, a son of Mattathias. Judas Maccabeus died in the battle of Mount Azotus in 160 BC [1 Macc 9.3, 15-18].
 - 5.3. What was the result of the faithful Jews receiving assistance?
 - 5.3.1. Some other Jews (who had previously apostatized and gone over to Antiochus) insincerely aligned themselves with the believers who had stood firm.
 - 5.3.2. They appear to have sensed or believed that the ‘winds of fortune’ were changing and that Antiochus would be defeated and wanted to be on the winning side.
 - 5.3.3. The fickleness of the masses is illustrated by this report. Most people follow trends and go with the latest popular star or idea and rarely stand on principle—much like the fickle crowd that followed Jesus for a time and then deserted him at the time of his crucifixion.
 - 5.4. Why was it only a ‘little help’?
 - 5.4.1. The resistance force raised by Judas was small compared with the forces which Syria could muster.
 - 5.4.2. The revolt lasted only for a few years. After the death of Judas the momentum for independence waned. His brother, Jonathan, who was High Priest, made treaties with various foreign states and Judea reverted to being a subject province of the Seleucids and then of Rome when Pompey captured Jerusalem and subjected the territory to Roman rule. The Hasmonean dynasty ended in 37 BC when the Idumean, Herod the Great, became king of Israel.
 - 5.4.3. Depending on one’s view about the morality of raising a resistance force and fighting against a ruler, the help could also be considered ‘little’, because it was not from God but of men.⁵¹³
6. Is it right for a group of people to raise a rebellion against their king?
 - 6.1. Calvin says, with respect to the actions taken by the Maccabees: “This passage may lead us to inquire whether the angel approved of all the exploits of the Maccabees. We may reply to the question in two opposite ways. First of all, if any one persists in contending from the angel’s words for God’s approval of every action of the Maccabees, this view is by no means correct. God might use the Maccabees in succoring the wretched Israelites, and yet it does not follow that they conducted the good cause properly and lawfully. It very often occurs, when the faithful offer their services to God, and have one object set before them, that they fail either

⁵¹³ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vi.xli.html
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through inconsiderate zeal, or through partial ignorance. Whether we take this view or not, our object is often good when our manner of proceeding is objectionable. And thus it was with the Maccabees; God, doubtless, stirred up Mattathias to collect the dispersed remnant of the people, to restore his worship, and to purge his temple from the abominations which Antiochus had set up. Yet in the troublous times which occurred, his sons, doubtless, failed in many points of duty. The cause which they undertook was just, while particular actions of theirs cannot be approved by us.”⁵¹⁴

- 6.2. We could approach this question from different directions.⁵¹⁵ For example, a consistent pacifist might argue that it is never right to take up arms. A proponent of the *just war theory* might present an argument that the Jews had sufficient reason to defend themselves against the aggressor, Antiochus.
- 6.3. How do we balance self-defence with suffering for righteousness (e.g., 1 Pt 2.13-21; 1 Pt 3.8-17)?
 - 6.3.1. There may be a difference between defending one’s self against a belligerent aggressor when the aggressor’s motives are not a direct attack against Christ and Christianity and resisting those who are attacking Christians precisely because they have taken a stand for Christ based on a specific principle.
 - 6.3.2. We must be willing to defend truth, even to death (our own death). God gave his son for truth (to fulfill all righteousness) which demonstrates that truth is more important than physical life.
 - 6.3.3. Yet we are not to throw our lives away meaninglessly (e.g., Mt 24.15-21; Acts 25.10-12).
- 6.4. The question of whether it is right to take up arms against the king, was one that the Scottish Covenanters struggled with during the Killing Times (1660-1688). They did not develop a definitive position that all agreed with. However, most of them remained non-combative and tried to avoid conflict by hiding or fleeing.
- 6.5. It is probably the case that the Maccabees, as Calvin states, acted improperly when they rose up against their overlord, even though he was extremely wicked and his actions excessively brutal.
7. What happened to some of the wise? (35)
 - 7.1. They stumbled (ESV, NIV) or fell (NASB, NKJV).
 - 7.1.1. One version of the Greek Septuagint (Theodotion) translates this as ‘became ill’.
 - 7.1.2. It may be that some of the wise became cowardly and temporarily capitulated. But then they recanted and reconfirmed their commitment to the holy covenant.
 - 7.1.3. However, what Daniel was told was probably that even though they were to be put to death by Antiochus, from God’s eternal perspective, they were to face only a temporary affliction.
 - 7.1.4. This may be similar to what Jesus meant when he said that Lazarus was sleeping and then had to tell the disciples that he meant that he was dead (Jn 11.11-14).
 - 7.2. Why did they ‘stumble’?
 - 7.2.1. If we understand this as the purification of some believers who had sinned by complicity with Hellenism or pagan idolatry, then it may be that their stumbling and later recanting (purification) resulted in the strengthening of their convictions.
 - 7.2.2. However, it seems more likely that the reference is to the fact that some of the wise underwent martyrdom and were then everlastingly purified.
 - 7.2.2.1. The three-fold emphasis on purification—refined, purified, and made white—appears to mean that they were completely purified, i.e., they were made entirely holy.

⁵¹⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vi.xli.html

⁵¹⁵ See: “Appendix B – Use of the ‘Sword’ for Protection and Just War Theory” in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder – Instructor’s Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 7.2.2.2. As we have noted previously, a three-fold repetition of a word or its synonyms is a Hebraic/Aramaic idiom (comparable to our use of adjectives such as ‘very’) for expressing totality.
- 7.2.2.3. Total holiness is available to the saints only once they reach Heaven.
- 7.2.2.4. The connection here with persecution and purification seems to be a forward look to the saints in Glory (Rev 7.14) who have come through a (*the*) great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb and made them white (holy).
- 7.2.3. God used the persecutions to purge from Israel the insincere and hypocrites—true believers could be more easily identified—and the martyrdom of some of the most faithful to strengthen the faith of those who remained.
- 7.3. What will end, at the ‘time of the end’?
 - 7.3.1. It appears that the best way to read this is that the stumbling (persecution) of the wise would end at an appointed time. God would mercifully end the reign of destruction and spare his people.
 - 7.3.2. The reference is not to *the end of time* but rather to the *time of the end* of the persecutions.
 - 7.3.3. God had appointed a time for the persecutions to end. As we noted (33) these persecutions would last for ‘some days’ (‘a time’) and then would end. Antiochus died at the age of 51 or 52 (of a severe illness⁵¹⁶ or insanity⁵¹⁷), in 163 BC during a campaign in Persia—ending both his wicked life and his persecution of God’s people.
- 8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 8.1. *Providence* – This passage teaches that God providentially rules over the affairs of men.
 - 8.1.1. Whether events appear to be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ from our perspective, they are in accord with the plan of God and in his appointed time.
 - 8.2. *Persecution* – God permits and wills the persecution of his people.
 - 8.2.1. Why does God send persecution on his people?
 - 8.2.2. Many Christians (and unbelievers) have questioned why bad things happen to ‘good’ people. The question is as old as the Book of Job. People have struggled to reconcile the goodness of God with the presence of evil in the world.
 - 8.2.2.1. When considering God’s providential control over all events, someone might ask why God would plan, decree, and permit (i.e., not restrain; Gen 20.6) evil such as a person being born blind or a terrorist attack.
 - 8.2.2.2. David Hume, quoting Epicurus, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) says: “Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?” This analysis has been re-stated by many atheists since Hume.
 - 8.2.2.3. However, there is no ‘problem of evil’ unless evil really exists. Without God’s moral standard, there is no evil. All other definitions of ‘evil’ are purely subjective. One man’s evil can be another man’s good.
 - 8.2.2.4. The ‘problem of evil’ turns out to be a problem for Hume, all atheists, and all unbelievers. In order to argue that something is evil they must first show that something *can* be evil (i.e., that the existence of evil is meaningful) and not merely inconvenient, unpleasant, or against their own wills. Moral indignation against atrocities is inconsistent within their materialistic and naturalistic philosophy. The unbeliever has to work from a Christian presupposition to declare something as evil. The real problem of evil is a logical problem for the

⁵¹⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes

⁵¹⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 31.11;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D31%3Achapter%3D11

unbeliever.

8.2.2.5. How then, as Christians, can we answer Hume's challenge? We can set out the following presuppositions:

8.2.2.5.1. God is completely and only good.(Ps 25.8; Ps 119.68).

8.2.2.5.2. God can do anything except what is against his nature (e.g., deny truth).

8.2.2.5.3. Evil exists by definition (against God's law) and actually (evil happens).

8.2.2.5.4. God plans, decrees, and permits evil (such as a man being born blind; Jn 9.3) for reasons which are morally commendable and good.

The final presupposition is the one missed by Hume. As a set, there is no logical contradiction in these four statements.

8.2.3. What good does God accomplish by allowing his people to suffer persecution?

8.2.3.1. Paul assures us (Rom 8.28) that *all* things (this includes persecution!) work together for good for those who are God's people.

8.2.3.2. The good that God brings about through persecution includes:

8.2.3.2.1. God accomplishes spiritual growth in faith, and sanctification for his people, through suffering (1 Pt 1.7). God knows if we need to face afflictions, and sends only what we need. His purpose is to build character in us, not to provide us with comforts in this life. His goal is to draw us closer to himself with the bonds of faith and love.

8.2.3.2.2. He uses persecution as a means of sifting out of the Church on earth those who are unfaithful hypocrites. The purification of the Church—the sifting of the wheat from the weeds—will continue until the end of time (Mt 13.24-30).

8.2.3.2.3. As the faithful undergo persecution they bear witness to the world that faith in the true God overcomes all adversity. God uses the persecution of his people to draw others to the church. Tertullian (2nd c) wrote that “the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church,” teaching that the death of believers leads to the conversion of others.

8.2.3.2.4. God stores up judgement on the persecutors of Christians. He will vindicate his people over their enemies. The everlasting punishment that the evil receive will demonstrate that God did not permit one cruel thing that went unnoticed.

8.2.3.2.5. Ultimately, God uses persecution for his glory. We cannot see now how he is fitting together all the events of history. The persecution of a poor, illiterate, believer in Southern Sudan or rural Pakistan seems to us to be merely gratuitous. But from God's eternal and infinitely wise perspective their suffering is of great value—after all he gave his Son, whose death was of infinite value, for the salvation of those saints as much as he did for a Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, Spurgeon, or Billy Graham.

8.2.3.3. Randy Alcorn has dealt with the subject of Christian suffering (whether or not it results from persecution) thoroughly in his book, *If God is Good*.⁵¹⁸ His book is highly recommended.

8.2.4. The Book of Daniel was given to the Jews to provide comfort in the times leading to arrival of Christ, and to the Church as a whole in the times leading to his return.

8.3. *Pastoring* – The spiritually wise—the leaders among the congregation—must instruct the people.

8.3.1. Leaders in the Church must be prepared to teach believers how to handle persecution.

⁵¹⁸ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good . . . Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009).
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- 8.3.1.1. *Actual*: We should consider examples of persecution of our spiritual brothers and sisters today. By so doing we can be encouraged by their strong faith to face even great persecution.
- 8.3.1.2. *Anticipated* – We should prepare to meet the coming challenge. The evidence of a professing Church is persecution. When the Church lives in a state of grace, spiritual light shines into the darkness, and the powers of darkness—Satan, demons, the beast of human governments, the prophets of false religions, and debauched humankind not wanting to hear that their sordid lives are an abomination before God—will fight to the death to stop Christian ascendancy.
- 8.3.2. The spiritually wise must also be prepared to encourage those who are suffering so that they will persevere to the end.
 - 8.3.2.1. Perseverance in patient suffering is a sacred duty (1 Thess 5.14; Heb 10.31-39).
 - 8.3.2.2. What will enable Christians to struggle to the end? Knowing:
 - 8.3.2.2.1. *Possession*: Being aware of what we already have and possess—everlasting salvation that can never be taken from us.
 - 8.3.2.2.2. *Prospect*: Even when facing the trials of persecution, we must realize that things are not hopeless. Jesus is coming back! He will gather his people and take us to be with him forever.
 - 8.3.2.2.3. *Promise*: The greater part of our happiness is not in the here-and-now but in the promise. Real life only begins when it ends here on earth. Life here is but a shadow or the everlasting reality.
- 8.4. *Punishment* – God cuts short persecution for the sake of the elect (Mt 24.22), and delivers our enemies over to their everlasting punishment.
 - 8.4.1. The persecutions under Antiochus were to last only for a time (33)—i.e., they were limited in duration and in extent. Similarly, Jesus is clear that the destruction of Jerusalem would be limited (Mt 24.22). The destruction of the province of Judea was limited to the recalcitrant cities of Jerusalem and Masada, and then it ended.
 - 8.4.2. The persecutions under Antiochus, Nero, other Roman emperors, and Hitler were relatively short. The Inquisition and the persecutions of the Covenanters lasted longer, but even they were cut short by God’s mercy.
 - 8.4.3. In every case of persecution of Christians, God judges the enemies of his Church and cuts them off. He says to them, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed.” (Job 38.8)

Swaggering Scorn (Dan 11.36-39)

- 1. Who is the king spoken of in this section?
 - 1.1. Almost all commentators agree that to this point, chapter 11 has dealt with a sequence of significant rulers from Cyrus to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, the king spoken of in verses 36-39 has led to considerable debate. Many different views of who this king is (or will be) have been postulated over the past 2,000 years.
 - 1.2. We will consider some suggestions. However, in order to provide a consistent interpretation of the remainder of this chapter we should first consider some interpretive principles:
 - 1.2.1. This chapter is dealing with events relating to the Jewish people; ‘your people’ (Dan 10.14; Dan 11.14), not with events that would occur in the Christian (or NT Church) era. Chapter 11, so far, has been dealing with foreign kingdoms immediately intersecting with the Jews in Palestine from the time of Daniel, onward.
 - 1.2.2. The period it covers is from the time of Daniel until the arrival of the Messiah (Dan 9.24-27) and is given as a straightforward narrative that includes all the important personages who interacted with the Jews in Judea.
 - 1.2.3. The explicit accuracy of the mapping of events recorded in this chapter, thus far, against identifiable historical personages of significance leads us to expect the same level of accuracy for the remainder of the chapter.

- 1.2.4. A king who is from the general period of Antiochus needs to be under consideration because of the explicit references to Edom and Moab (41), which ceased to exist before the time of Christ; and to the wealth of Egypt (43), which certainly does not apply today.
- 1.2.5. The interpretation should be straightforward and not require a complex or convoluted explanation (e.g., as proposed by the dispensationalists).
- 1.2.6. These verses (36-39) speak of a notoriously wicked tyrant who would interact with the Jews.
- 1.3. Antiochus IV Epiphanes
 - 1.3.1. Some suggest that this passage gives more information about Antiochus—in particular his additional incursions into Israel.
 - 1.3.2. However, the details given in these verses do not fit with any of the extra-Biblical historical information known about Antiochus.⁵¹⁹
 - 1.3.3. One writer has said that, “Exegetical necessity requires that 11:36–45 be applied to someone other than Antiochus IV.”⁵²⁰
- 1.4. The Roman Empire
 - 1.4.1. Calvin, for example, held this view.⁵²¹
 - 1.4.2. The passage is too specific to refer to an empire; rather it points to an individual.
- 1.5. The papacy and the Pope
 - 1.5.1. This view had a following among Protestant Reformers and Puritans.
- 1.6. Another individual that lived between the time of Christ and our present day
 - 1.6.1. Nero, Constantine, Omar ibn El-Khattab (with the wars between the Caliphs and the Romans being referred to in 36-39), and others have been mentioned.
- 1.7. The NT antichrist of 2 Thessalonians 2.4
 - 1.7.1. It is argued that this passage speaks either of a generic antichrist (for example the papal system) or a specific, yet to appear, individual.
 - 1.7.2. This is the most popular view among Evangelical commentators today, and the prevailing view, particularly among premillennialists and dispensationalists.
 - 1.7.3. They argue that this passage provides a portrait of the antichrist given in the NT. While this is true in general, and there are allusions to Daniel’s account in the NT (2 Thess 2.4; Rev 13.5, 6), it may be better to understand the individual mentioned here (36-39) as a type or precursor of the antichrist rather than *the* specific antichrist (if there is to be a single person filling the role).
 - 1.7.4. They also argue that this passage is given in the context of the ‘last days’ (Dan 11.40; Dan 12.2, 4, 13). However, these references do not necessarily have to do with the time of Christ’s second coming but may refer to his first coming and the end of the Jewish age. We will reserve further comments on this interpretation until we study those verses.
 - 1.7.5. This view fails to meet the interpretive conditions we laid out above. It also introduces a gap of over 2,000 years between verse 35 and verse 36. This does not make sense exegetically, since the Hebrew in verse 36 starts with the conjunction ‘and’, and indicates sequence and an expected immediate continuity.
- 1.8. Herod the Great
 - 1.8.1. A new personality, ‘*the king*’, is introduced in verse 36. He is like Antiochus in his drive to persecute God’s people, but is a different individual. He is not introduced as the king of the north or south, but only as ‘the king’. The implication is that this individual is the king in Judea, not a foreign (Syrian, or Egyptian) king with suzerainty

⁵¹⁹ Mark Mercer, “The Benefactions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Dan 11:37-38: An Exegetical Note,” *Masters Seminary Journal*, 12 (2001), 89-93.

⁵²⁰ S. R. Miller, *The New American Commentary – Vol. 18: “Daniel”* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), (electronic ed.), Logos Library System.

⁵²¹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vi.xlv.html

- over Judea.
- 1.8.2. As we noted in the previous section, the Maccabean revolt led to the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty and the Jews remained independent (though subject to the Seleucids) from the death of Antiochus until Pompey captured Jerusalem and subjected the territory to Roman rule. The Hasmonean dynasty ended in 37 BC when the Idumean Herod the Great became king of Israel.
 - 1.8.3. Herod is the logical next king, following Antiochus IV Epiphanes, with whom the Jews have to contend.⁵²²
 - 1.8.3.1. Herod is called ‘the king’ in the Gospels (Mt 2.1, 3), and he alone held the title ‘king’ among the Jews after the death of Antiochus.
 - 1.8.3.2. It would be remarkable and strange indeed, if the history from Cyrus to Christ included Alexander, the Seleucids and Ptolemies, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, and the Maccabees, but did not mention Herod “who exerted upon Jewish affairs and destinies an influence greater than they all, and who sat upon the throne of Israel when Christ was born.”⁵²³
 - 1.8.3.3. The historical data given in this passage fits what we know about Herod from extra-Biblical accounts.
2. What did this king do?
 - 2.1. Did as he pleased.
 - 2.1.1. This idea occurs often in Scripture to express a spirit of lawlessness (Gen 6.5; Dt 12.8; Judges 21.25; Dan 8.4; Dan 11.3, 16; Mk 9.13).
 - 2.1.2. Herod was excessively self-willed.⁵²⁴ He secured and maintained despotic power through schemes with Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Cleopatra; murdered his wife Mariamne and some of his sons because he suspected them of aspiring to his throne; and slaughtered the infant boys in Judea (Mt 2.16-18).
 - 2.1.3. “When he [Emperor Augustus] heard that among the boys in Syria under two years old whom Herod, king of the Jews, had ordered to kill, his own son was also killed, he said: it is better to be Herod's pig, than his son.”⁵²⁵
 - 2.2. Exalted himself above every god (36) and above all (37).
 - 2.2.1. Herod exalted himself above every ruler and authority in Israel. He took the title ‘king’ to himself.⁵²⁶
 - 2.2.2. Whether we understand ‘god’ here to mean ruler or authority, or an idol, it speaks of Herod. For example, he deposed (and even murdered) incumbents in the high priest’s office, and appointed whom he wished to that office. He appointed his own brother-in-law, Aristobulus (not a Levite), Mariamne’s brother, to the office, and shortly after had him murdered.⁵²⁷
 - 2.3. Spoke astonishing things against God.
 - 2.3.1. This could be a reference to Herod’s decree for the slaughter of the children in Judea. A decree to slaughter the Messiah—the Son of God—is to speak astonishing things against God.
 - 2.4. Ignored the gods of his fathers.
 - 2.4.1. Herod was an Idumean (as an Edomite, a circumcised descendant of Abraham), and “a practicing Jew, as the Edomites and many Nabateans had been converted to Judaism by the Hasmoneans.”⁵²⁸

⁵²² Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

⁵²³ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

⁵²⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 3; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.iii.html

⁵²⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_the_Innocents

⁵²⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great

⁵²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapters 3, 6, 7, 9; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.html

⁵²⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great

- 2.4.2. Herod referred to the Jews' ancestors as 'our fathers'.⁵²⁹
- 2.4.3. He ignored the gods—the true God of his Covenant fathers and the gods of his pagan ancestors—and at times he aligned himself with the Roman gods and at other times did not honour any gods.
- 2.5. Ignored the desire of women.
 - 2.5.1. Many have identified the 'beloved of women' as the king's lustful passions ('the desire of women') or a Syrian goddess.
 - 2.5.2. Others have suggested that this is a reference to the Messiah. Jewish women desired to be the mother of the Messiah.
 - 2.5.3. Herod clearly did not have any regard for the one desired by women and repudiated the Messianic hope of the Jews. The slaughter of the infant boys in Judea (Mt 2.16-18) is the clear evidence of this, and is probably the direct fulfillment of this part of Daniel's prophecy.
- 2.6. Honoured a god of fortresses, one his fathers did not know.
 - 2.6.1. Some have suggested this could be a reference to Zeus (Jupiter) or to Mars. Others suggest that he made war his god—his religious substitute for God was war.
 - 2.6.2. The expression, "god of forces" or "god of fortresses" may be a reference to the Roman Empire, which had the most extensive military force ever seen to that point in history. He used flattery and bribery (through gifts of gold, silver and precious stones) of the Roman Caesars as a means of gaining their support. For example, he rebuilt Samaria calling it Sebastos (Augustus) and rebuilt Strato's Tower the seaport of Tyre and dedicated it to Caesar Augustus, calling it Caesarea.^{530,531} He built other fortified cities and named them in honour of Caesar.⁵³²
- 2.7. Dealt with a strong fortress under the patronage of a foreign, false, god.
 - 2.7.1. This is supported by the words of Josephus: "[Herod] took care to have external security for his government as a fortress against his subjects; for the orations he made to the cities were very fine, and full of kindness; and he cultivated a seasonable good understanding with their governors, and bestowed presents on every one of them, inducing them thereby to be more friendly to him, and using his magnificent disposition so as his kingdom might be the better secured to him, and this till all his affairs were every way more and more augmented. But then this magnificent temper of his, and that submissive behavior and liberality which he exercised towards Caesar, and the most powerful men of Rome, obliged him to transgress the customs of his nation, and to set aside many of their laws, and by building cities after an extravagant manner, and erecting temples—not in Judea indeed, for that would not have been borne—it being forbidden for us to pay any honor to images, or representations of animals, after the manner of the Greeks; but still he did thus in the country [properly] out of our bounds, and in the cities thereof. The apology which he made to the Jews for these things was this: That all was done, not out of his own inclinations, but by the commands and injunctions of others, in order to please Caesar and the Romans, as though he had not the Jewish customs so much in his eye as he had the honor of those Romans, while yet he had himself entirely in view all the while, and indeed was very ambitious to leave great monuments of his government to posterity; whence it was that he was so zealous in building such fine cities, and spent such vast sums of money upon them."⁵³³
 - 2.7.2. Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, and while he was at it he turned it into a

⁵²⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 11.1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.xi.html

⁵³⁰ www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/vie/Caesarea.html

⁵³¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 8.5, 9.6; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.ix.html;
www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.ix.html

⁵³² Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 1, "Of the Temple and Cities that were Built by Herod and Erected from the Very Foundations; as also of those Other Edifices that were Erected by Him; and what Magnificence he Showed to Foreigners; and how Fortune was in all Things Favorable to Him."; chapter 21, paragraphs 2-4; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.iii.ii.xxi.html

⁵³³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 9.5; 11 www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.ix.html;
www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.xi.html

- fortress—the mightiest in the land. The citadel he called the Tower of Antonia, after Mark Antony.⁵³⁴ It was on the stairs leading to this tower that Paul spoke to the crowd of Jews (Acts 21.34-40).
- 2.7.3. He set up statues of Caesar to be worshipped in various fortified places. He even placed a large golden eagle (an emblem of imperial Rome) at the gate of the temple, causing a riot—it was torn down in 4 BC. He, thus, honoured the god of forces (Caesar).⁵³⁵
- 2.8. Honoured those who acknowledged him.
- 2.8.1. Persons who vowed allegiance to Herod were rewarded with leadership positions and territories to rule.⁵³⁶
- 2.9. No other person in history can fulfill the details of this prophecy as does Herod. And what was prophesied about him was completely and accurately fulfilled.
3. In spite of his wickedness, why would he be successful? (36)
- 3.1. The word “indignation” is a translation of a Hebrew word (אַף) that can speak of the wrath, anger, or fury of God (Is 10.5, 25; Is 13.5); the equivalent in men (Jer 15.17); or man’s insolence (Hos 7.16).
- 3.2. The duration of this king’s rule was been determined by God, and his success or prosperity would last until the indignation (wrath) was accomplished.
- 3.3. The indignation is probably the slaughtering of the infant boys in Judea (Mt 2.16-18). However, Philip Mauro understands the end of the indignation to have occurred with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD which brought to an end the Herodian dynasty and their persecutions of God’s people—John the Baptist was killed by Herod Antipas, John was killed by Herod Agrippa I, Peter was imprisoned by Agrippa, and Herod Agrippa II sent Paul to Rome as a prisoner.⁵³⁷
- 3.4. Jesus was born in 4 BC. Herod died in 4 BC. Herod prospered until the indignation was accomplished. This reinforces the fact that the wicked activities of Herod were decreed and permitted by God to accomplish his purposes.
4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
- 4.1. *Accuracy* – We have noted numerous times the exquisite accuracy with which the prophecies in Daniel are realized in history.
- 4.1.1. The accounts are so accurate that many interpreters refuse to believe that the account (in chapter 11) was written in 6th century BC, hundreds of years before the events happened.
- 4.1.2. We should sit in silent awe marvelling at how God first tells us what would happen and then unfolds his plan precisely as he said it would.
- 4.1.3. Only the Creator God who controls all events in time and space, who holds the hearts of kings in his hand, and who has infinite knowledge even down to numbering the hairs on our heads, could achieve such accuracy—“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Rev 4.11).
- 4.2. *Anarchy* – We are reminded of the wickedness of the human heart (Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9).
- 4.2.1. Herod’s evil life is indicative of where all men who have power would go without God’s leavening grace.
- 4.2.2. If it were not for God’s placing limits on evil, as he did when he ended Herod’s destructive actions, once his purposes for Herod had been fulfilled, Herod would have carried out even more perversions.
- 4.2.3. If it were not for God’s general grace, all men would follow Herod’s path of

⁵³⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 11.4; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.xi.html

⁵³⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great

⁵³⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 8.5; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/complete.ii.xvi.viii.html

⁵³⁷ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

swaggering scorn:

- 4.2.3.1. Doing as they please – Men strive for autonomy and despise God's Law; for example, they claim that there is no standard for morality, other than that we should treat others as we want to be treated.
 - 4.2.3.2. Exalting themselves above God – They set themselves forward as the normative standard against which God must be judged; for example, they challenge God to prove himself.
 - 4.2.3.3. Speaking against God – They blame and blaspheme God in their philosophical systems and in their personal practice; for example, they use the names of God as swear words and present atheism and Evolution as replacements for God.
 - 4.2.3.4. Despising Christ – They despise Jesus Christ and treat him as nothing more than a wise guru or example or as an inconsequential quixotic fool.
 - 4.2.3.5. Honouring a god of war – Even if they claim to be pacifists, men quickly become antagonistic and war-like if they feel that their 'rights' are being abused; for example, it is easy to see how quickly men revert to violence when they are in a mob after a sports team has lost a championship or they are confronted by supporters of the other team.
 - 4.2.3.6. Building monuments for themselves – Men would claim that they do not care about building monuments. In fact, they do, but don't have the power or means to do it. A simple way to show that all men wish to have a monument as a memorial is to delve into a man's inner fear that no one will attend his funeral.
 - 4.2.3.7. Playing favourites – Playing favourites is rampant throughout government and business; for example, there are 'standards' for the common folk and privileges for those in the 'inner circle'.
- 4.3. *Antichrist* – While this section is not dealing explicitly with the NT antichrist, it certainly is dealing with a person who typifies the antichrist.
- 4.3.1. The actions Herod took against Jesus and God's people is generally prophetic of what most interpreters claim that the antichrist would do (2 Thess 2.4; Rev 13.5, 6).
 - 4.3.2. Whether the antichrist is a specific individual (e.g., Nero, or a person yet to arise), a false religion (e.g., Islam), a religious system (e.g., the papacy), human government, or a general reference to the evil wrought by Satan is debated, and adds no value. It seems best to conclude that the antichrist is all world systems (religious and political) and individuals who oppose Christ (1 Jn 2.18, 22; 1 Jn 4.3; 2 Jn 7).
 - 4.3.3. Regardless, Herod was certainly an antichrist and a type for all subsequent antichrists.

Subdued (Dan 11.40-43)

1. Who challenged the king (Herod)?

1.1. There are two common views of how to interpret this passage:

- 1.1.1. *Historical* – This view claims that this passage is speaking of an historical personage (e.g., Antiochus IV Epiphanes⁵³⁸). This particular view is held mostly by liberal commentators who give a late date for the book of Daniel and do not accept that it was written in the 6th century BC. Some conservative scholars do take the view that it is speaking of Antiochus or another historical figure. Very few take the view that it is speaking of Herod the Great.
- 1.1.2. *Eschatological* – This view is held by the vast majority of conservative, evangelical scholars.
 - 1.1.2.1. This view is held primarily by premillennialists and dispensationalists. However, many amillennialists also hold this view. Both Young and Leupold view this passage in an eschatological context.

⁵³⁸ For example: P. Niskanen, "Daniel's Portrait of Antiochus IV: Echoes of a Persian King," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 66 (2004), 378-386, in which he argues that Daniel 11.40-45's account of the death of Antiochus IV is based on Dionysius of Halicarnassus' account of Cambyses, noting six parallels between the accounts.

- 1.1.2.2. They claim that attempts to have this section refer to an historical person are unsatisfactory—and they are right when the attempt is made to fit this section to Antiochus.
- 1.1.2.3. One of the reasons that commentators hold to the eschatological view is the mention of ‘time of the end’. They conclude that that expression must mean the end of all things. We will examine the expression’s meaning shortly.
- 1.1.2.4. This view can be divided into two sub-views:
 - 1.1.2.4.1. This passage deals with a single, specific, antichrist who will appear on earth sometime in the future. Often included in this view is the idea that this passage is speaking of the battle of Armageddon, with reference to Gog and Magog.
 - 1.1.2.4.2. This passage deals with a future, symbolic, antichrist which is represented by individuals, false religions, and political systems, which are antichrist.
- 1.1.3. The position I take, following Philip Mauro⁵³⁹, is that this passage is historical and is speaking of Herod and his interactions with the Romans. In verses 40-43, we find a parenthesis as Herod interacts with the last remnants of the Greek Empire and with the Roman Empire.
- 1.1.4. We will not review the pros and cons of the various views, and will dismiss, without any consideration, the speculations of the premillennialists and dispensationalists. Rather we will note a few reasons for why this passage should be interpreted as historical, and then we will consider how it speaks of Herod and his interactions with Rome.
 - 1.1.4.1. Chapter 11 is a literary unit.⁵⁴⁰ The bulk of the chapter, thorough verse 35, is understood by most commentators to apply to historical personages. We have shown that verses 36-39 can also be applied to an historical person—i.e., Herod. Therefore, it is consistent to understand the latter part of chapter 11 to be dealing with history from the same era as the former part. There is nothing in the chapter that gives a ‘signpost’ indicating the change in perspective—other than, possibly, the reference to the ‘time of the end’, which we will deal with shortly.
 - 1.1.4.2. Chapter 11 deals with the interaction of the Jews with the dominant international powers around them, until the time of the Messiah. It is not explicitly dealing with times of the Gentiles, some of which are even in our future. This chapter is written as a preview of history that a Jew before, or at, the time of Christ would expect to see fulfilled contemporaneously.
 - 1.1.4.3. While this passage is dealing with historical events leading up to the coming of the Messiah, it certainly provides an historical context for eschatological events. Therefore, while not its primary focus, the passage can be *applied* eschatologically and can provide insight into the NT concept of the antichrist.
- 1.2. When was the ‘time of the end’?
 - 1.2.1. The majority of interpreters conclude that the ‘time of the end’ (as used here) refers to some event in our future, such as the rapture or the end of history when Christ will return to earth to renovate the universe and usher in the Day of Judgement.
 - 1.2.2. However, the ‘time of the end’ is not speaking of the end of time but of the end of the first of two ages in God’s redemptive plan.

⁵³⁹ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

⁵⁴⁰ Tim Meadowcroft, “History and Eschatology in Tension: A Literary Response to Daniel 11:40-45 as Test Case,” *Pacifica* 17 (October 2004); www.google.ca/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CD8QFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pacifica.org.au%2Fvolumes%2Fvolume17%2Fissue03%2Fhistory-and-eschatology-in-tension%2Fat_download%2Fpdf&ei=wX3GTaT2HsHdOQQQmfWCA&usq=AFQjCNG1eje7ztRrAy7DQsR_FyTIZ8ErPa

- 1.2.2.1. There are three key events in history: Creation, Christ, Consummation and only *two* ages of everlasting importance; the former age of the OT economy—the era of types and symbols—and the latter days of the NT economy—the era of the reality in Christ (Acts 17.30).
- 1.2.2.2. We live in the ‘last/latter days’. God has established his kingdom under the Messianic king, time is wrapping up, and the world is quickly moving toward the Day of Judgement.
- 1.2.2.3. Calvin said in commenting on the phrase ‘latter days’ (Dan 10.14), “The Scriptures in using the phrase, the last days, or times, always point to the manifestation of Christ, by which the face of the world was renewed.”⁵⁴¹
- 1.2.3. From the perspective of the Jews in the 6th century BC, the ‘time of the end’ was when the Messianic kingdom would be established. From our perspective, it is the end of the OT Jewish era and the establishment of the NT era.
- 1.2.4. Thus, the events being spoken of in this section are the events that were coincident with the end of Jewish history, the days of the Herods.
- 1.3. Who was the king of the south?
 - 1.3.1. The first part of verse 40 appears to be speaking of the tenuous alliance which was made between Cleopatra VII and Antony (in Egypt) and Herod. Cleopatra became pharaoh (‘king’, as in ‘monarch’; without implying a gender) of Egypt in 51 BC at the age of 18 or 19 and was the last monarch in Egypt and ruled until 30 BC when she committed suicide.⁵⁴²
 - 1.3.2. Notice that the ESV has the word ‘thrust’ in the footnote as an alternative to ‘attack’. The lexicons give a possible alternate meaning for the Hebrew word, as ‘wage war with’.
 - 1.3.3. Listen to what Josephus says: “Now when the war about Actium was begun, Herod prepared to come to the assistance of Antony, as being already freed from his troubles in Judea, and having gained Hyrcania, which was a place that was held by Antigonus's sister. However, he was cunningly hindered from partaking of the hazards that Antony went through by Cleopatra; for since, as we have already noted, *she had laid a plot against the kings* [of Judea and Arabia], she prevailed with Antony to commit the war against the Arabians to Herod; that so, if he got the better, she might become mistress of Arabia, or, if he were worsted, of Judea; and that she might destroy one of those kings by the other.”⁵⁴³
 - 1.3.4. Cleopatra wanted Judea and her ‘alliance’ with Herod was also a plot against him. This fits very well with the meaning of the Hebrew word used here, that is translated ‘attack’ or ‘thrust’ or ‘waged war with’. It is a good example of a *double entendre*, and displays Cleopatra’s duplicity.
2. Who is the king of the north?
 - 2.1. Notice that this king of the north would come with a great fleet of ships. This is different from the forces assembled by other kings of the north (i.e., Syria) that we have previously encountered in this chapter.
 - 2.2. The king of the north in this instance was likely Octavian from Rome. The ‘king’ of the south was Cleopatra with a tenuous alliance with Antony—Herod and Judea were caught between them.
 - 2.3. Verse 40 appears to be a prophecy about one of the battles associated with the Roman civil wars that occurred between 43 BC and 30 BC after the assassination of Julius Caesar. It is likely that the particular incident referred to is the Battle of Actium which occurred in

⁵⁴¹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.v.xv.html

⁵⁴² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra_VII

⁵⁴³ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 1, “How Antony at the persuasion of Cleopatra sent Herod to fight against the Arabians; and now after several battles, he at length got the victory...”; chapter 19, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-1.htm

- September, 31 BC, and its aftermath.⁵⁴⁴
- 2.4. Prior to this battle, Antony deserted the Octavian party and, infatuated with Cleopatra, had left Octavian's sister and moved to Alexandria to be with Cleopatra. Octavian took this as a threat. The forces of Octavian met the combined forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium (in Greece). This battle consisted of two phases: a naval encounter which Octavian won; followed by desertion and surrender of Antony's cavalry before Octavian's forces. Notice the reference to ships as well as horses and chariots (40), confirming the historical reference to the battle.
 - 2.5. Following the Battle of Actium, Antony was a fugitive and his army was deserting him. Cleopatra appears to have deserted him also and connived with Octavian. In early August, 30 BC, Antony engaged Octavian again, this time in Egypt. Antony's forces were defeated and Antony fled. He had been misinformed that Cleopatra had been captured and had committed suicide, so he stabbed himself. However, he did not die at once and was carried to the mausoleum where Cleopatra was held captive. He died in her arms. Cleopatra tried to appeal for mercy from Octavian. She eluded her guard and committed suicide on August 12th. Egypt's surrender after Cleopatra's death was the end of the Hellenistic Age and the Ptolemaic Kingdom.
 - 2.6. Octavian had Caesarion, the son of Julius Caesar, killed and became the uncontested ruler of the Roman Empire as "Augustus Caesar" (Lk 2.1).
3. Where did the king of the north consolidate the territory of his Empire?
 - 3.1. He took possessions of the provinces throughout North Africa, the Middle East and Asia Minor—sweeping through them like a flood (40-43).
 - 3.1.1. Special note should be made of the mention of Libya and Ethiopia (Cushites or Nubians) following in submission to Augustus.
 - 3.1.2. Augustus appointed Cornelius Balbus as praetor in the north. In 19 BC Balbus defeated the Garamantes (Libyans⁵⁴⁵), and then received the honour of a triumph, which was the first one ever granted to a person who was not a Roman citizen by birth, and the last time a private individual, had a triumph until 534 AD.⁵⁴⁶
 - 3.2. During this campaign Augustus entered Palestine, and specifically Judea (the glorious/beautiful land; 41), on his way to face off against Antony in Egypt. According to Josephus, "After this Caesar went for Egypt through Syria, when Herod received him with royal and rich entertainments; and then did he first of all ride along with Caesar, as he was reviewing his army about Ptolemais, and feasted him with all his friends, and then distributed among the rest of the army what was necessary to feast them withal."⁵⁴⁷
 - 3.3. Josephus, in the same paragraph, tells us that while Caesar was in Judea he confirmed Herod as king of Judea. Herod in turn gave him gifts. Then, after defeating Antony and Cleopatra, he extended the territory of Herod, giving him Gadara, Hippos, Samaria, Gaza, Anthedon, Joppa, and Strato's Tower (i.e., Tyre). He also gave him four hundred Galls [Galatians] as a guard for his body, which had belonged to Cleopatra.
 4. What territories were not delivered into Augustus' hand? (41)
 - 4.1. Edom, Moab, and the main part of the territory of the Ammonites.
 - 4.2. History records the remarkable escape of these countries from the Romans. Augustus sent an expedition into these countries under Aelius Gallus, apparently accompanied by five hundred of Herod's guards.⁵⁴⁸ Humphrey Prideaux, citing Josephus, Pliny, Strabo, and Dio Cassius,

⁵⁴⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Actium

⁵⁴⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garamantes

⁵⁴⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Cornelius_Balbus_the_Younger

⁵⁴⁷ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 1, "How Antony at the persuasion of Cleopatra sent Herod to fight against the Arabians; and now after several battles, he at length got the victory..."; chapter 20, paragraph 3; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-1.htm

⁵⁴⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 15; chapter 9, paragraph 3; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-15.htm

refers to this expedition's failure.⁵⁴⁹

- 4.3. Philip Mauro says that 'The *Universal History*, in a note added to their account of the expedition, says, "The bad success that attended Aelius in this expedition deterred both him and others from any further attempts on that country" (*Ancient Universal History*. Vol. XIII, p. 498).⁵⁵⁰ Since he did not provide an author's name, I was unable to verify this quotation. Volume 13 of the only version of *Universal History* I could find searching the Internet, was by William Fordyce Mavor and deals with the dispersion of the Jews and a history of the African nations.

5. What happened to the treasures of Egypt? (43)

- 5.1. They were plundered by Augustus.
- 5.2. The fact that the prophecy mentions these treasures indicates that the fulfillment was to take place in ancient times. Egypt has been a poor country since the time of Christ, so the impoverished the Egypt of the Middle Ages or of today is not the subject of this prophecy.
- 5.3. Plutarch speaks of Cleopatra's wealth as follows: "Cleopatra had erected near the temple of Isis some monuments of extraordinary size and magnificence. To these she removed her treasure, her gold, silver, emeralds, pearls, ebony, ivory, and cinnamon, together with a large quantity of flax, and a number of torches. Caesar was under some apprehensions about this immense wealth, lest, upon some sudden emergency, she should set fire to the whole. For this reason he was continually sending messengers to her with assurances of gentle and honourable treatment, while in the meantime he hastened to the city with his army."⁵⁵¹
- 5.4. This account is reinforced by two stories of the vastness of her wealth:
- 5.4.1. When news reached Rome about the successful capture of Cleopatra VII and of her treasures, the interest rates in Rome fell from about 12 percent to 4 percent.⁵⁵²
- 5.4.2. Pliny reported in his *Natural History*, that to show her wealth and power she made a bet with her lover, Marc Antony, that she could spend 10 million sesterces on one meal. The first course was nothing special. She ordered as her second course a vessel containing vinegar. She took an expensive pearl and dropped it in the vinegar. When it had dissolved, she drank it.⁵⁵³
- 5.5. Thus, according to Scripture prophecy and its fulfillment in history, the wealth of Egypt became the possession of the king of the north—the Roman Caesar.

6. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

- 6.1. *Research* – This section teaches how important it is to do proper research before interpreting the Scriptures.
- 6.1.1. Careful historical research will never embarrass the Bible scholar. Since the Bible is entirely accurate and trustworthy, extra-Biblical facts can only vindicate it.
- 6.1.2. Sadly, many modern interpreters jump to conclusions and follow popular paths. They are unwilling to conduct the necessary research into ancient history to see how to apply the OT's prophecies accurately.
- 6.2. *Restraint* – Most modern commentators have been influenced by a faulty eschatology, which interprets Daniel in the wrong way and applies it to the wrong era.
- 6.2.1. As we have unfolded the historical fulfillment of the prophecy in this section, it has reinforced the fact that we need to apply great restraint and not extrapolate this book

⁵⁴⁹ Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament connected in the history of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations, from the Declension of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ*, Volume 2 (Oxford: 1839), pp. 566-567; books.google.com/books?id=9mIjAAAAAAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁵⁵⁰ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

⁵⁵¹ Plutarch, *Lives*, Translated by John Langhorne and William Langhorne, (Baltimore: William and Joseph Neal, 1831), p. 654; books.google.ca/books?id=yDEEXg7eXw8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁵⁵² www.touregypt.net/cleopatr.htm

⁵⁵³ Rossella Lorenzi, "How Cleopatra Won Her Bet," *Discovery News*, 2010-08 -03; news.discovery.com/history/cleopatra-pearl-cocktail.html

- into speculations about our future.
- 6.2.2. Not even Jesus, in his human nature, knew the day or hour of his second coming, so it is utter foolishness to think that anyone can predict the day and hour when Jesus will come again to wrap up history, open the graves, execute everlasting judgement, and renovate the created order (Mt 11.22; Jn 5.28, 29; 2 Thess 1.10).
 - 6.2.3. Therefore, we should shun the teachings of the false prophets who try to make predictions about end times, when Jesus tells them not to do it. We should reject their attempts to inject mysteries about our future into OT passages of Scripture, which are in fact speaking of events in our past.
 - 6.3. *Reality* – We, again, must bow in awe at the reality of a God who controls the events of this world to such an extent that he can predict human affairs in such specific detail, over five-hundred years before they happened.
 - 6.3.1. The predictions in this section are not general and imprecise but specific and precise. The way they were fulfilled by the various leaders in the late 1st century BC indicates confirms the single historical fulfillment and precludes their application (other than as principles) to a future series of events.
 - 6.3.2. In this account we see more of the to-and-fro of the nations— they arise and they retreat—but in the end, God controls them all.
 - 6.3.3. In this account, God sweeps over the ancient history that fills volumes from secular historians, as time marches to his drumbeat. The great, powerful, and honoured of this world get only a brief mention in a few verses, as events progress toward the appearance of God’s man—the Messiah. So it is today, the nations of this world, for all their pretensions, are but a footnote in God’s records as he fills his books with the names of his saints and wraps up history, waiting for the second appearance of his man—the Christ.

Slaughter (Dan 11.44-45)

- 1. What news angered Herod?
 - 1.1. It is not obvious who the ‘him’ is in verse 44. However, Herod is the primary subject of the later part of chapter 11. Verses 40-43 were a parenthetical comment dealing with significant events in other territories, at the time of Herod, that had an impact on the subject kingdom of the Jews.
 - 1.1.1. The antecedents of pronouns cannot be assumed to be the immediate proximate reference, but sometimes need to be determined by the context.
 - 1.1.2. It is sometimes the case that the OT prophets insert parenthetical comments and it is necessary to look back a number of verses to find the antecedent of a pronoun (e.g., Is 18.1-2, 7 with 3-6).
 - 1.1.3. As we will see as we examine the text, the prophecy of these verses fits Herod and no one else. For example, the reference to location where he pitched his ‘tent’ clearly applies to Herod.
 - 1.2. Where did the report come from that angered Herod?
 - 1.2.1. From the east and north.
 - 1.2.2. What land was east of Israel?
 - 1.2.2.1. The Parthian Empire, which stretched from central Asia Minor to the Hindu Kush Mountains and almost to the Indus River.
 - 1.2.2.2. It included the territories of ancient Babylon and Persia.
 - 1.3. What news came from the east (Babylon or Persia) that angered Herod?
 - 1.3.1. That Jesus, the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem (Mt 2.1-8).
 - 1.3.2. In particular, Matthew 2.3 indicates that Herod was troubled by the news that the wise men from the east brought.
 - 1.4. What news came from the north that troubled him?
 - 1.4.1. Antipater, Herod’s oldest son, living in Rome (i.e., “the north”; 40), plotted against his

father. Antipater had previously sent letters to his father claiming that his brothers had bad-mouthed Herod to Caesar. This made Herod very angry and he killed these two sons. Later he also killed Antipater for plotting against him.^{554,555}

- 1.5. On hearing the news, what did Herod do?
 - 1.5.1. Destroyed (annihilated) many, including his own sons.
 - 1.5.2. We find the final fulfillment of this prophecy in the slaughter of the infant boys in Judea (Mt 2.16-18).
 - 1.5.3. In addition to these episodes of slaughter he devoted many others to destruction:
 - 1.5.3.1. He burned Matthias, the high priest, and forty others alive, after they pulled down the golden eagle at the temple.⁵⁵⁶
 - 1.5.3.2. Nearing his own death, he assembled the principal men of the entire Jewish nation in the hippodrome and gave the order that they were to be killed at his death, so the nation would mourn—in fact, the order was not carried out.⁵⁵⁷
2. Where did Herod pitch his tents?
 - 2.1. ‘Tent’ in this instance is used in the more general sense of ‘dwelling place’ (Ps 91.10); not necessarily a tent made of camel hair or animal skins.
 - 2.2. The Hebrew here has plural ‘seas’ (NIV), not ‘sea’ (ESV). In addition, the verse refers to ‘tents’. Herod had two major dwelling places in Jerusalem, i.e., between the Mediterranean Sea and Dead Sea—one a fortress (the Antonia⁵⁵⁸) adjacent to the Temple and the other a palace in the upper city.⁵⁵⁹
 - 2.3. His fortress was located on the Temple Mount, i.e., on the ‘glorious holy mountain’ (Ps 48.1-3)
3. How did Herod die?
 - 3.1. With no one to help him.
 - 3.2. Herod died lonely (he had butchered his family), bitter (while lying on his deathbed, he had Antipater killed), and painfully ill,⁵⁶⁰ and hated by his family and subjects. He attempted death by suicide with an apple paring knife.⁵⁶¹ Near death he said, “I shall die in a little time, so great are my pains; which death ought to be cheerfully borne, and to be welcomed by all men; but what principally troubles me is this, that I shall die without being lamented, and without such mourning as men usually expect at a king’s death.”⁵⁶²
 - 3.3. Jesus was born in 4 BC and Herod died in 4 BC. Therefore, Herod died after issuing the command to slaughter the infants at Bethlehem. Herod prospered until the slaughter of the infants was completed and then he came to his own end—in God’s time and according to God’s plan.
 - 3.4. The following is a summary of the evidence supporting the belief that Jesus was born in 4 BC:
 - 3.4.1. The most commonly accepted, proposed, dates for the crucifixion of Jesus are April 7th, 30 AD and April 3rd, 33 AD. The crucifixion had to be:
 - 3.4.1.1. During the High Priesthood of Caiaphas (Mt 26.3-4; Jn 11.49-53). Caiaphas was high priest from ~18 AD to ~36 AD.^{563,564}

⁵⁵⁴ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 1, “From the Taking of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes, to the Death of Herod the Great”; chapters 26-33; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-1.htm

⁵⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapters 5-7; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁵⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 7; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁵⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 6; paragraph 5; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁵⁸ www.rtmeyer.com/2009/02/02/the-antonia-herods-temple-mount-fortress/

⁵⁵⁹ www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/herods-palace.html

⁵⁶⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 6; paragraph 5; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁶¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 1, “From the Taking of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes, to the Death of Herod the Great”; chapter 33, paragraph 7; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-1.htm

⁵⁶² Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 6; paragraph 5; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁶³ C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), p. 249.

⁵⁶⁴ A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 181.

- 3.4.1.2. During the governorship of Pontius Pilate (Mt 27.24-26; Mk 15.15; Lk 23.24; Jn 19.15-16). He was governor of Judea from 26 AD to 36 AD.⁵⁶⁵
- 3.4.1.3. After the beginning of 29 AD, since John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Lk 3.1-2).^{566, 567}
- 3.4.1.4. On a Friday (Mt 27.62; Mk 15.42; Lk 23.54; Jn 19.42) before the Saturday Sabbath began (Mt 28.1; Mk 16.2; Lk 24.1; Jn 20.1).
- 3.4.1.5. On a Friday at the time of the Passover (Mt 26.2; Mk 14.1; Lk 22.1; Jn 18.39), which began at sundown on the Friday (Jn 18.28-29a).
- 3.4.2. Two possible dates between 29 AD and 36 AD qualify:
 - 3.4.2.1. Friday, April 7th, 30 AD was in the midst of Passover week.⁵⁶⁸
 - 3.4.2.2. Friday, April 3rd, 33 AD, was the date for the Passover sacrifice.⁵⁶⁹
- 3.4.3. Luke informs us that Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry (Lk 3.23). It is generally believed that his ministry was slightly over three years in duration (including a Passover at the beginning and end; Jn 2.13; Jn 6.4; Jn 11.55). Thus, Jesus died when he was about 33 years old.
- 3.4.4. If we accept the proposed date of 33 AD for the crucifixion, then Jesus would have been born in 1 BC (there was no year 0). A birth date in 1 BC is not possible because Herod died in 4 BC, and Jesus was born before Herod died. However, if we accept the proposed date of 30 AD, then Jesus was born in 4 BC.
- 3.5. The following is a summary of the evidence supporting the belief that Herod died at the end of March or early in April, in 4 BC:
 - 3.5.1. Josephus states that a lunar eclipse occurred not long before Herod's death,⁵⁷⁰ and that he died before Passover that year.⁵⁷¹ A lunar eclipse would have been visible in Palestine on March 13th, 4 BC.⁵⁷²
 - 3.5.2. Archelaus, one of Herod's sons who succeeded him, was banished in 6 AD, the tenth year of his reign, giving a date of 4 BC, as the start of his reign as ethnarch.⁵⁷³
 - 3.5.3. Herod Antipas, another of Herod's sons, was deposed in the summer of 39 AD. The last coins minted during his reign are from his 43rd year. Working backwards, gives a date of 4 BC for his accession.⁵⁷⁴
 - 3.5.4. Philip the Tetrach, another of Herod's sons, died in the 38th year of his reign in 34 AD. Working backwards, gives a date of 4 BC for the start of his reign.⁵⁷⁵
- 3.6. A possible outline of rapidly unfolding events surrounding the death of Herod, the birth of Jesus, and the early infancy of Jesus, could be as follows:
 - 3.6.1. The Magi visited Herod prior to his death to determine where the Christ was to be born (Mt 2.1, 2) and then they went to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus (Mt 2.11) a few days after his birth. Then they went back to their homeland by a different route (Mt 2.12).
 - 3.6.2. Jesus was probably circumcised in Bethlehem on the 8th day after his birth (Lk 2.21).⁵⁷⁶
 - 3.6.3. After his circumcision, Jesus was taken to Egypt by Joseph and Mary (Mt 2.13-14). It probably took Joseph and Mary around 10⁵⁷⁷ days to reach Egypt. They would have

⁵⁶⁵ A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 833.

⁵⁶⁶ C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), p. 1594.

⁵⁶⁷ A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 1004.

⁵⁶⁸ www.cgsf.org/dbeattie/calendar/?roman=30

⁵⁶⁹ www.cgsf.org/dbeattie/calendar/?roman=33

⁵⁷⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 6; paragraph 4; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁷¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 17; chapter 9; paragraph 2; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/ant-17.htm

⁵⁷² Douglas Johnson, "And They Went Eight Stades toward Herodeion," in J. Finegan, J. Vardaman, and E. M. Yamauchi, *Chronos, kairos, Christos: Nativity and chronological studies presented to Jack Finegan*, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 96.

⁵⁷³ Douglas Johnson, "And They Went Eight Stades toward Herodeion," in J. Finegan, J. Vardaman, and E. M. Yamauchi, *Chronos, kairos, Christos: Nativity and chronological studies presented to Jack Finegan*, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 94.

⁵⁷⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, "The Date of the Death of Herod the Great," in J. Finegan, J. Vardaman, and E. M. Yamauchi, *Chronos, kairos, Christos: Nativity and chronological studies presented to Jack Finegan*, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 106.

⁵⁷⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, "The Date of the Death of Herod the Great," in J. Finegan, J. Vardaman, and E. M. Yamauchi, *Chronos, kairos, Christos: Nativity and chronological studies presented to Jack Finegan*, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 107.

⁵⁷⁶ However, he could have been circumcised while his parents were fleeing with him to Egypt.

⁵⁷⁷ We do not know how far into Egypt they went. Donkeys move at a walking pace of a little over 7 kms/hr. So they could have travelled 45kms in six hours; taking time to rest, they could have comfortably covered 45kms in 8-10 hours. If they travelled 45

travelled slowly in light of Mary's postpartum condition, and because she was nursing baby Jesus. They may have been in Egypt a day or two before the angel announced to them that Herod had died. Thus, 12 days could have elapsed from the time they had left Bethlehem.

- 3.6.4. As Joseph and Mary were travelling to Egypt Herod was waiting for the Magi to return. It is possible that it was a week or two after the birth of Jesus that Herod realized that the Magi were not going to return (Mt 2.16) and he issued the command to have the infants in Bethlehem slaughtered. Herod had infants up to two years old slaughtered to include the time from when the Magi had first seen the star (Mt 2.7, 16).⁵⁷⁸ The star appeared some time *before* Jesus was to be born, not on the night of his birth, so that the Magi had time to travel to Judea and arrive in Jerusalem before his birth, and in Bethlehem around the time of his birth. Herod probably also allowed additional time to ensure that his massacre of the infants would be certain to include the baby Jesus.
- 3.6.5. After Herod died (Mt 2.15), Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth (Mt 2.19-23). Then, on the 40th day after his birth, Jesus was presented in Jerusalem at the temple (Lk 2.22-38), where Mary completed her time of purification, according to the Law of Moses (Lev 12.2-4). After Jesus was presented at the temple, his parents returned to Nazareth in Galilee (Lk 2.39).
- 3.7. From this outline of the events during the early infancy of Jesus, we can reach the following conclusions:
 - 3.7.1. Since Jesus was born before Herod died and Herod died in the spring of 4 BC, and Jesus was presented at the Temple within 40 days of his birth (after the death of Herod), then Jesus was born in early 4 BC, not on December 25th (of 4 BC) or in November or December of 5 BC (or of any other year).
 - 3.7.2. If it took Mary and Joseph 12 days to walk from Egypt to Nazareth and 5 days to walk from Nazareth to Jerusalem, then Herod had to have died at least 17 days before Jesus was presented at the temple. However, they may have had a layover of two days in Nazareth before heading to Jerusalem. Therefore, Herod's death could have been about 19 days before the presentation of Jesus at the temple.
 - 3.7.3. This means that Mary and Joseph left Bethlehem about 31⁵⁷⁹ days before Jesus was presented at the temple, or about 9 days after his birth.
 - 3.7.4. The Magi arrived in Bethlehem sometime during the 8 days before Joseph and Mary left Bethlehem and visited Jesus in a house where the family were then staying (Mt 2.11), not up to two years *after* Jesus was born—based on an incorrect interpretation of Matthew 2.16.
 - 3.7.5. Herod probably died a few days after issuing the command for the slaughter of the infants—a direct punishment from God for his wicked action.
 - 3.7.6. It has been calculated that Passover fell on April 11th in 4 BC.⁵⁸⁰ If Herod died on April 8th (i.e. before Passover, as Josephus states), Jesus could have been born on the day the Passover lamb was selected (Ex 12.3), on March 19th.⁵⁸¹

4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

- 4.1. *Sermons* – Leupold, in his Homiletical Suggestions at the end of his commentary on chapter 11, makes the following statement, “This chapter might be treated in Bible classes. We do not

kms/day, they would have covered 450kms in 10 days, which would have put them past Suez and well into the Nile delta. However, they probably rested on the Sabbath. Also they may have travelled only 300kms. Regardless, it would have been very feasible to walk from Bethlehem to parts of Egypt in 10 days.

⁵⁷⁸ Johannes Kepler suggested that the star was the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7-6 BC. Two years later would have been 4 BC. However, how that conjunction could have led the Magi, two years later, to the exact place where Jesus was residing (Mt 2.9) is difficult to explain. It is probably better to postulate that God worked a miracle and provided a unique celestial sign which the Magi observed and concluded to be the sign of the Jewish Messiah.

⁵⁷⁹ 10 days to Egypt + 2 days in Egypt + 12 days to Nazareth + 2 days in Nazareth + 5 days to Jerusalem

⁵⁸⁰ www.cgsf.org/dbeattie/calendar/?roman=4bc

⁵⁸¹ 8 days in Bethlehem + 10 days to Egypt + 2 days in Egypt = 20 days. April 8th – March 19th = 20 days.

see how it could be used for a sermon or for sermons.”⁵⁸²

- 4.1.1. This is a sadly ill-conceived statement from a worthy expositor of Scripture.
- 4.1.2. Throughout our study of this chapter, we have derived numerous lessons from each section of this chapter. The exposition of this chapter has shown the wickedness of man’s sin and the greatness of God’s providence. It shows how God has unfolded history precisely as he moved it rapidly toward the revelation of his son, the redeemer of mankind.
- 4.1.3. Without question this chapter, and this last section, provides tremendous homiletic resources.
- 4.2. *Sin* – The death of Herod, as predicted in this section, provides a tragic and fearful picture of how wickedness consumes the heart of sinners.
 - 4.2.1. Herod went to his death with twinges of regret and fear, but not a hint of repentance. Even now, he is in Hell shaking his fist at God.
 - 4.2.2. Regardless of his power, wealth, and mad paranoia, he went the way of all men and met his maker in Judgement.
 - 4.2.3. He ended his life in wretchedness and without hope. This is the only way that an unrepentant sinner can end his life.
 - 4.2.4. Herod’s death reminds us that God is the victor and will vindicate his purposes; and that we must repent of our sins or meet the same everlasting judgement as Herod, who was a manifestation of the antichrist.
- 4.3. *Scripture* – The entire chapter, including the exquisitely detailed prophecies of these last two verses, is a tremendous witness to the truthfulness of Scripture.
 - 4.3.1. Throughout this chapter, there are about 150 prophecies that have been fulfilled in actual history.
 - 4.3.2. We do not need wild speculation about how Daniel 11.1-45 (and in particular verses 36-45) will be fulfilled. We have shown that the prophecies throughout this chapter have been fulfilled in exact correspondence to how they were reported by the angel to Daniel.
 - 4.3.3. The Bible is unique. No other ‘holy’ book contains detailed prophecies given hundreds and thousands of years in advance which have been fulfilled. God vindicates the truthfulness of his word through the fulfillment of prophecy (Is 42.9; Is 44.7; Is 46.9-10; Is 48.5-6). God gives a test to determine the truthfulness of his word or the word of any pretend prophet. He declares that if a prophet speaks about the future and the prophet’s word does not come true then he is a false prophet (Dt 18.22). This is the test to determine if any other book or writing, considered to be sacred or holy, is true. If it cannot predict the future with explicit accuracy it is not a word from God. For example,
 - 4.3.3.1. The Book of Mormon does not even provide an accurate account which can be compared with historical facts, let alone provide verifiable prophecies which have been fulfilled.
 - 4.3.3.2. Defenders of the *Qur’an* claim that it presents prophecies which have been fulfilled (e.g., “They will alter Allah’s creation.” [4:120] refers to genetic engineering, “[W]hen the wild beasts are gathered together.” [81:6] refers to zoos, “[W]hen various souls are paired.” [81:8] refers to modern communication systems, and “By the heaven containing pathways” [51:8]” refers to air transportation. It is clear from these examples that the *Qur’an* does not include specific prophecies about the future which have been realized. In addition, what history it provides is often a fairy tale—for example, claiming that Jesus was not crucified [4:157], referring to Mary as the sister of Moses and Aaron [19.28], and portraying Alexander as a righteous man [8:83-99].
 - 4.3.3.3. Other religious texts tend to be mystical ramblings that have little connection

⁵⁸² H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). p. 525.
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with history or the future.

4.3.4. The literal fulfillment of these prophecies teaches us that:

4.3.4.1. The author of Scripture is the omniscient and omnipotent God. No mere human writing could be as literally accurate hundreds of years before the fact.

4.3.4.2. God's word from Genesis 1.1 to Revelation 22.21 is entirely reliable and must be believed to be true by all men.

4.3.4.3. Scripture can be corroborated by a study of the facts of extra-Biblical history.

4.3.4.4. We can trust God to work out his remaining prophecies as precisely as he worked out the prophecies given here—the Lord Jesus will return in spite of what scoffers may say, and usher in the glorious eternal Kingdom Age.

Destined Termination (Dan 12.1-13)

Separation (Dan 12.1-3)

1. When was Michael to arise?

1.1. At that time. 'at that time' refers to the period just described in Daniel 11.36-45

1.1.1. The versification and chapter divisions are not in the original text. They were added at least a thousand years after Daniel wrote this account.

1.1.2. Since there are no chapter divisions in the original text, this part of Daniel's final vision continues from 11.45 without interruption.

1.2. Most interpreters of this passage assume that verse 1 is referring to the end of time, when Jesus is to return to earth. They assume this because:

1.2.1. They misinterpret the events in the last part of chapter 11, and conclude they refer to events yet to occur.

1.2.2. Verse 2 appears to be speaking of the last day of the world when Christ will return, and they associate verse 1 with verse 2.

1.3. If verse 2 applies to a time in our future, then there are at least two possibilities for how we can interpret the timing of the events in verse 1.

1.3.1. The events in verse 1 occurred near the time of Jesus and there is a gap of ~2,000 (or more) years between verses 1 and 2.

1.3.2. The events in verse 1 are yet to occur (at the end of time) and there is a gap of ~2,000 (or more) years somewhere between some verse in chapter 11 and 2.1.

1.4. Most interpreters put the gap at verse between 11.35 and 11.36, since almost every interpreter agrees that 11.1-35 was in the period leading to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

1.5. Since we have concluded that the last verses (36-45) of chapter 11 were dealing with the time of Herod the Great, then verse 1 of chapter 12 should be interpreted as referring to the same time period.

1.6. This is consistent with the understanding of the Jews at the time of Jesus, as seen in the example of the disciples' questions to Jesus (Mt 24.1-4; Mk 13.1-5; Lk 21.5-8). In their minds, their questions all related to a single event in space-time—the end of history and time as we know it, the destruction or replacement of all physical reality, including the Temple, and the establishment of an eternal Messianic kingdom. Although, we should note that Jewish eschatology was not an elaborately worked out scheme as it is for some today, with signs, markers, events, and significant antichrists. In addition, Jews at the time of Jesus did not have the concept of two separate appearances of the Messiah—one to establish the Messianic Kingdom, and a second to bring to a conclusion the space-time realm.

2. What was Michael's role?

2.1. Who is Michael?

2.1.1. We considered who Michael is previously (Dan 10.13, 21).

2.1.2. Michael (whose name means "who is like God?") is one of the most powerful and important angels, and only one of two angels (along with Gabriel) mentioned by name

- in the Bible.
- 2.1.3. Some interpreters suggest that Michael is another name for Christ, who is the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels. We considered why this may not be correct, but concluded that determining the correct interpretation is not essential—since Christ in the OT is also referred to as an angel.
 - 2.2. Michael is referred to as a chief prince, i.e., an archangel.
 - 2.3. He appears to have had specific responsibilities to serve as the protecting angel over Israel, to counter a demon who was assigned by Satan to cause trouble for Israel.
3. What is the time of trouble?
- 3.1. Most interpreters of this passage place this time of trouble in our future—they believe that a time of extreme persecution of Christians will occur before the return of Christ. However, this interpretation creates unnecessary complexities with interpreting Scripture.
 - 3.2. There is a simpler interpretation that fits with all that has been previously mentioned in chapter 11 and in an earlier prophecy in the book of Daniel (Dan 9.26, 27).
 - 3.2.1. The words ‘was a nation’ refer to a specific nation (not *nations*, as in the NIV)—i.e., ‘since Israel became a nation’. Therefore, the time of trouble that Daniel is speaking about was to be a time of trouble for Israel, not for the NT Christian Church.
 - 3.2.2. Jesus speaks of the particular time of persecution (Mt 24.21), quoting from this verse in Daniel, when he predicts the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Titus.⁵⁸³
 - 3.2.3. He predicted that the destruction of Jerusalem would be the most grievous punishment ever dispensed on a people. Josephus reported the devastation: “It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.”⁵⁸⁴
 - 3.2.4. Some might argue that the holocaust in Germany and Poland during WW II, the Islamic destruction of Christians in Armenia, Africa, or Iraq, or the slaughter of Christian dissidents in Communist Russia were more grievous than the destruction of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem. However, we should take God’s perspective on this seriously. Jesus says that the greatness of the distress associated with the events in 70 AD would be unequalled from the beginning when God created the world and will never be equalled again. The fact that he says that they will be unequalled in the future indicates that we are not to look for a particular excruciating tribulation in the future as a sign of Jesus’ imminent return.
 - 3.3. The most straightforward interpretation is to conclude that the ‘time of trouble’ in this verse is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, which brought to a close the Jewish age and forms a natural break in the communication, between verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12.
 - 3.4. There will be on-going times of persecution of Christians before the end of the world,⁵⁸⁵ of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a precursor, but the suffering of believers will not equal the suffering, which the Jews experienced during the destruction of Jerusalem. We should however take warning from this verse, that after time comes to an end there is a much greater punishment for the sins of rebellion against God and rejection of his son—everlasting Hell fire.
4. What hope is offered?
- 4.1. There will be deliverance for Daniel’s people—the Jews.

⁵⁸³ For a complete exegesis of Matthew 24.1-51 (and the related passages in Mark and Luke) see: James R. Hughes, *Daily Meditations on the Life of Jesus – A Contemporary Application*; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

⁵⁸⁴ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 7, “From the Taking of Jerusalem by Titus to the Sedition of the Jews at Cyrene”; chapter 1, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-7.htm

⁵⁸⁵ See the lessons learned in the section entitled ‘Steadfast Saints’ (Dan 11.32b-35).

- 4.2. Who, specifically, will be delivered?
 - 4.2.1. All those whose names are written in the book.
 - 4.2.2. Many (most) interpreters conclude that this is a reference to a, supposed, future deliverance of the Jews—e.g., a mass conversion of the Jews before the return of Christ.
 - 4.2.2.1. They connect this with their interpretation of Romans 11.26.
 - 4.2.2.2. However, Daniel isn't speaking of a future mass conversion of the Jews, as the Bible does not promise or teach this,⁵⁸⁶ contrary to what premillennialists and dispensationalists teach. God has finished dealing with the Jews as a *nation*. The true Israel is the NT Church. Of course, any Jew who believes that Jesus is the Messiah will be saved and become a member of the NT Church.
 - 4.2.3. Daniel is speaking of true believers in the Messiah who heeded Jesus' explicit warning (Mt 24.15-20) to flee from Jerusalem when they saw the city being surrounded by the Roman armies, and were thus delivered from the destruction of the city.
 - 4.2.3.1. The deliverance of believers from the destruction wrought by the Roman armies provides a pointer (a type, or analogy) to what Christ will do when he returns to earth. He will deliver all his spiritual Israel—those whose names are written in the book of life (Rev 20.15)—from the destructive forces of sin and Hell.
- 4.3. What is the book in which the names are written?
 - 4.3.1. It is probably a reference to one of the 'books' (Dan 7.10) or to the 'book of life'.
 - 4.3.1.1. The books appear to be a symbol for the complete record of each person's life (Ps 139.16; Mal 3.16; Rev 20.12). From this record, the indictment (a formal accusation of a crime) and evidence against mankind is recorded.
 - 4.3.1.2. The 'book of life' may refer to a specific symbolical book that contains the names of those who are the elect (Ex 32.32; Ps 69.28; Lk 10.20; Phil 4.3; Rev 3.5; Rev 13.8; Rev 20.12, 15). Christ didn't die for the world in an abstract sense but for specific, named, believers throughout the world.
 - 4.3.2. The idea that there is a record of the citizens of Heaven—the City of God (Heb 12.22-23)—draws on the practice of recording citizens in a town or nation, that goes back to ancient times.
 - 4.3.2.1. There are records of censuses in ancient Egypt and China at, or before, the time of Israel's early censuses. A famous extra-Biblical census is that which was administered by William I after the Battle of Hastings. The results of that census are called the *Domesday Book* which recorded most of the population and holdings in England and Wales.
 - 4.3.2.2. The Jews took a census on their departure from Egypt (Num 1.2) and on their entry into the Promised Land (Num 26.2).
 - 4.3.2.3. The Law required a census in order to establish the poll tax (Ex 30.12).
 - 4.3.2.4. The Jews kept extensive genealogical records to demonstrate their kinship and ancestry. These records were important for determining who could legitimately serve as a priest or perform Levitical duties (Ezra 2.62), and the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Mt 1.1-17; Lk 3.23-38).
 - 4.3.2.5. The Roman Census of 4 BC required by Caesar Augustus played a key role in bringing Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (Lk 2.1-3) so that the Messiah would be born there (Mic 5.2).
 - 4.3.3. Whose names were written in the book?
 - 4.3.3.1. Those who would be delivered.
 - 4.3.3.2. The implication is that a subset of the population of Jerusalem would be delivered from the destruction of the city. This would consist, primarily, of the

⁵⁸⁶ See: James R. Hughes, *And So all Israel will be Saved*, 1998; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

ones who were true believers and heeded the warning of Jesus.

4.3.3.3. It appears, from the historical records, that most Christians fled from Jerusalem;⁵⁸⁷ but the unbelieving Jews remained in the city when Titus' armies besieged and destroyed it. God's plan was to scatter Christians from the city to proclaim the Gospel—then the city and Temple would be levelled.

4.3.3.4. Therefore, the 'book' in this case could be a reference to God's plan to save believers in Jesus from the destruction of the city.

4.3.4. What doctrines are implied by the reference to the 'book'?

4.3.4.1. *Predestination* – Technically, 'predestination', relates to the predetermination (foreknowing and foreordination) of the everlasting destinies of mankind. It is sometimes used as a synonym for 'providence', which is God's decreeing and controlling all events (Acts 17.26; Eph 1.11; Eph 3.11).

4.3.4.1.1. God predestines both to eternal life and to everlasting damnation (Rom 9.13; Acts 13.48; Eph 1.5, 11).

4.3.4.1.2. The predestined outcomes for mankind cannot be changed by the wills or actions of humans (Jn 6.37; Rom 8.29-30).

4.3.4.1.3. God does not predestine based on *foreseeing* events but on the basis of his eternal decrees—i.e., *foreknowing* (Rom 8.29-30; Eph 1.4; Titus 1.2).

4.3.4.1.4. Predestination does not remove or absolve human responsibility to obey God, believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, and repent of sin (Acts 2.23; Acts 4.27-28; Rom 9.11, 18-23).

4.3.4.1.5. It is unwise, and impossible because of our finite minds, for us to attempt to explain the mystery of predestination and the conundrum it supposedly presents for human 'free will'. It is our responsibility to accept the word of God on faith.

4.3.4.1.6. Predestination is a despised doctrine by many, but it should be loved. It provides the foundation for our acceptance with God, in Christ, and assurance of salvation.

4.3.4.2. *Election* – God elects some to eternal life and decrees reprobation for the remainder of mankind.

4.3.4.2.1. Election is by God's grace and is not based on anything that we have done (Rom 9.16; Eph 2.8-10; 2 Tim 1.9).

4.3.4.2.2. Election is to salvation (Eph 1.4) and ultimately to the glory of God (Eph 1.5-6).

5. What was to happen after the time of trouble?

5.1. There would be a resurrection of many.

5.1.1. This appears to be a reference to the general resurrection of all the dead on the last day, at the end of time, when Christ returns to earth.

5.1.2. Some (dispensationalists) argue that this verse cannot be speaking of the general resurrection since, according to their view, the saints are raised after the great tribulation and then the rest of mankind is raised a thousand years later at a second resurrection. They quote Revelation 20.4-6 to support their argument.

5.1.2.1. We cannot undertake an analysis of their interpretation of Revelation 20.4-6, as it would result in a major digression from our analysis of Daniel.

5.1.2.2. William Hendriksen provides a possible alternative way of interpreting this passage—i.e., Revelation 20.4-6.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ J. Julius Scott, Jr.; *Did Jerusalem Christians Flee to Pella? Evidence from Biblical, Historical, Archaeological and Critical Studies*; Paper read at Wheaton College Archaeology Conference, Wheaton, IL, Nov 1998; [www.friendsofsabbath.org/ABC/Church%20of%20God%20History/Did%20Christians%20Flee%20to%20Pella%20\(not%20AC\).pdf](http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/ABC/Church%20of%20God%20History/Did%20Christians%20Flee%20to%20Pella%20(not%20AC).pdf)

⁵⁸⁸ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), pp. 191-193.

- 5.1.3. This verse (Dan 12.2) includes a resurrection of both righteous and wicked persons. So, if it is speaking of the general resurrection, it does not make a distinction as to the timing of the resurrection of these two groups. If dispensationalist interpreters claim that it is not speaking of the general resurrection, then they have to explain what the resurrection is that is spoken of here. They would then have to introduce explanatory complexities which are difficult to defend.
- 5.1.4. In addition, the NT makes it clear that there is one resurrection of all of mankind—the righteous and the wicked (Mt 13.49; Acts 24.15).
- 5.1.5. The word ‘many’ in the ESV may give the idea of a limited number. In this instance the NIV’s translation (‘multitudes’) is preferable for translating the Hebrew word (רַב), which means ‘a great number’.
- 5.2. What are the dead called?
 - 5.2.1. Those who sleep.
 - 5.2.2. Death is called, figuratively, a sleep elsewhere in the Bible (Job 3.1; Ps 13.3; Jer 51.39, 57; Jn 11.11–14; Acts 7.60; 1 Thess 4.13; 1 Cor 15.51).
 - 5.2.3. This ‘sleep’ refers to physical death only, not to ‘soul sleep’. When the spirit of a believer leaves the body, it/he goes directly to be with the Lord in conscious enjoyment (Lk 16.22, 24; Lk 23.43; 2 Cor 5.8; Phil 1.21–23). So also, when the spirit of an unbeliever departs, it/he goes to a place of conscious torment (Lk 16.23).
 - 5.2.4. The reason death is called *sleep* is that sleep is temporary. Physical death is temporary and our bodies will awake (arise or be regenerated) from it to be assigned permanently to eternal life or everlasting death (Mt 10.28).
- 5.3. If this verse (2) is speaking of the general resurrection, then we have to deal with a gap of ~2,000+ years somewhere in Daniel 11.1–45 through Daniel 12.1–13.
 - 5.3.1. The gap occurs between verses 35 and 36 (of chapter 11), as most interpreters today propose, or it could occur between verses 1 and 2 (of chapter 12). We have taken the position that the gap occurs between verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12
 - 5.3.2. The ‘problem’ of a gap is present for *all* interpreters of this passage, unless they assign verse 2 (and following) to events that occurred immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, or put *all* of chapter 11 into our future.
 - 5.3.3. Is there a satisfactory way for us to explain the gap of ~2,000 (or more) years between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of time?
 - 5.3.3.1. We may have here an example of what some have called ‘prophetic foreshortening’.⁵⁸⁹ The idea is that the OT prophets foresaw events in the near and distant future as if they were immediately following one another—possible examples include: Isaiah 9.1–7; Isaiah 11.1–16; Isaiah 50.1–5; and Jeremiah 30.1–24; in addition Matthew 24.1–51, which deals with both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the return of Christ at the end of time, is an example. A series of mountains is often used to illustrate this concept—a large mountain behind a nearer one looks close to the first mountain, but in fact can be quite a distance away.
 - 5.3.3.2. From a prophetic and eschatological viewpoint, the next major event, which is to follow the destruction of Jerusalem, is the return of Christ, which will usher in the final judgement and the renovation of the universe (Acts 1.11; 2 Pt 3.3–7)—*not*, as premillennialists claim, events such as the rapture, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, the mass conversion of the Jews, the appearance of the antichrist, and the Battle of Armageddon.
 - 5.3.3.3. Since the next major event in God’s plan of salvation is the return of Christ, this means that the period between Christ’s first and second coming to earth is inconsequential from a *eschatological* perspective.

⁵⁸⁹ “Type, Typology” in *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*; www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/type-typology.html

- 5.3.3.3.1. Although it is true that there are NT prophecies which indicate that the Church will grow and expand throughout the earth (Mt 28.19-20; Acts 1.8; 1 Thess 4.15-17), events such as the growth of the papacy, the split of the Church into eastern and western sections, the Reformation, and the worldwide missionary movement are not explicitly foretold in Scripture.
- 5.3.3.3.2. Many people find numerous future events prophesied in Revelation. However, most of the prophecies in Revelation related to events which occurred *before* the destruction of Jerusalem.⁵⁹⁰ The remainder of the prophecies apply to the second coming of Christ, or generally (not specifically) to intervening events. For example, the prophesied appearance of the antichrist is a favourite of those who attempt to predict future events. These may apply to Nero, to all world systems (religious and political), or generically to individuals who oppose Christ (1 Jn 2.18, 22; 1 Jn 4.3; 2 Jn 7). We are not to look for a specific antichrist in our future.
- 5.3.3.4. Even dispensationalists should agree with the claim that the period between Christ's first coming and the end of the age is inconsequential from a *eschatological* perspective; because they claim that the Church age is essentially an afterthought, filling a gap until God fulfills his program for the Jews. However, dispensationalism misses the reality that Christ and the NT Church fulfill the OT prophecies which remain to be fulfilled—not a restored Jewish nation. The prophecies which remain to be fulfilled relate to the consummation of the ages when Christ returns.
- 5.3.3.5. It should humble our proud culture (even the Church has been infected by this pride) to learn that our 'modern' era doesn't warrant any recognition in Biblical *eschatological* prophecy—like many of the events associated with the mighty Persian and Greek empires are skipped over in Daniel 11.1-45; including a gap of over 130 years (Dan 11.2-3).
- 5.4. What do we learn about the resurrection from this verse?
 - 5.4.1. *Reality* – The resurrection is a teaching of Scripture—primarily in the NT, but also in the OT.
 - 5.4.1.1. This verse is generally considered to have the most explicit reference to the resurrection in the OT.
 - 5.4.1.1.1. However, it is not the only reference in the OT, since the resurrection is implied or explicitly stated in: Genesis 5.21-24; 2 Kings 2:9-12; Job 19.25-27; Psalm 16.10; Psalm 17.15; Psalm 49.15; Isaiah 25.8; Isaiah 26.19; Ezekiel 37.1-14; and Hosea 13.14. Even so, the reality of the resurrection is somewhat veiled in the OT. However, many of the Jews up to the time of Christ believed in the resurrection based on their understanding of the OT (Acts 23.6, 8).
 - 5.4.1.1.2. The NT expands on the teaching (Mt 12.41-42; Mt 18.8-9; Mk 12.25-27; Acts 24.15, 21; Rom 8.11, 19-23; 1 Cor 15.23–28, 35-49; Col 1.18; Phil 3.21; 1 Thess 4.14–18; Heb 11.17-19; Rev 20.4-6, 11-15).
 - 5.4.1.1.3. The concept of *resurrection* is essentially a Christian (Biblical) concept. Although the religions of the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome had concepts of an afterlife, they did not include the idea of persons being resurrected with physical bodies which would be the same (or recognizably similar) to the ones they possessed in this life. In general they believed that once a person entered the netherworld

⁵⁹⁰ Kenneth Gentry, *The beast of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).
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(Sheol/Hades) there was no returning—for example, the place of the dead in Mesopotamia was called ‘the land of no return’;⁵⁹¹ in Egyptian mythology the afterlife is idealized, but there is not the concept of a *bodily* resurrection.⁵⁹² The ancient Greek myths make it clear that only the greatest of heroes (e.g., Hercules, Odysseus, Theseus, Orpheus) could descend into Hades and return. Hinduism does not have the concept of resurrection, but rather reincarnation as a different being/person. Islam’s form of the afterlife is essentially the same as that found in Greek mythology—with Paradise and Hell corresponding to the Elysium Fields and Tartarus.

5.4.1.1.4. The Biblical teaching about the resurrection of all mankind, some to glory and some to dishonour, is a great differentiator of Christianity from all other religions. It is the hope of the Christian life (1 Cor 15.19).

5.4.2. *Reach* – The scope of the resurrection includes the multitudes of the dead.

5.4.2.1. How many were to be raised from the dead?

5.4.2.2. The ESV text says ‘many’ which may be misinterpreted as not all. The NIV has a better translation with ‘multitudes’; which means that a great number will be raised, and can include all the dead.

5.4.2.3. The point of the passage is not that *some* will be raised from the dead and others will not be. The point is that the resurrection will include a vast number of people.

5.4.2.4. Jesus alludes to this verse in John 5.28, 29, and uses ‘all’.

5.4.3. *Rift* – All the dead will be raised to be divided into two (and only two) separate groups of those who are raised.

5.4.3.1. Two categories of resurrected are mentioned in this verse.

5.4.3.2. The implication is, based on what is taught in the NT by Jesus (Jn 5.29) and Paul (Acts 24.15), that believers in Jesus and unbelievers will be resurrected into two separate categories.

5.4.4. *Results* – The results of the resurrection are rewards and retribution.

5.4.4.1. Believers will rise to enjoy everlasting life in their new bodies and will reign with Christ (Rev 20.4–6).

5.4.4.1.1. The phrase ‘everlasting life’ is used here for the first time in the OT

5.4.4.1.2. It was translated into the Greek OT (the Septuagint) and John uses the phrase (Jn 3.16).

5.4.4.1.3. The term ‘everlasting life’ does not refer merely to endless time, but includes a special quality of life—‘eternal life’ is a technical term meaning a glorified life. This is clear from the fact that unbelievers will also be raised to life. However, their life will not have the same quality as that of believers.

5.4.4.2. In contrast, unbelievers will face everlasting shame and contempt.

5.4.4.2.1. The Hebrew for ‘shame’ has an intense meaning more like ‘very ashamed’ or ‘disgraced’. This is compounded by being viewed with contempt or abhorrence—presumably by God and believers (Is 66.24) who will turn away in disgust.

5.4.4.2.2. Unbelievers will remain everlastingly before God, aware of their hardened hearts, knowing that they have scorned Christ and spurned life.

5.4.4.2.3. The punishment of unbelievers is implied in this verse. It isn’t until Jesus teaches about Hell that the extent of the punishment for

⁵⁹¹ ancientopedia.com/article/221/

⁵⁹² www.king-tut.org.uk/egyptian-mummies/egyptian-afterlife.htm

- unbelievers is revealed.
- 5.4.4.2.4. Since unbelievers will experience the resurrection as well as believers, this means that they will have an everlasting physical existence with physical torment (Mt 22.13).
- 5.4.5. *Run* – The resurrection will lead to everlasting destinies.
 - 5.4.5.1. The destiny of both groups is to be everlasting.
 - 5.4.5.2. At the resurrection, all persons will face either everlasting life or everlasting punishment.
 - 5.4.5.3. There will be no second chance after death, and there will be no change in the destinies determined before death.
- 5.5. What encouragement did this prophecy provide to Daniel and the Jews who read this book?
 - 5.5.1. Many Jews were going to suffer under tyrants, including Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Herod the Great. They would suffer loss of their possessions and loss of life.
 - 5.5.2. But they would sleep until the resurrection, and those who were true believers in the Messiah would be resurrected to eternal life—a better life (Heb 11.35).
 - 5.5.3. The hope of all Christian martyrs is that although this life may be cut short, they have an everlasting existence of joy before them.
 - 5.5.4. Any believing Jew reading this account during the 1st and 2nd centuries BC, and any Christian reading it today, can be encouraged by this promise—the persecutions they suffer are only for a moment and then they will be removed to experience great reward.
- 6. Who are the wise?
 - 6.1. The wise are those who turn (lead) many to righteousness.
 - 6.1.1. The parallel structure of the two parts of the verse has one part expanding on another, thus explaining the meaning of the former part with the latter part.
 - 6.1.2. The wise are the righteous ones who fear God (Prov 9.10) and believe in Jesus Christ—in the OT era, those who looked for his appearance as the Messianic Saviour; in the NT era, those who look back to his appearance and are looking forward to his second coming.
 - 6.1.3. They are wise because they accept truth on faith, even in the face of severe persecution.
 - 6.1.4. The wise undoubtedly includes godly teachers who help seekers understand and apply Scripture—“who turn many to righteousness”. However, the wise includes all believers in Christ who have true wisdom—the knowledge of truth—and who communicate the truth through word and action to friends, family, and neighbours, with the intention of showing them the way to repentance and salvation (James 5.20).
- 7. How will the wise be recognized?
 - 7.1. They will shine like the sun and stars in the expanse of the heavens (Mt 13.43).
 - 7.1.1. It could be that the resurrected believers will actually have a bright glow, like Jesus did when he was transfigured (Mt 17.2).
 - 7.1.2. However, the expression is probably figurative, meaning that they will be glorified (1 Cor 15.40, 43) in the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - 7.2. A glorious, everlasting (‘forever and ever’), future state awaits all God’s redeemed.
 - 7.3. Some suggest that since stars have different magnitudes that this verse teaches that everlasting rewards will vary. While, it does appear that the rewards of the saints will vary (Lk 19.12-26), this verse cannot be used to support that view—it reads into the analogy too much detail that is not intended.
- 8. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?
 - 8.1. *Remembrance* – God remembered his covenant with Israel.
 - 8.1.1. In the past, he was with his people whom he had called out as a nation. In spite of how the Gentile tyrants treated them, they were under his protective care.

- 8.1.2. In the same way, God remembers his covenant with the Church (the New Covenant in the blood of Christ) and watches over them. The politically correct ‘tolerant’ citizens, the hate-filled Islamic terrorists, the atheistic snobs, and the irreligious hedonists all wish for nothing less than the dismissal of Christ and the destruction of the Church. Yet God is watching over the Church.
- 8.1.3. In spite of persecutions against Christians—somewhere in the world one Christian is killed, on average, every three minutes—God remembers his people and delivers them from temporal persecutions either by ending the life of the persecutor or by taking his people into Glory.
- 8.2. *Resurrection* – The resurrection of believers is assured.
 - 8.2.1. Daniel assured the Jews with the promise that all the believers martyred in the tribulations under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Herod would be restored to life.
 - 8.2.2. This same promise is given to us. The next major event in the history of redemption is the return of Christ and the resurrection of all the dead.
 - 8.2.3. Since death is called sleep, as believers we should not be afraid to face death. We look forward to sleeping and do not fear it believing that we will awaken refreshed. So, we should look forward to the sleep (of death) which will allow us to shed our decaying mortal frames (Phil 1.23), believing that we will awaken to an everlasting refreshment.
- 8.3. *Reward* – Believers will not only be raised from the dead, but also rewarded.
 - 8.3.1. All the dead will be raised and given new bodies (Jn 5.28-29).
 - 8.3.2. Unbelievers, with their new bodies, will be consigned to endless physical torment (Jn 5.29). Jesus provides a scary summary of the consequences of punishment in Hell—weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 22.13; Mt 24.51). Since the Bible states clearly that there will be a general resurrection of all men, the punishment of unbelievers will include everlasting physical pain. Anyone who has had an abscessed tooth knows that the pain is severe enough to make anyone cry. Such pain is only a small hint of what Jesus means when he speaks of the punishment that will be meted out on any who do not sincerely repent of their sins and believe in his death as a covering for them. This reality should encourage each unbeliever to flee from the wrath which is coming and should compel us to plead earnestly with God to convert them.
 - 8.3.3. Believers, those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev 13.8), will be given new glorified (1 Cor 15.44) bodies—infused with *real* life that exceeds anything that we can conceive of today—and will dwell everlastingly in immortality (1 Cor 15.53, 54). We cannot fathom how different our resurrected physical bodies will be from our current bodies. C. S. Lewis provides a hint of what they might be like when he describes a bus tour to Heaven, “I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright I saw them while they were still very distant. ... The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they had crushed the grass and scattered the dew. Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh.”⁵⁹³
- 8.4. *Respected* – Those who teach about the way of eternal life, are the wise ones respected by God.
 - 8.4.1. The world respects the wrong things. A Harris poll survey⁵⁹⁴ showed that the most admired professions in the US were: fire fighter (1), doctor (2), nurse (3), scientist (4), teacher (5), military officer (6), police officer (7), clergyman (8), farmer (9), and engineer (10).
 - 8.4.2. From God’s perspective, the number one profession belongs to the professors of the true religion who lead many to Christ. They will shine gloriously forever in the

⁵⁹³ C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Touchstone, 1974), pp. 30-31.

⁵⁹⁴ Tom Van Riper, "America's Most Admired Professions," *Forbes*, 2006-07-28; www.forbes.com/2006/07/28/leadership-careers-jobs-cx_tvr_0728admired.html

firmament of Heaven.

- 8.4.3. If believers really understood God's priorities, we would be less caught up with worldly ambitions and would turn the world upside down (Acts 17.6) for Christ.

Sealed (Dan 12.4)

1. What was Daniel to do with the prophecy he had received?
 - 1.1. Shut up the words and seal the scroll.
 - 1.1.1. The words of the prophetic vision (Dan 11.2-12.3) had concluded and were to be shut up and sealed.
 - 1.1.2. However, the angel (probably Gabriel; Dan 9.21; Dan 10.5-6) may be speaking not only of these specific words, but also of the entire book of Daniel since he refers the scroll on which the book would have been written.
 - 1.2. The instruction to *shut up* the words and *seal* the scroll may be made up of two synonymous clauses. However, they may also refer to two parts of an official action.
 - 1.2.1. Daniel was to complete the writing of the book (e.g., the remainder of chapter 12) and then attach his official seal to it and store it in the archives to be preserved for the future (compare with, Dan 8.26).
 - 1.2.2. The purpose was to preserve the scroll for the future in a safe manner as a valued treasure (Dan 12.9), which could not be tampered with or changed.
 - 1.2.3. Normal procedure would have been to make available a copy of official documents for immediate use, while the official copy was stored safely in the archives.
 - 1.2.4. References to this process may be found in Isaiah 8.16 and Jeremiah 32.9-14. The two copies of the Ten Commandments (Ex 31.18; Ex 32.15; Ex 34.4) may also be an example of this; although in this case it could be that one copy was considered to be God's and the other the peoples'.
 - 1.3. This instruction does not mean that the book was to be kept hidden as a secret until the end of time.
 - 1.3.1. This is demonstrated by the fact that the book was translated into Greek sometime in 2nd century before Christ.
 - 1.3.2. In addition, a copy of the book of Daniel was shown to Alexander the Great when he came to Jerusalem, to show him that God had prophesied about his arrival in Jerusalem.⁵⁹⁵
2. What is the 'time of the end' spoken of in this verse?
 - 2.1. There are two primary possibilities:
 - 2.1.1. The end of the world, when Jesus will return
 - 2.1.2. The end of the Jewish age, at the time of the incarnation of Jesus, when all the events (other than the final resurrection mentioned in verses 2 and 3) recorded in the vision will have been fulfilled.
 - 2.2. This account was written specifically to provide guidance and hope to the Jews from the time of Daniel to the arrival of the Messiah. Therefore, the immediate 'time of the end' refers to the end of the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod and Titus.
 - 2.2.1. The time of the end, in this verse, is likely referring to the end of the OT Jewish economy.
 - 2.2.2. We have noted throughout our study of Daniel that we are now living in the last days.
 - 2.2.3. As Calvin said, '[The] whole New Testament time, from the point that Christ appeared to us with the preaching of his gospel even to the Day of Judgement, is designated by "the last hour", the "last times", "the last days"'.⁵⁹⁶
 - 2.3. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that since we are living in the 'time of the end',

⁵⁹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* (translated by William Whiston), book 11, chapter 8; www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-11.htm

⁵⁹⁶ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), book 4.8.7, p. 1155.

the words of this prophecy also have general value and application to our age—particularly that God watches over his people through all generations and provides for their welfare in the face of persecutors.

3. What were to be the indicators that the end of the age had arrived?
 - 3.1. Many would be running to and fro and there would be an increase in knowledge.
 - 3.2. Many interpreters today, especially of the dispensationalist and premillennial persuasion, interpret this as a speaking of our day in which there has been a substantial increase in travel facilitated by ships, trains, automobiles, and airplanes; and an increase in knowledge associated first with the printing press and then with additional media including the internet.
 - 3.3. However, the second part of the verse could have as easily been speaking of the time of the Roman Empire. Travel in the Roman Empire was considerably more available and efficient than at any previous time, and there was a vastly increased outpouring of publications, including: literature, history, civics, science, and medicine. Thus, if the passage is speaking of increased travel and general knowledge, then it could be applied to the time of the Messiah, consistent with how we have interpreted the prophecies in Daniel, and need not speak of our present, or an hypothesized future period.
 - 3.4. However, the statement probably has nothing to do with an increase of travel and general knowledge. Rather it likely deals with an increased understanding of the application of the OT prophecies, and specifically those in Daniel.
 - 3.4.1. The phrase ‘run to and fro’ comes from a single Hebrew word (רץ) and has been translated in various ways. A few suggestions include:
 - 3.4.1.1. Greek (Theodotion) “until many are taught and knowledge is fulfilled”.
 - 3.4.1.2. Greek Septuagint (LXX) “until man are left behind and the earth is filled with righteousness”.
 - 3.4.1.3. Calvin: “many shall investigate”.⁵⁹⁷
 - 3.4.1.4. Leupold: “diligently peruse” knowledge, reading and rereading, checking and pondering.⁵⁹⁸
 - 3.4.1.5. Young: “travelling about in order to discover knowledge”.⁵⁹⁹
 - 3.4.1.6. Mauro: “[T]he worldwide activity in spreading the truth of the gospel.”⁶⁰⁰
 - 3.4.2. Usage in other parts of the OT gives the idea of seeking knowledge (2 Sam 24.2 [‘go’]; 2 Chron 16.9; Jer 5.1; Amos 8.12; Zech 4.10 [‘range’]), not necessarily by travelling about.
 - 3.4.3. In addition, there is an article (‘the’) before the word ‘knowledge’ in the Hebrew. This seems to indicate that a particular kind of knowledge (‘the knowledge’) is being considered, and not a general increase in knowledge.
 - 3.4.4. The idea that seems to be expressed here is that at the time of the end there will be an intense search to understand the meaning and application of the prophecies which are included in the book of Daniel, and especially in Daniel 11.2-12.3. Jesus reinforces this idea when he states “Let the reader understand” (Mt 24.15), after he alludes to Daniel’s prophecy.
 - 3.4.5. A possible way to translate this phrase is “Many shall seek diligently to understand and the knowledge [of these events] shall increase.” As the events unfolded through the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod and Titus, the meaning of the prophecy would become clearer and the Jewish readers of Daniel would know that the time of the Messiah, and the end of the Jewish era, was near.
4. What are some lessons that we can derive from this verse?

⁵⁹⁷ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*; www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25.vii.vi.html

⁵⁹⁸ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961). pp. 534-535.

⁵⁹⁹ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel – A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 258.

⁶⁰⁰ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

- 4.1. *Comfort* – Even though the Jews in Daniel’s day, and following, could not have fully understood his prophecies, they were able to derive comfort from them.
 - 4.1.1. They found in them the promise of deliverance for the righteous—if not in their lifetimes, then in the resurrection.
 - 4.1.2. In the same way we can derive comfort from knowing that God is faithful to his covenanted promises. The example of his fulfilling history exactly as he had decreed and declared, from the decree of Cyrus to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, provides us with a great assurance that God knows what he is doing and is working all things out according to the purpose of his will, for our good, and for his glory.
- 4.2. *Consultation* – Real knowledge comes from consulting the Scriptures.
 - 4.2.1. Anyone who wishes to increase his knowledge must make an effort to diligently study the Bible.
 - 4.2.2. The study of other disciplines (from history to science) has some (considerable) value for living in this world. But for living in the next world, the consultation of the sacred texts is of far more importance.
 - 4.2.3. Eternity can now only be understood through the eyeglasses of God’s Word—not in a particle of sand, as William Blake claimed.
- 4.3. *Clarity* – All will be revealed in God’s time, since ‘truth is the daughter of time’.
 - 4.3.1. As Francis Bacon (1561-1626) said in one of his philosophical works, “For rightly is truth called the daughter of time, not of authority. It is no wonder therefore if those enchantments of antiquity and authority and consent have so bound up men's powers that they have been made impotent (like persons bewitched) to accompany with the nature of things.”⁶⁰¹ While we do not agree completely with his statement, since God speaks truth with authority, his point is that truth is always vindicated by time—as a popular saying goes, ‘time will tell’. Human authority, tradition, and popular opinion may declare certain things to be fact, but time proves whether or not they are true. For example,
 - 4.3.1.1. Evolution is declared to be a fact by the scientific establishment. As time has passed since the publication of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), the concept of increasing genetic and informational complexity through mutation and natural selection has become increasingly implausible. It is only a matter of time before Evolution is dismissed as a great myth and its proponents as charlatans.
 - 4.3.1.2. Anthropogenic global warming is declared by most politicians and much of the popular media to be a fact. All it will take is a major change in the solar cycle and associated ‘solar winds’ to debunk this silly fetish.
 - 4.3.1.3. It is claimed (if not rationally, then by behaviour) that governments can borrow and spend indefinitely to provide ‘entitlements’ to their constituents. Once the debt-burden crushes the populace, reality will smack politicians and their naïve supporters on the head with a ton of devalued banknotes.
 - 4.3.2. So it is with God’s truth. Scoffers in the last days will scoff (2 Pt 3.3) at the truths of God. Yet God will have the last laugh (Ps 2.4) when all that he has declared in his word (whether speaking of the past or the future) will be unequivocally shown to be absolutely true. Ultimately, God’s truthfulness will be vindicated at end of time.

Summation Sequence (Dan 12.5-13)

1. Who joined the angel who had been speaking with Daniel?
 - 1.1. Two ‘others’—presumably angels—joined the first angel who had been speaking with Daniel.
 - 1.1.1. The same angel (compare, Dan 10.5 with Dan 12.7) spoke to Daniel from 10.5 through to this point in the narrative, and continues to provide the explanation until the end of

⁶⁰¹ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon – True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature*, aphorism 84; 84; www.constitution.org/bacon/nov_org.htm

this chapter.

- 1.2. Why did they join the first angel?
 - 1.2.1. The simplest explanation seems to be that they appeared as witnesses (Dt 19.15) to a solemn oath that would be taken by the angel ('man') dressed in linen (7).
 - 1.2.1.1. Some object to this idea since they claim that witnesses to oaths were only required in settings related to criminal charges. However, this is not the case (Mt 18.15-16).
 - 1.2.1.2. Some claim that if the speaker were Christ and not Gabriel, then Christ would not need witnesses to his words. However, Jesus does invoke witnesses to validate his words (Jn 5.30-47). In addition, John indicates that Jesus is vindicated by witnesses (1 Jn 5.6-9).
- 1.3. Where did they appear?
 - 1.3.1. They appeared standing on either side of the stream, with the first angel (Gabriel?) hovering above the waters of the stream (6).
 - 1.3.2. The stream in this instance is a tributary of the Tigris (Dan 10.4), which flowed below the mound on which the citadel of Susa was built; although a generic term is used, which is often used to refer to the Nile and its tributaries, and not the normal name for the Tigris.
 - 1.3.3. Why did they appear on either side of the stream?
 - 1.3.3.1. A number of fanciful suggestions have been given, for example, they were separated so that they couldn't whisper to one another, or to form a triangle as a symbol of the Trinity.
 - 1.3.3.2. A possible explanation, based on the symbol of waters representing the nations (Ps 29.10; Is 17.13) might be that they were ready to go in different directions throughout the world to carry out their duties.
2. Who made the enquiry, and of whom?
 - 2.1. Probably one of the other angels made the query of the 'man' clothed in linen.
 - 2.1.1. The Hebrew reads, 'and he said'; it does not say, 'and someone said' or 'and one of them said'. So, some suggest that it was the angel above the water who spoke, to a fourth person not yet identified.
 - 2.1.2. However, it was likely one of the other angels who spoke to Gabriel.
3. Why did he make the query?
 - 3.1. Not because the angels were curious. The revelation was not to inform them, but to provide additional information for Daniel and the Jews.
 - 3.2. The angel asked the question on Daniel's behalf, to give him more insight. Daniel may have been overwhelmed by what had been revealed to this point and may not have thought to ask for additional information.
4. What was the query?
 - 4.1. To determine how long it would be before these wonders were fulfilled.
 - 4.1.1. The Hebrew reads, 'until when ends the wonders' the translators supply the words 'will/shall it be'.
 - 4.1.2. The supplied words change, somewhat, the sense from the *duration* of the period to when would be the *termination* of the period. The question seems to be focusing on the duration of the time of trouble (Dan 12.1), rather than on when the time of trouble would end.
 - 4.1.3. The duration is what is supplied, in the answer in the subsequent verses (7, 11).
 - 4.2. Why is the time of trouble called 'the wonders'?
 - 4.2.1. It could also be translated as 'unusual', 'extraordinary', or 'astonishing'.
 - 4.2.2. The time of trouble would be so astonishing because of what God would allow to

- happen to his people, city, and the Temple.
- 4.3. The query is asking about the same period that is referred to in Daniel 7.25, and by Jesus as the ‘days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written’ (Lk 21.21-22)—in other words the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This period would be characterized by such an astonishingly severe distress that it would be necessary to shorten it or no human being would be saved (survive) (Mt 24.22).
5. How did the ‘man’ (angel) clothed in linen respond?
- 5.1. He raised both his hands and swore an oath.
- 5.2. Why did he raise both hands?
- 5.2.1. Raising a hand to heaven is a symbol of telling the truth when taking an oath (Gen 14.22; Dt 32.40; Rev 10.5, 6).
- 5.2.2. Apparently, he raised both hands because the oath was of the most solemn nature, and he was giving the strongest assurance that what he would say was true—it is akin to someone saying he will swear on a ‘stack of Bibles’.
- 5.3. How did he reinforce the truthfulness of his oath?
- 5.3.1. By swearing by the eternal God.
- 5.4. This verse demonstrates that taking oaths in God’s name is proper, in spite of an incorrect interpretation many place on Matthew 5.33-37 and James 5.12. If God himself (Gen 24.7; Ps 110.4; Heb 6.16, 17), a holy angel, and the apostles (Rom 9.1; 2 Cor 1.23; Gal 1.20; 1 Thess 2.5; 1 Thess 5.27) can swear oaths, then certainly Christians can, and should, swear oaths under the right conditions:
- 5.4.1. What is the implication of people not taking an oath (or making a promise) in God’s name? When people do not take oath in God’s name but promise to tell the truth:
- 5.4.1.1. They have to substitute something for God’s name, either a created object or nothing.
- 5.4.1.2. If their oath (or promise) refers to any created object, that is idolatry (Josh 23.7; Mt 5.34-36).
- 5.4.1.3. If nothing is referenced in the oath (or promise), it is equivalent to saying that the oath (or promise) is based on the person’s own veracity. If it is based on his own veracity, this is equivalent to the person setting himself in the place of God, which also is idolatry.
- 5.4.2. When is it proper to take an oath?
- 5.4.2.1. “A lawful oath is part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth ... The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear and therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence: therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred (Mt 5.34, 37). ... [i]t is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority.”⁶⁰²
6. When would these things be fulfilled? (7, 11)
- 6.1. The time (i.e., date) of the fulfillment is not actually being addressed in this passage. Rather, it is the *duration* of the time of trouble (1).
- 6.2. Daniel 7.25 refers to the same duration of ‘a time, times, and half a time’. So we should be consistent in our interpretation and application of the reference. When we studied 7.23-27 we noted that the events prophesied dealt with the Roman Empire, and in particular appeared to refer specifically to Titus and the conquest of Galilee and siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

⁶⁰² “Of Lawful Oaths and Vows,” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 22, paragraphs 1- 3.
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- 6.3. The reference to the ‘the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away’ (11) indicates that this prophecy is dealing with the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The dispensationalist hypothesis that there will be a future Jewish temple in which animal sacrifices will be restored is a blasphemy that denies the sufficiency of the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb 7.27; Heb 9.12, 26; Heb 10.5, 10, 14).
- 6.4. The three-and-a-half years referred to here (7) and in Dan 7.25, cover the period from May, 67 AD to September, 70 AD.
- 6.4.1. The Roman armies first approached Jerusalem in late 66 AD, after a Jewish revolt in Caesarea. For reasons that are hard to determine, they withdrew towards the coast and were ambushed by Jewish rebels—an attack that shocked the Romans.⁶⁰³
- 6.4.2. Nero, in response, sent Vespasian (Titus) to crush the Jewish rebellion, and Jerusalem was put under siege and finally fell in the late summer of 70 AD.
- 6.4.3. The siege of Jerusalem is reported to have occurred from May 67 AD to September 70 AD. From May 1st, 67 AD to September 30th, 70 AD is three years and half years. However, the siege didn’t coincide with these exact terminal dates. The three and half years in Daniel 7.25 (and Dan 12.7) is likely a rounded figure to the nearest half-year.
- 6.5. Verse 11 speaks of 1,290 days.
- 6.5.1. This may be a prophecy of the exact number of days from the first arrival of the Roman armies in Galilee (the *abomination of desolation*; Dan 9.27) to the end of the daily sacrifice. But it is more likely a round number based on an elapsed 43 months (of 30 days)—42 months would be 3.5 years, but 43 months may be giving a more exact indication of the duration of the Roman occupation until the destruction of the city.
- 6.5.2. If the Roman armies arrived near Jerusalem on November 9th, 66 AD and the daily sacrifice ended on July 14, 70 AD,⁶⁰⁴ that covers a period of ~1,340 days or ~45 months. This does not seem to fit with the prophecy. However, it is possible that the time is referring to the number of 30-day months *between* the two events—without considering the partial months on either side. If this is the case, then 43 *full* months elapsed between the two events.⁶⁰⁵
- 6.6. One objection that is raised against this interpretation, is that verse 11 refers to the regular burnt offering being abolished *before* the abomination that makes desolate was set up.
- 6.6.1. Based on the interpretation of the duration we have been considering, the order is reversed. The abomination that makes desolate (the arrival Roman armies) preceded the removal of the daily sacrifice.
- 6.6.2. However, it has been pointed out that the form of the verbs in this verse do not indicate a sequence of events. All that is mentioned is the elapsed time between the two events—not the chronology of the events.⁶⁰⁶
- 6.7. Many have speculated about the significance of the numbers in this chapter.
- 6.7.1. For example, one writer has suggested that the numbers (1290 and 1335) are Pythagorean numbers, representing geometric shapes, which in combination with the significant numbers 7 and 70, are symbolic, not historical.⁶⁰⁷
- 6.7.2. Others (e.g., Seventh Day Adventists) have suggested that the duration of these periods started in 508 AD with Clovis’ victory over the Arian Visigoths⁶⁰⁸ or at some other date between the destruction of Jerusalem and our day.
- 6.7.3. Dispensationalist put the fulfillment of these time periods in our future.
- 6.7.4. The occurrence of three-and-a-half years throughout Scripture (Dan 7.25; Rev 11.2, 3;

⁶⁰³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish-Roman_War

⁶⁰⁴ Jona Lendering, *Chronology of the Jewish War, 66-70*; www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish_wars/chrono66.html

⁶⁰⁵ Refer to the previous notes on 7.25, above, for a possible way of understanding the three-and-a-half years.

⁶⁰⁶ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation -- A Study of the Last Two Visions of Daniel, and of the Olivet Discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 1921; www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1921_mauro_seventy-weeks.html

⁶⁰⁷ S. F. Mathews, “The Numbers in Daniel 12:11-12: Rounded Pythagorean Plane Numbers?” *CBQ*, 63 (2001), 630-46.

⁶⁰⁸ Alberto R. Timm, *The 1,290 and 1,335 Days of Daniel 12.1-13*, [2002-06-05]; biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/daniel12.htm

Rev 12.6, 14; Rev 13.5) may have a symbolic meaning—i.e., half of seven a ‘complete’ period. However, this does not mean that it cannot also be fulfilled in actual history. For example, the drought at the time of Elijah was a judgement on Israel which lasted three-and-a-half years (1 Ki 17-18; Lk 4.25; James 5.17). Similarly, God created the universe over a literal six days, and rested on the seventh, to establish a pattern for man’s work and rest temporally and everlastingly (Heb 4.9).

7. What was to happen to the holy people? (7)
 - 7.1. The ‘holy people’ refers to Israel as a nation, set apart by covenant. The power of the holy people would be completely shattered (broken). Thus, the complete destruction of the Jewish nation is prophesied.
 - 7.2. What happened to Israel after the destruction of Jerusalem?
 - 7.2.1. Jesus prophesied that after the destruction Jerusalem the Jews would be taken into captivity as slaves (Lk 21.24). The Hebrew word (שָׁדָד) which is translated ‘shattered’, may refer to this scattering (dispersal).
 - 7.2.2. The conquest of Judea by the Romans and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD resulted in a great dispersion of the Jewish population throughout the world. Many were dispersed as slaves. It is likely that the number of Jews left in Judea was less than the population of Jews dispersed from the territory. Jews became a minority in their former land.⁶⁰⁹
 - 7.3. Jesus and Paul teach that the Jews (as a nation) had their chance to receive Jesus as the Messiah while he was on earth. If they rejected him they would no longer be considered the people of God, would be cut off, and would be treated as pagans. For example:
 - 7.3.1. Jesus says: “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt 8.11-12)
 - 7.3.2. In the *Parable of Two Sons* and *Parable of the Tenants* (Mt 21.28-46), Jesus says: “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.” (43)
 - 7.3.3. The *Parable of Fig Tree* (Lk 13.6-9) says: “cut it down.” (9)
 - 7.3.4. Jesus cursed the fig tree (Mt 21.18-22), speaking of the Jews (see, Hos 9.10), and said “May you never bear fruit again!” (19)
 - 7.3.5. In the *Seven Woes* of Matthew 23.1-39, Jesus appeals to Jerusalem to believe and then says: “your house is left to you desolate.” (38)
 - 7.3.6. In 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess 2.14-16) Paul indicates that the Jewish generation which rejected the Messiah was the last generation of Jews. Because of their rejection of the Messiah, “God’s wrath has come upon them at last! [or *fully*].”
 - 7.3.7. When Paul was in Corinth the Jews opposed him and became abusive, and after shaking his clothes in protest he said “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” (Acts 18.6)
- Jesus makes it clear that the time of his preaching is the Jews’ hour. This indicates, that if they rejected him, which they did (see, Jn 1.11), he would reject them as a nation. Paul also indicates that the Jews, as a nation, had had their chance.
- 7.4. The destruction of Jerusalem is a clear sign that God has stopped dealing with the Jews as a nation. This of course does not mean that individual Jews cannot come to Christ in the same way any other sinner can turn to him for salvation (e.g., Mt 23.39; 2 Cor 3.14-16; Eph 2.11-18).
- 7.5. The NT Church, called out from many nations and marked by baptism, has replaced the OT Church composed essentially of a single nation, marked with circumcision. Some of the evidence

⁶⁰⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora

that supports this statement includes the following:

- 7.5.1. The Abrahamic Covenant is not a promise for the physical nation of Israel—it is a promise for the spiritual seed of Abraham (Rom 3.29-30; Rom 4.13-16; Gal 3.7-9).
 - 7.5.2. Out of all the nations on earth, the Jews were to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex 19.6) Peter and John apply similar words to the NT Church:
 - 7.5.2.1. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” (1 Pt 2.9)
 - 7.5.2.2. “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins [and thus made us a holy nation] by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father...” (Rev 1.5-6)
- It is evident from these allusions to Exodus 19.6, that Peter and John viewed the NT Church as the continuation of the Jewish nation. The NT Church has replaced the Jewish nation as the chosen ‘nation’.
- 7.5.3. Stephen refers to the covenant made with Abraham as “the covenant of circumcision” (Acts 7.8). But Paul tells us that circumcision is now no longer an essential part of the Covenant (Rom 2.28-29; 1 Cor 7.19; Gal 5.6; Gal 6.15). The covenant made with Abraham has not been annulled; but circumcision, the distinctive ‘badge’ of the Jews (Eph 2.11) in the OT, has been replaced by baptism in the NT (Acts 2.38; Col 2.11-12). In the NT economy, Gentiles as well as Jews (Gal 3.28) are among the Israel of God (Gal 6.15-16). To suggest that those marked with circumcision continue to have a special place in God’s plans seems to invalidate the importance of changing the sign of the Covenant.
 - 7.5.4. Israel is God’s nation forever, in the same sense that other aspects of the covenant are eternal in Christ. For example, the (Jewish) Sabbath (Ex 31.16-17), bread (Lev 24.8), salt (Num 18.19), the priesthood (Num 25.13), the Temple (1 Kings 8.13; 1 Chron 23.25), the sacrificial system (Ex 29.42.), the kingly line (2 Sam 23.5), circumcision (Gen 17.13), and the land (1 Chron 16.16-18) are all aspects of the ‘Jewish’ covenant which are referred to as everlasting. In Christ, these aspects of the old covenant have been changed or brought to their fulfillment (Heb chapters 4-9). With the coming of Christ, the imperfect types and shadows of the OT economy have been replaced with their spiritual and eternal antitypes. So also, Israel as a nation is the OT counterpart of the Church in the NT. Israel is fulfilled in the Church.

8. What time period is introduced in verse 12?

- 8.1. Anyone who reaches the end of 1,335 days is blessed.
- 8.2. This adds 45 days (or 1.5 months) beyond the 1,290 days of verse 11.
- 8.3. It is possible that this 45 days is a reference to the time between the end of the daily sacrifices (July 14) and the final destruction of the city and the end of the siege (Sept 2).⁶¹⁰ The exact dates, based on Josephus’s writings are difficult to determine.
- 8.4. How surviving through this 45 day portion of the siege could be a blessing is not obvious from the text. However, when Titus entered the city he freed those who had been held captive during the siege.⁶¹¹
- 8.5. It may be that the vision in Daniel is foreseeing the perseverance that is expected of the saints in the face of persecution (Mt 24.13) and speaking of an extraordinary blessing on those who endure to the end.

9. What would be an outcome of the time of trouble? (10)

- 9.1. The first part of this verse appears to refer to the same type of purification as is mentioned in Daniel 11.35. Thus, the purification, being made white (spotless), and being refined is speaking of the saints (believers in the coming Messiah) facing persecution and death.

⁶¹⁰ Jona Lendering, *Chronology of the Jewish War*, 66-70; www.livius.org/ja-in/jewish_wars/chrono66.html

⁶¹¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 6, “Containing the Interval of about one Month. From the Great Extremity to which the Jews Were Reduced to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus”; chapter 9, paragraph 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/war-6.htm
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- 9.1.1. The troubles under Antiochus IV Epiphanes are the subject of Daniel 11.35.
- 9.1.2. The troubles brought about by the siege of Jerusalem, under Titus, are the subject of Daniel 12.10.
- 9.2. What would the wicked do when faced with extreme trouble?
 - 9.2.1. They would continue in their wickedness and refuse to repent.
 - 9.2.2. One event can affect people in different ways, for example, two non-Christian survivors from a plane crash will respond differently—one, though losing his family in the crash will see God’s hand in preserving him, repent of his sins, and devote his life to purposefully presenting Christ to the world; the other, while losing his family, will blame God, and will live out the rest of his pitiful life as an avowed atheist.
 - 9.2.3. From one perspective, it is unclear why men blame God and continue in their sins when faced with calamity, instead of seeing the troubles as a warning of worse to come on the Day of Judgement. We can only ask, “How can they be so stupid and not repent?”
 - 9.2.4. However, from a theological perspective it is clear, men in rebellion against God, love sin and are too full of pride to fall on their knees before God, their Creator (Rev 9.20–21; Rev 16.9, 11). Even in Hell, men will never be of a mind to repent but will always be yelling curses against God.
- 9.3. What reason is implied in this verse for why men do not repent?
 - 9.3.1. They are unwise, or fools, and cannot understand God’s truth and word (Ps 14.1).
 - 9.3.2. They suppress even what light of truth they have from the revelation about God in nature and darken their minds (Rom 1.18-31).
 - 9.3.3. Understanding comes through the fear (reverence) of God in faith (Ps 111.10).
- 9.4. This passage is not speaking directly about the days just prior to the return of Christ. It cannot be used to reject or defend a particular eschatological view. For example, it is inappropriate to use this passage to reject the postmillennial idea that society will get progressively better before Christ returns. Similarly, it is inappropriate to use this passage to defend the premillennial view that evil will escalate to unprecedented levels under the antichrist. Wickedness and godliness will both be present in all societies until the end of time (Gen 6.5; Mt 13.30; Rom 1.28-31; Rom 3.10)—each will wax and wane throughout history and around the globe, as the Holy Spirit works out God’s eternal plan of filling the eternal Kingdom with a great multitude that no man can number (Rev 7.9).
- 10. What was Daniel’s reaction to this revelation? (8)
 - 10.1. He could not understand the revelation and asked for clarification from the angel speaking with him.
 - 10.2. His use of the appellation ‘lord’ does not mean that we are to conclude that the speaker is Jesus (although it might be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus). Daniel uses a general term of respect (Gen 23.6, 11, 15), equivalent to ‘sir’ (Judges 6.13; Jn 4.11; Rev 7.14).
 - 10.2.1. He is likely addressing Gabriel, who was introduced in chapter 8 (16) and appears to be the one explaining the visions found in the remainder of the book (Dan 9.21).
 - 10.2.2. Gabriel next appeared about 530 years later when he carried the announcement of the births of John and Jesus (Lk 1.19, 26). It would be interesting to know what Gabriel thought when he delivered the message to Mary that she was to miraculously bear a son who would be the fulfillment of the prophetic messages he had delivered over 500 years prior to Daniel. He likely bowed in awe before God and praised him for how he had worked his providences to ensure that Jesus would be born during the reign of the king (Herod) who would slaughter many and die shortly thereafter with none to help (Dan 11.44-45).
 - 10.3. What does this tell us about Daniel?
 - 10.3.1. Daniel was a wise man—wiser than anyone in his day (Ezk 28.3)—yet he was challenged to understand the revelation contained in the vision. He was not so proud as to think that he could give the meaning of the revelation without assistance from

God. He understood the importance of asking God for wisdom so that he could understand his revelation (James 1.5; 1 Pt 1.10, 11).

- 10.3.2. We have the advantage of additional revelation, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the wisdom of over 2,000 years of careful interpretive study of Scripture. Yet there is still much speculation and perversion in how men interpret God's word. Like Daniel, when we approach the study of God's revelation, we need to come before it humbly, knowing that at times, it will be difficult for us to understand, we need to ask for wisdom, and we need to study and examine his revelation with great care (Acts 17.11).

11. Why was Daniel told to go his way? (9, 13)

- 11.1. The angel told Daniel to go (literal: "Go, Daniel") because the words are closed and sealed (4) until the time of the end.
- 11.2. This is not a word of censure (i.e., for asking for clarification) but rather a reminder to Daniel that a fuller explanation could not be provided until the events prophesied were fulfilled.
- 11.2.1. As the time of the end approached, the message would become increasingly clear to believers.
- 11.2.2. The basic meaning seems to be, "Don't try to understand these visions, you won't be able to until all is fulfilled."
- 11.3. What was the way that Daniel was to go?
- 11.3.1. To take his rest (compare, verse 2) until the end—i.e., to await the resurrection.
- 11.3.2. Daniel was at this point around 85 years old. Likely, he died shortly after receiving this prophecy.
- 11.3.3. However, the focus of this message from the angel, is not on death—i.e., the angel is not saying 'go away and die'.
- 11.3.4. The Hebrew word 'rest' (based on the same word that is at the root of Noah's name) used here includes the idea of cessation from labour. Daniel had lived a life of many challenges as he faithfully confronted paganism in high places. He is being given a message of encouragement, "Your work is done, take your rest now!" Daniel could now go to his everlasting rest (Ps 116.7).
- 11.4. What promises are given to Daniel by the angel?
- 11.4.1. He would stand at the end of days. He would experience the resurrection.
- 11.4.2. He would receive his allotted inheritance—with the implied promise being that his inheritance was to be eternal life in the kingdom of the Messiah of which he had prophesied starting with his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2.45).
- 11.4.3. While the words were currently closed up, it is implied that at the resurrection all would be explained to him and he would see how God had worked out the fulfillment of these prophecies.

12. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section?

- 12.1. *Work* – Daniel continued his work for the Lord until his dying breath, serving in the administrations of a series of pagan kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus.
- 12.1.1. It was only when his work was complete that he could rest.
- 12.1.2. He is an example of the dedicated perseverance, which should be displayed by all Christians.
- 12.1.3. Those who are faithful to the end, in their service for God, will "shine like the brightness of the sky above ... like the stars forever and ever" (3).
- 12.2. *Watch* – Daniel was given great visions and deep insight. Yet he was told that he could not have a full explanation of their meaning. He would have to watch and see what God would do, in order to understand what God had planned to do.
- 12.2.1. There is a warning in this for all the 'date-setters' or our age who try to read into

contemporary events the arrival of the antichrist, signs of the rapture, or the establishment of a millennial kingdom. The words from the angel, to Daniel, that he should go his way, should be a loud word of rebuke to the ‘prophets’ of our age, “Stop!”

- 12.2.2. We need to listen to the clear prophecies of Scripture (Christ will return, there will be a resurrection, a Day of Judgement is coming), watch for their fulfillment in God’s time, and marvel as we see him work them out.
- 12.3. *Wait* – Daniel was to wait with faith, expectation, hope, and patience for the coming Messiah. So, we also are to wait with expectation, faith, and patience for the return of Christ.
- 13. What else do we know about Daniel that is not recorded in the Book of Daniel?
 - 13.1. When we began this study of Daniel, we noted that the only place in the Bible that he is mentioned outside of the Book of Daniel is in Ezekiel (Ezk 14.14, 20; Ezk 28.3).
 - 13.1.1. He was considered by Ezekiel, his contemporary, to be one of the most righteous men to have ever lived and wiser than any other in his generation.
 - 13.2. There are three additions to the Book of Daniel in the Apocrypha.
 - 13.2.1. *Song of the Three Youths* or the *Prayer of Azariah* (i.e., Abednego)
 - 13.2.1.1. We considered this addition when we studied Daniel 3.19-30. It is inserted between verses 23 and 24 in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version of the OT. It includes an additional account about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
 - 13.2.1.2. It is primarily a prayer of acknowledging God’s justice in punishing Israel and a request for deliverance; and includes additional information about the heating of the furnace and descent of the Angel of the Lord.
 - 13.2.1.3. The original *King James Version* (1611) included this account in its appendix.
 - 13.2.2. *Susanna*
 - 13.2.2.1. In the Greek OT this account appears as a prologue to the book of Daniel.
 - 13.2.2.2. In the Vulgate this addition is included as chapter 13, this organization is followed by Roman Catholic translations (e.g., *Douay-Rheims*).
 - 13.2.2.3. The original *King James Version* included this account in its appendix.
 - 13.2.2.4. In this account a virtuous woman is accused of adultery by two Jewish elders who lusted after her. Since she would not consent to their wishes, so they concocted a story about her adulterous affair with a young man. Daniel as a youth, apparently before being taken into captivity, defends the woman by examining the account of each of the elders separately and showing by their inconsistent accounts that they were lying. The two men who had falsely accused the women were put to death.
 - 13.2.3. *Bel and the Dragon*
 - 13.2.3.1. Some believe that this account was originally written in Aramaic around the late second century BC and translated into Greek and included in the Septuagint. This addition was included in an appendix in the *King James Version* of the Bible.
 - 13.2.3.2. It consists of two related accounts:
 - 13.2.3.2.1. Cyrus worshipped a Babylon idol, named Bel. The king asked Daniel why he didn’t worship Bel. Daniel replied that he would only worship the true God and not idols. Cyrus asked Daniel if he thought that Bel wasn’t real since he ‘ate’ the daily sacrifices. Daniel told the king that the idol was only glass and brass. The king asked Bel’s priests to prove that the idol ate the sacrifices—if not they would die, if so, Daniel would die. So

the priests had the king present the sacrifice and then seal the doors of the temple of Bel. But they had a secret entrance under the sacrifice table where they could enter the chamber and consume the sacrifices. Daniel had his servants spread ashes throughout the temple. During the night the priests and their families came and ate the sacrifices. In the morning they came to the king and asked him to check the seal. When he opened the door and saw the empty table they praised Bel. But Daniel laughed and told the king to enter carefully and he would see all the footsteps. The secret door was then revealed to him and he killed all the priests of Bel.

- 13.2.3.2.2. There was also a dragon idol that the Babylonians worshipped. The king asked Daniel if this was also merely an image of brass. Daniel filled the idol's mouth with tar, fat and hair and blew up the dragon idol. The Babylonians accused the king of becoming a Jew and demanded that Daniel be handed over to them. Daniel was thrown into a lions' den for six days. A Jewish prophet, Habbacuc, was told by an angel to bring food to Daniel in the lions' den. The prophet told the angel that he had never been to Babylon and didn't know where the lions' den was. The angel then transported the prophet to the den where he delivered the food to Daniel. After Daniel was released from the den, the king threw in Daniel's accusers who were devoured by the lions.
- 13.3. There is nothing in these accounts that is inconsistent with Biblical theology, God's working miracles (e.g., protecting Daniel in a den of lions), or with the godly life of Daniel. However, they are 2nd century BC stories written by Jews living under Greek rule.
- 13.4. As we noted previously when we considered the *Song of the Three Youths*, the apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel are not included in Reformed Protestant translations of the Bible. We can summarize the reasons as follows:
 - 13.4.1. These accounts are not found in Hebrew manuscripts of the OT, and were not considered to be canonical by the Jews.
 - 13.4.2. Jesus appears to have endorsed the Hebrew canon, although he may have quoted from the Greek translation (at least the Gospel writers, have him quote from the Greek translation).
 - 13.4.3. No NT writer quotes from the Apocrypha.
 - 13.4.4. Early translators of the OT into Latin, e.g., Jerome (c 450 AD) rejected the Apocryphal books because no Hebrew version of these texts could be found. They eventually were accepted by the Church during the middle ages and added to the Vulgate.
 - 13.4.5. The Protestant Reformers rejected these books during the Reformation as lacking divine authority.
- 13.5. No extra-Biblical, contemporary, references to Daniel are known.
- 14. What are some summary lessons we can derive from the book and life of Daniel?
 - 14.1. *Providence* – God is in control of the nations and of all events that transpire on this earth.
 - 14.1.1. A key message of the book of Daniel—from God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar to the prophecies of his plans for the nations that follow, until the arrival of the supreme king Jesus Christ—is that God raises up and disposes the nations (Dan 2.21).
 - 14.1.2. As King Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod, and Titus fulfilled God's purposes, so also do kings, dictators, presidents, and prime ministers today.

- 14.1.3. God is working out his plan and redemptive purposes. His purposes are not arbitrary or capricious. They are directed to one primary goal and mission—to save a people for himself.
- 14.2. *Prophecy* – God’s word is accurate and trustworthy.
 - 14.2.1. If God says something, it is true. If he prophesies an event, it will transpire. If he promises something it will come to pass—provided the associated conditions he has set are met (e.g., obedience to his laws).
 - 14.2.2. The prophecies in this book describe precisely events as they actually unfolded in history.
 - 14.2.3. When God records history (e.g., in Genesis 1-11) his word is to be understood as truth.
 - 14.2.4. Secular history, whether derived from cosmology, geology, palaeontology, archaeology, or ancient writings, when rightly interpreted, will only ever confirm the Bible, never contradict it or disprove it.
 - 14.2.5. We can have absolute confidence in the Bible as God’s word.
- 14.3. *Power* – God can do anything; but contradict his own nature. He is all-powerful.
 - 14.3.1. Miracles are exceptional to us but not to God.
 - 14.3.2. We should not stumble over the miracles in Daniel—e.g., saving the three men from the furnace and Daniel from the mouths of lions. Preventing harm to them is a relatively insignificant control of nature compared with creating the universe, creating life, or raising someone from death to life.
- 14.4. *Perversion* – Idolatry is the natural course that all men follow if the Holy Spirit does not convert them.
 - 14.4.1. Idolatry can take many forms (physical or non-physical), since it is “adoration, reverence, or devotion to something other than God”.
 - 14.4.2. If God is not our primary focus and first priority (Mt 6.33), then anything that is put in his place is an idol.
 - 14.4.3. Idolatry is a pernicious evil that pervades all of man’s thinking and practice. Thus, the NT writers warn us to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10.14; 1 Jn 5.21).
- 14.5. *Punishment* – God punishes wickedness. There is a judgement to come, and God is the Judge (Ps 58.11; Ps 98.9).
 - 14.5.1. God cannot be trifled with, he holds all men accountable against the Ten Commandments, will judge men accordingly, and will mete out punishment for every breach of his holy law.
 - 14.5.2. All forms of false worship are especially displeasing to him because they are direct sins against him. Other sins (e.g., theft) are, first, sins against our fellow men and indirectly sins against God. False worship is a direct slap in the face of Almighty God.
 - 14.5.3. We can rest assured that any apparent escape from judgement is only temporary. God knows all mankind’s thoughts and actions and will bring all wickedness to account.
 - 14.5.4. The kingdoms of this world will be held accountable to God and judged. We know that no ‘*orbis unum*’ (one world) government will ever exist. God will not tolerate any supreme challenge against the kingdom of his Son—God will permit no unified kingdom to arise again, as did the first Babylonian empire that challenged God and was destroyed (Gen 11.1-9). And no single earthly kingdom will ever reach the heights of rebellion against God that the Neo-Babylonian empire did under Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon (and Rome in the image of Babylon) is the epitome of what man aspires to without God and it has been destroyed (Is 21.1-10; Rev 18.1-24).
 - 14.5.5. The proud and cruel enemies of the Church of Jesus Christ will certainly be judged and destroyed in God’s time, and the Church will rejoice (Rev 19.1-5).

- 14.5.6. We should rejoice in God's judgement of the nations because he is just in all his ways (Dt 32.4; Dan 4.37).
- 14.6. *Prayer* – Daniel was a man of prayer, who provides us with models for prayer. Our prayer should be like Daniel's and be:
 - 14.6.1. *Supplicating* – Our prayer should be based on a humble confession of our sins and unworthiness to receive any blessings from God.
 - 14.6.2. *Sustaining* – We should pray only for what is agreeable with the will of God.
 - 14.6.3. *Sacrificing* – Our prayer should be offered up as a spiritual sacrifice of worship.
 - 14.6.4. *Systematic* – We should learn from Daniel about discipline and regularity in prayer—for example, in his three-times-daily prayer (Dan 6.10).
- 14.7. *Provocation* – When the people of God fall into apostasy, they can expect to be chastised (Prov 3.11-12; Heb 12.6-11).
 - 14.7.1. Throughout Biblical history when the hearts of God's covenant people grew cold, he chastised them—examples include: the serpents in the wilderness, forty years of desert wandering, Babylonian Captivity, and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - 14.7.2. All the successes of the church's enemies are but a rod of chastisement in God's hand.
 - 14.7.3. We should then expect persecution in the Church in the West because of apostasy.
- 14.8. *Persecution* – God permits and wills the persecution of his people also when they are living godly lives and challenging the culture (Jn 15.20; 2 Tim 3.12; 1 Pt 4.12).
 - 14.8.1. One evidence of a professing Church is persecution (Mt 5.10-12). The more Christ is displayed in the lives of Christians the more there will be persecution against them.
 - 14.8.2. The very existence of Christianity provokes a pernicious reaction from evil men. In particular, God-haters despise:
 - 14.8.2.1. God's legal requirements, because men demand to be autonomous.
 - 14.8.2.2. Christ's claim to uniqueness, because men espouse human effort as the path to paradise.
 - 14.8.3. When we suffer because of righteousness we should rejoice (James 1.2) because this persecution reminds us that we are:
 - 14.8.3.1. Living lives that honour Christ. Only Christians suffer because of righteousness. We must be having an impact on society if people care enough to hate us for the sake of Christ (1 Pt 4.14, 16).
 - 14.8.3.2. Considered worthy to share in Christ's suffering (Phil 1.29; Acts 5.41) and the suffering of the prophets and apostles. This means that we are not weaklings but champions.
 - 14.8.4. Paul assures us (Rom 8.28) that *all* things (this includes persecution!) work together for good for those who are God's people. God accomplishes great good by allowing his people to suffer persecution, including:
 - 14.8.4.1. Spiritual growth in faith, and sanctification for his people, through suffering (1 Pt 1.7).
 - 14.8.4.2. Sifting out of the Church on earth those who are unfaithful hypocrites.
 - 14.8.4.3. Bearing witness to the world that faith in the true God overcomes all adversity.
 - 14.8.4.4. Storing up judgement on the persecutors of Christians.
 - 14.8.4.5. Bringing glory to God as he fits together all the events of history.
- 14.9. *Protection* – God protects his people and is especially caring of those who obey him under difficult, life threatening, situations.
 - 14.9.1. It might appear at times that God deserts his people. For example, when the three young men were thrown into the furnace, they may have thought that God had forsaken them. The miracle of their salvation from the fire and the presence of Christ with them in the fire, tells us that God is with his people in their infirmities,

- troubles, persecutions, trials and temptations.
- 14.9.2. This does not mean that every believer will be protected in every adverse circumstance in this life.
 - 14.9.2.1. God's purposes are deeper and larger than we can ever understand or imagine at this time, with our finite understanding.
 - 14.9.2.2. His purposes may include allowing us to be subjected to an apparently premature death.
 - 14.9.2.3. The protection of the three in the furnace is a promise that God will never leave us or abandon us (Josh 1.5; Ps 37.25; Is 41.10; Jn 14.18; Heb 13.5). He will be with us even through the valley of the shadow of death.
 - 14.10. *Prospect* – The resurrection of believers is assured.
 - 14.10.1. Daniel assured the Jews with the promise that all the believers martyred in the tribulations under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Herod would be restored to life.
 - 14.10.2. This same promise is given to us. The next major event in the history of redemption will be the return of Christ and the resurrection of all the dead.
 - 15. Daniel is *the* man who feared God (Prov 9.10). As a result, he was considered to be a righteous man of the caliber of Noah and Job (Ezk 14.14, 20), and wise beyond any of his era (Ezk 28.3). Our concluding prayer should be that God would grant us the grace to be like Daniel and that he would raise up Daniels in our day.

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