

Introduction to Daniel

The prophecy of Daniel is one of the most amazing books in the Bible. Its pages contain not only a record of one of the most godly men who has ever lived in any age, but also some of the most specific prophecies of future events included in the pages of the Bible.

Author

Daniel the prophet was a Palestinian Jew, born of Jewish nobility and perhaps even royal blood (1:3) around 625 B.C. He was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar's army and deported to Babylon around 605 B.C. as a part of the first Babylonian deportation. In Babylon he was chosen for training as a government official in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (2:48). Surpassing all of his contemporaries, he was promoted to a position of honor in the government of Nebuchadnezzar, and continued to play a role in the governments of two of the Medo Persian rulers who followed the Babylonians well into his senior years. Daniel is singled out by the Lord Himself for high praise as a man of unusual integrity and righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3).

That Daniel was the author of this prophecy is borne out by the mention of his authorship in the book itself (9:2; 10:2), the testimony of ancient tradition, and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself (Matthew 24:15, referring to the "abomination of desolation" mentioned in 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11).

Date

Few Biblical books (if any) have been so hotly contested as to the date of their writing as the prophecy of Daniel. The traditional date of around 535 B.C. has been called into question by both ancient skeptics and modern liberal scholars, who

reject the possibility of the long-range predictive prophecy which is so evident in Daniel's writings. But the book shows every indication of authenticity, and there are good reasons why the book MUST have been written at the traditional date of around 535 B.C.: (1) Ezekiel refers to Daniel three times (Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3); (2) Josephus records that Alexander the Great was shown the book of Daniel by the high priest when he came to Jerusalem in 333 B.C.; (3) A copy of Daniel's prophecy, believed by paleographic experts to have been copied before Maccabean days, was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls; and (4) the Septuagint translation (completed around 200 B.C., before the 165 B.C. date which has been suggested by critics for the book's authorship) included Daniel.

Message

The book of Daniel recounts the life and prophecies of Daniel for the benefit of the ancient Jewish people who were living in Babylonian captivity and for the benefit of all who would follow in the faith. Written at a time when Israel was being humiliated before foreign enemies, it predicts that Israel's days are not finished; that her Messiah would yet come, though he would be "cut off" (9:24-27); that His kingdom would one day fill the entire earth (2:34-35, 43-44); and that the saints would rule and reign with Israel's Messiah (7:21-22,27). In addition, the book of Daniel reveals that the Lord will use Gentile nations in the fulfillment of His plan. Daniel's prophecy demonstrates how the Lord commanded the respect of foreign rulers who may have originally thought He was too weak to deserve their respect or to deliver His people.

Outline

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Think About It: The fact that God could use an ancient prophet to provide an amazingly detailed account of the events to unfold for ages to come is clear evidence that the Lord is the source of Scripture and in control of the events of history.

“Daniel’s Captivity and Commitment”

Daniel 1:1-21

Q - When have you memorably felt the impact of peer pressure to conform to their wishes?

We have all felt the pressure of the crowd to do things we might not normally do without such pressure - and the pressure can intensify when we are away from home! Daniel is a man who knew how to deal with peer pressure - far from home!

I. Daniel Is Taken to Babylon 1:1-7

A. Nebuchadnezzar Captures Jerusalem 1:1-2

Q - Why would the Lord allow His “chosen people” Israel to be besieged and captured by a pagan king? He had assured Israel that, if they did not abide by the terms of His covenant with them (under Moses), they could be captured by enemies and deported from their land (Deuteronomy 28:63-64).

B. Daniel Is Chosen for Royal Service 1:3-7

Q - What were some of the things Daniel apparently had “going for him” as a youth? He was considered to be a young man “in whom was no defect, who [was] good looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king’s court” (v. 4).

Q - What was Nebuchadnezzar apparently trying to accomplish by his policies of educating Israeli youth and changing their names as he did? He was seeking to eliminate their identity with their nation and culture of origin and to get them

to identify with the “gods” of Babylon - so Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar, which probably means “may Bel protect his life.”

II. Daniel Proposes a Test 1:8-13

A. His Decision Not to Defile Himself 1:8

Q - Why do you think Daniel made the decision he did regarding the king's generous provisions? As a devout Jew he was committed to a kosher diet (Leviticus 11:1-47); he may have had reason to believe that parts of the king's diet had been offered to idol deities; and he wanted to resist the king's desire to conform him to Babylonian values and practices.

B. His Request of a Test Period 1:9-13

Q - What did Daniel's proposal of a test period demonstrate about Him? He was wise enough not to refuse to conform, which could have resulted in punishment or even death, and he was wise enough to propose an inoffensive alternative to open rebellion toward his captors and their king.

III. Daniel Passes the Test 1:14-16

A. The Test Is Conducted 1:14

Q - What complications could this test have brought about for Ashpenaz? As he observed in verse 10, he could have been killed for failing to carry out the king's instructions regarding the young men who were under his care.

B. The Test's Conclusion 1:15-16

Q - What did the test's results demonstrate about the

Lord's response to Daniel's bold commitment? The test demonstrated that the Lord had blessed His servants desire to refrain from defiling themselves with the king's choice food and the wine which he drank.

IV. Daniel's Is Promoted to Royal Service 1:17-21

A. His Promotion by God 1:17

Q - What encouragement does this verse offer for Christians challenged by academic pursuits? The Lord is well able to give knowledge in any and every area of learning to His people when they commit themselves to Him and His revealed word.

B. His Promotion by the King 1:18-21

Q - What did King Nebuchadnezzar's investigation demonstrate? King Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel and his three friends to be wiser and more knowledgeable by far than any of the other young men who were being prepared for service in his kingdom.

Think About It: Daniel prospered in a foreign environment because he committed himself fully to the Lord. What worked for Daniel will surely work for God's people today - in ANY environment.

Apply It: How does our commitment to the Lord and His word compare with that of Daniel and his three friends?

“Daniel and the Great Statue Dream” (Part One)

Daniel 2:1-24

Q - When have you wondered about the significance of a dream you have had?

Down through the centuries the Lord has sometimes revealed Himself and His truth to human beings by means of dreams, as He famously did, for example, to Jacob’s son Joseph. Sometimes His revelations have included dreams experienced by unbelievers. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream which made him wonder about its significance - and which became the stage for a revelation of the sovereign power of Daniel’s God!

I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream and Demand 2:1-13

A. Nebuchadnezzar Has a Dream 2:1-3

Q - Why should Nebuchadnezzar have become so troubled about his dreams? Believing, as he and other ancient persons did, that dreams were sometimes indications of things to come, Nebuchadnezzar was concerned about the possible significance of a dream which pictured an ominous fall.

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar do in his quest for an understanding of his dreams? He called in the “wise men” of his kingdom - the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans - to ask them for their assistance in understanding the significance of his dream.

B. Nebuchadnezzar Demands an Interpretation 2:4-13

Q - Why would Nebuchadnezzar have thought that his

magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and the Chaldeans might be able to recall and interpret his dream? The people he called on were known to deal in matters of the spirit world and he assumed that his dream might have been sent by some supernatural power with whom they claimed to be in contact.

Q - Were the Chaldeans being reasonable to insist that the king tell them his dream before interpreting it for him? It certainly appeared to them a reasonable request that they be told the content of the dream they were being asked to interpret.

Q - How did the Chaldeans attempt to convince the king that his request was an unreasonable request? They objected that no king had ever made such demands as he was making of them (with its serious consequences if they failed to meet his demands), and that no man on earth could possibly do what they were being asked to do.

Q - Why was the king so enraged that he decreed the death of his servants when they couldn't interpret his dream? He had assumed that his "wise men" would be able to connect with the spirit world (as they probably claimed they were able to do) for insight from their "gods" into both the content and the meaning of his dream.

II. Daniel's Request and Prayer 2:14-24

A. Daniel's Request of the King 2:14-16

Q - What do we learn about Daniel from his response to the king and his decree? As verse 14 reports, Daniel possessed discretion and discernment, so he requested that the king give him a little time to seek to respond appropriately to his request.

B. Daniel's Prayer to the Lord 2:17-23

Q - What resource did Daniel have in this crisis that most of the king's other servants did not have? Daniel (with his three friends) had a relationship with the Lord, the only true God - who knows all things and would be well-aware of both the dream and its meaning, because He was the one who sent the dream!

Q - What does verse 19 reveal as the Lord's response to the prayer of Daniel and his companions? It reveals that the Lord revealed the mystery regarding the dream's content and meaning in a night-time vision.

Q - What lessons can be learned from Daniel's prayer to the Lord in 2:20-23? Daniel's prayer teaches that, because He is the God who possesses wisdom and power, and because He sovereignly controls the affairs of human authorities, and He gives wisdom to men with the understanding He provides, He deserves to be thanked and praised for His revelation in response to the prayer of Daniel and his friends.

C. Daniel's Promise of an Interpretation 2:24

Q - What does Daniel's promise to interpret the king's dream tell us about Daniel? Daniel was completely confident that he would be able to satisfy the king's demands by revealing both the king's dream and its interpretation.

Q - What does Daniel's promise to interpret the king's dream tell us about the Lord? Daniel's promise to interpret the king's dream reveals that the Lord was able and had actually done for Daniel what the king's other "wise men" had assured him could not be done.

Think About It: The finest training in the schools of earth cannot prepare a person to deal with life's questions as well as

a personal relationship with the God of heaven can!

Apply It: Do you enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord which enables you to connect with His divine wisdom and direction?

“Daniel and the Great Statue Dream” (Part Two)

Daniel 2:25-49

Q - When have you ever wished you knew what was going to happen in the future?

We can know about the future only what the Lord reveals, because only He knows what the future holds. In many places in the Scriptures He has shown that He obviously knows what is ahead for both individuals and nations!

I. Daniel’s Revelation of the Dream 2:25-35

A. Daniel’s Appearance Before the King 2:25-30

Q - What was Daniel careful to make clear to the king before revealing and interpreting his dreams? Daniel made it clear that his “wise men” were right; no mortal could be expected to reveal the dream and explain its meaning - but that the true God in heaven had revealed the dream and its meaning.

B. Daniel’s Report of the Dream 2:31-35

Q - What were the four portions of the statue in the king’s dream made of?

The head? - made of fine gold.

The breast and arms? - made of silver.

The belly and thighs? - made of bronze.

The legs and feet? - the legs made of iron; the feet made of iron mixed with clay.

Q - What finally happened to the statue in the king’s dream? The statue was stuck on the feet by a stone cut out

without hands, totally demolishing the statue and blowing away every trace of it like chaff in the wind - then turning into a large mountain filling the whole earth.

II. Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream 2:36-45

A. The Head of Gold 2:36-38

Q - What did Daniel say the head of the statue represented? The statue's head of gold represented King Nebuchadnezzar - given his kingdom, power, strength and glory by the Lord.

B. The Silver and Bronze 2:39

Q - What did the silver and bronze portions of the statue represent? The silver represented another kingdom which would be inferior to Babylon (the Medo-Persian kingdom), followed by a third kingdom (the Greek kingdom, represented by the bronze part of the statue) which would have worldwide influence.

C. The Iron and Clay 2:40-43

Q - What did the iron and clay portions of the statue represent? The iron part of the statue represented a fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire) which would initially be very powerful, crushing opposition - but would eventually become an unstable composite of varied nations and ethnicities, some very strong (like iron) and others very brittle (like clay). The reference to combining with one another in the seed of men, but not adhering to one another, may refer to the requirement in the Jewish Law that differing seeds not be sown together in the same field (Leviticus 19:19).

D. The Great Stone 2:44-45

Q - What did the great stone of the king's dream represent? The great stone of the king's dream represents the emergence of the Kingdom of Heaven (under the reign of the Messiah, Jesus) which will prevail over all human institutions and replace them all, never to be followed by another kingdom because, following the millennial reign of Christ, it will become the eternal kingdom of God.

III. Nebuchadnezzar's Appreciation of Daniel 2:46-49

A. The King Acknowledges Daniel and His God 2:46-47

Q - What was very unusual about the king's acknowledgment of Daniel? King Nebuchadnezzar bowed on his face before Daniel, ordered that he be given an offering and fragrant incense, and acknowledged the Lord (Daniel's God) as "the God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries - in view of His ability to reveal both the dream and its interpretation - and, of course, he promoted Daniel in his government.

B. The King Promotes Daniel and His Friends 2:48-49

Q - How did Daniel demonstrate his humility in response to Nebuchadnezzar's appreciation of his interpretation of the dream and the promotion he was given? Daniel requested that his three Jewish associates be promoted to administrative positions in the Babylonian empire.

Think About It: The Lord has known for ages how the events of history would unfold because He is the sovereign God of heaven. He can predict the future because He knows and He controls the future.

Apply It: What does the Lord's knowledge and control of the future clearly reveal about Him?

“Daniel’s Friends in the Furnace”

Daniel 3:1-30

Q - What would you say are the most important ingredients in an effective witness for the Lord?

Because Daniel and his friends were captured by their Babylonian enemies and deported to Babylon, where pagan idolatry prevailed, they faced a stiff uphill battle in terms of their witness as followers of the Lord, God of Israel. But, because of the Lord’s significant blessing in their lives, they had far greater impact over the decades which followed than anyone might have expected. The third chapter of Daniel records a fascinating example of the powerful impact of a godly witness!

I. The King’s Image and Declaration 3:1-7

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold reveal about himself and his kingdom? Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold probably reveals an exaggerated view of his importance, as well as the vast wealth he commanded (a statue of gold, 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide, would be incredibly expensive). A note in the ESV Study Bible reports that:

A Babylonian document from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 b.c.) warns not to harm the statue that had been set up: “Beside my statue as king... I wrote an inscription mentioning my name . . . I erected for posterity. May future kings respect the monument, remember the praise of the gods . . . He who respects . . . my royal name, who does not abrogate my statutes and not change my decrees, his throne shall be secure, his life last long, his dynasty shall continue.”

The statue also reveals the pagan polytheistic views

of the king who would require all of his public servants, under pain of death, to bow in worship at the dedication ceremony for his statue.

Q - What did the people's willingness to bow in worship of the king's image reveal about them? Their willingness to worship the statue revealed their willing submission to their king, whether they were actually worshipping his statue or not, and their fear of the consequences for failing to comply with his orders.

II. The Chaldeans' Complaint 3:8-12

Q - What do you think motivated the Chaldeans' charges against the Jews? The Chaldeans' charges were probably motivated by anti-Semitism and their jealousy about the fact that Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego had been promoted, along with Daniel, to positions of honor they thought they deserved.

Q - What was it about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego that kept them from bowing to the king's image? Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego had joined Daniel in his determination not to defile himself by conforming to Babylonian values (1:8), and (as the Chaldeans reported) they were not willing to worship the "gods" of Babylon.

III. The Jewish Youth's Courage 3:13-18

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar's threat to the Jewish young men reveal about his own beliefs? Nebuchadnezzar's threat revealed that he considered his "gods" to be superior to the "gods" of other people, and that the God which Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego worshipped would not be able to deliver them from his hand if they refused to worship his "gods" and bow to his gold statue.

Q - What did the reply of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to the king demonstrate about them? Their reply revealed that they were fully committed to the Lord; that they fully believed that He could save them from the king's anger; but, that if He did not choose to save them, they were still not willing to defile themselves by worshiping Babylonian "gods" and they were not willing to bow in worship to the king's golden statue.

IV. The King's Rage and Command 3:19-23

Q - Why did the king order the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal? Because his original threat had been that resisters would be thrown into "a furnace of blazing fire" (v. 6), he apparently ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal as a result of his rage that his servants would dare to defy his orders.

Q - What did the deaths of the men who threw Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego into the fire reveal? Their deaths revealed that the furnace was so extremely hot that even getting near it was enough to kill a man.

V. The Jewish Youths' Deliverance 3:24-27

Q - Why was Nebuchadnezzar so astounded at what he saw in the furnace? Knowing that the fire had killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to the furnace, the king was astonished to see not only Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego walking around unharmed in the furnace, but a fourth person who appeared to him to be "a son of the gods."

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar learn from his experience with the furnace? He learned that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were servants of "the Most High God," a deity

clearly more powerful than his own “gods” in view of His ability to deliver his servants completely unharmed from what he had assumed would be certain death for them.

VI. The King’s Decision and Decree 3:28-30

Q - Why did Nebuchadnezzar do such an about-face in his attitude toward the Jewish youths and their God? The king was unable to deny that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego had delivered them from what he thought would be certain death because of their refusal to worship any God other than Himself - even though they had disobeyed his command.

Q - What did his new decree reveal about him and his commitments? His new decree revealed that, at least for the moment, He recognized that there was no other God than the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego who could have done what the Lord their God did - so he decreed that anyone saying anything offensive toward the Lord would be torn apart, with his house reduced to rubble.

Think About It: Nebuchadnezzar’s religious beliefs were thoroughly challenged by the commitment of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to their God and their own religious beliefs.

Apply It: Who is being challenged by OUR religious beliefs and behavior?

“Daniel and the Great Tree Dream” (Part One)

Daniel 4:1-18

Q - What does it take for a human being to come into a personal relationship with the Lord?

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had about as much reason to turn from his idolatrous pagan beliefs as any other pagan king in history. But the transition from paganism to Biblical faith is a challenging transition for many to make. For all of his opportunities to find the truth about the Lord, there is only patchy evidence that Nebuchadnezzar ever really saw the light or knew the Lord!

I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Introduction 4:1-3

A. His Greeting to the Reader 4:1

Q - What might cause the king of a world empire to wish peace for all the peoples of earth? Nebuchadnezzar probably considered himself to be king over “all the peoples of earth” in view of the vast extent of his kingdom, and it is always best for any king and kingdom that all of its subjects live in peace.

B. His Tribute to the Lord 4:2-3

Q - Does Nebuchadnezzar’s high praise of the God of Israel sound like he had realized the truth about God? Because his high praise reflects his experience of humiliation which will be recorded in this chapter, and because his high praise (repeated in part in verses 34 ff.) resulted from his humbling experience at the hand of the Lord, it does sound as if he realized (at least momentarily) the truth about God.

II. Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of the Tree 4:4-18

A. His Report of the Vision 4:4-5

Q - Why might a dream cause such a powerful ruler as Nebuchadnezzar was to be alarmed? His earlier dream involved a large statue which came to an inglorious end (totally destroyed). If he was connecting the fate of the large statue with the fate of the large tree in his dream (which seems likely), the fact that the large tree also came to an inglorious end would give him reason to wonder if the tree represented him and/or his kingdom.

B. His Request for an Interpretation 4:6-9

Q - Why might Nebuchadnezzar have revealed his dream to his "wise men" on this occasion after refusing to do so in the event reported in Daniel 2? Because of his earlier experience with Daniel, perhaps he was now less concerned that his "wise men" might try to deceive him when he could turn to Daniel as his "back-up."

Q - Since only Daniel was able to interpret his earlier dream, why might Nebuchadnezzar have waited to consult Daniel last on this occasion? The text doesn't indicate that King Nebuchadnezzar actually called for Daniel, but that Daniel came into the picture after the other "wise men" had failed to interpret his dream. Perhaps Daniel had been away on business when the king first appealed to his counselors for an interpretation of his dream. Nebuchadnezzar's commendation of Daniel (v. 9) clearly reveals that he was well-aware of Daniel's earlier success as an interpreter of dreams.

C. His Report of the Appearance of the Tree 4:10-12

Q - What was there about the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream which might have caused him such concern? The fact that the tree was so large and that it had world-wide impact may well have made him wonder if he and his kingdom were somehow in view in the presence of the tree in his dream.

D. His Report of the Fate of the Tree 4:13-17

Q - What was there about the fate of the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream which should have caused him some concern? The fact that the tree was ordered by a heavenly being to be chopped down and stripped of its branches, with only its stump remaining with a band of iron and bronze around it - followed by a personalization of the stump, assigned to be drenched with dew along with animals of the field and its mind altered from that of a man to that of a beast for seven periods until God was recognized as the Most High and sovereign God provided Nebuchadnezzar with more than enough information to cause him some concern!

E. His Request of Daniel 4:18

Q - What reason is there to be encouraged about in Nebuchadnezzar's request of Daniel? Nebuchadnezzar's request of Daniel recognized what he called the "spirit of the holy gods" residing in Daniel, and it recognized Daniel's ability to do what none of the other "wise men" of the kingdom were able to do.

Q - What is there about Nebuchadnezzar's request of Daniel which indicates a lack of understanding? The fact that Nebuchadnezzar saw in Daniel "a spirit of the holy gods" reveals his ongoing assumption that there were many gods, and that Daniel's god was simply one among the many.

Think About It: There is often a very fine line between know-

ing about the Lord and truly knowing and trusting the Lord.
But crossing over that line will make all the difference in a
person's life not only in time but in eternity.

Apply It: Where would you say you are on the fine line
between knowing about the Lord and knowing and trusting the
Lord?

“Daniel and the Great Tree Dream” (Part Two)

Daniel 4:19-37

Q - Who is the greatest person you have ever come in contact with?

The world has many differing ideas about what it is that constitutes greatness. Though it may have appeared that King Nebuchadnezzar was great in view of his role among world rulers in his day, he discovered the hard way that it is the Lord who is truly great!

I. Daniel’s Interpretation of the Vision 4:19-27

When Daniel heard king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and realized its meaning he wasn’t exactly encouraged!

A. Daniel’s Consternation 4:19

Q - Why do you think Daniel was so concerned when he realized the meaning of the king’s dream? It may be that he was genuinely concerned for the well being of Nebuchadnezzar (with whom he had a close relationship as an advisor). It could also be that Daniel was concerned about the reaction he would get from the king if he shared the bad news he knew the dream revealed!

B. Daniel’s Interpretation 4:20-26

Q - What made the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream a fitting description of the great king? The description of the tree was a fitting description of Nebuchadnezzar - at least as he thought of himself. Nebuchadnezzar’s empire was the largest and most powerful in that part of the world up to that time.

And the fall of the tree was an accurate picture of what was about to happen to Nebuchadnezzar - as the Scriptures warn (in Proverbs 11:2 - “When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom” and Proverbs 16:18 - “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling”).

C. Daniel’s Advice 4:27

Q - What would probably have happened if the king had followed the advice Daniel gave? Because (as Proverbs 29:23 tells us) “A man’s pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor,” if Nebuchadnezzar had broken away from his sins by doing righteousness (as Daniel suggested), he would probably have been honored by the Lord.

II. Nebuchadnezzar’s Realization of the Vision 4:28-33

A. The King’s Reflections 4:28-30

Q - How did Nebuchadnezzar’s reflections square with reality? Nebuchadnezzar was clearly experiencing “delusions of grandeur”! He had clearly not personally built Babylon the great as his royal residence by the might of his power and for the glory of his majesty, though the city of Babylon and the empire which it ruled may well have benefitted by his leadership and administrative skill.

B. The King’s Heavenly Visitation 4:31-32

Q - How had Nebuchadnezzar obviously responded to Daniel’s advice? Nebuchadnezzar had clearly not broken away from the sin of pride, and his continued belief in pagan deities was preventing him from doing the righteousness which Daniel had commended to him.

C. The King's Humiliation 4:33

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar's fate clearly demonstrate? His fate clearly demonstrated that the "might of [his] power" was not as impressive as he had imagined, and that he was in fact subject to the "God of gods and Lord of kings" he had seemingly acknowledged after Daniel revealed and interpreted his first dream (2:47)!

A note in the NIV Study Bible states that "Nebuchadnezzar was possibly stricken with a rare mental illness known as boanthropy, which causes its victims to assume the appearance, habits and posture of cattle."

III. Nebuchadnezzar's Restoration to Power 4:34-37

A. His Returned Reason 4:34a

Q - What was the cause of Nebuchadnezzar's restored reason? The fact that Nebuchadnezzar "raised [his] eyes toward heaven" - humbling himself before the Lord - resulted in the restoration of his reason. The Holman NKJV Study Bible observes that "Boanthropy does not render its victims entirely unable to reason or understand what has happened to them, so it was possible for the king to realize that his own pride had caused his insanity." When he "raised [his] eyes toward heaven," the Lord acknowledged his renewed understanding of his problem and the Lord restored his sanity.

B. His Recognition of the Lord 4:34b-35

Q - How would you evaluate Nebuchadnezzar's theology in these verses? Nebuchadnezzar's statement regarding the Lord's supremacy is entirely accurate. The Lord is sovereign over the affairs of the universe which He created.

C. His Conclusion 4:36-37

Q - What did Nebuchadnezzar's fate demonstrate about the Lord? Nebuchadnezzar's fate demonstrated that the Lord is sovereign in the affairs of men; that He has committed Himself to judge human pride; and that He is compassionate in His response to those who humble themselves before Him, and is willing to restore them fully in response to their repentance.

Think About It: God's sovereignty extends far above the highest of earth's rulers. Those who fail to honor Him willingly in this life will be forced to honor Him eventually.

Apply It: How successful are we in dealing with the problem of pride, and how faithful are we at honoring the Lord?

“Daniel and the Handwriting on the Wall” (Part One)

Daniel 5:1-16

Q - When have you ever needed help in unraveling a “mystery” in your life?

Every person encounters things in life which cannot be understood by the mind of man alone. There will be times in life when all men, even kings, need help from the Lord.

I. Belshazzar’s Great Feast 5:1-4

Belshazzar the king was the son of Nabonidus who ruled in Babylon from 556-539 B.C. Father and son ruled as co-regents from 553-539 B.C. The Babylonian kings who preceded him were:

Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.);
Nabu-kadurri-usur II (Nebuchadnezzar, 605-562 B.C.);
Amel-Marduk (Evil-merodach, 561-560 B.C.);
Nergal-shar-usur (Neriglissar, 559-556 B.C.);
Labashi-Marduk (556-556 B.C.);
Nabu-naid (Nabonidus, 555-539 B.C.);
and Bel-sharra-usur (Belshazzar, 552-542 B.C.).

A. The Occasion of the Feast 5:1

Q - What does Daniel tell us about the occasion for the feast? Belshazzar was holding a great feast for a thousand of his noblemen where drinking wine was part of his meal.

B. The Vessels at the Feast 5:2-3

Q - What may have been Belshazzar’s motive in ordering

the use of the gold and silver vessels from Jerusalem's temple at his feast? The vessels were made of precious metals, and probably very artistically made by Jewish artisans. The vessels served to remind his guests that Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, had conquered Israel and captured its treasures - which Babylonians probably saw as an indication of the superiority of their pagan gods over the God of Israel.

C. The Worship at the Feast 5:4

Q - What ironies do you see in the report of the worship at this feast? While drinking from vessels of gold and silver which were crafted for use in the worship of the true God, Belshazzar and his nobles, wives and concubines were praising so-called "gods" made of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

II. God's Message on the Wall 5:5-9

A. The Appearance of the Hand 5:5

Q - Why might the Lord have chosen to reveal His message in such an unusual way? The Lord may have chosen to write His message on the wall in order to create a sense of mystery and fear in the minds of all who were in view of the hand which was doing the miraculous writing.

B. The Reaction of the King 5:6-9

Q - What factors might have figured into Belshazzar's response to the handwriting on the wall? The hand (not connected to a body) was mysterious; Belshazzar may have wondered if the presence of the gold and silver vessels from the Jerusalem temple (a mockery of the God of Israel) had anything to do with the mysterious hand; the "lampstand" may have

been the candelabra stolen from the Jerusalem temple where the gold and silver vessels came from; the wall may have been the wall which the Jamison, Fausset and Brown Bible Commentary says may have included “a recital of titles, victories and exploits, to remind the spectator at every point of the regal greatness.”

Q - What did Belshazzar’s request of his “wise men” tell us about him? It reveals that Belshazzar, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, trusted “the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners” (all committed to pagan polytheism) for their understanding of mysterious messages which may have had divine origin and significance.

Q - What did the response of Belshazzar’s “wise men” tell us about them? As had been the case when Nebuchadnezzar consulted his “wise men,” their successors were still unable to provide any help in understanding the message the Lord was providing for Belshazzar and his guests.

III. The Queen’s Report About Daniel 5:10-12

A. The Entrance of the Queen 5:10

Q - What caused the queen to enter the picture? The queen had become aware of the conversation which was taking place between the king and his nobles - and of the inability of the king’s “wise men” to provide any clarity on the significance of the message on the wall.

B. The Report of the Queen 5:11-12

Q - Why might the queen have remembered Daniel though the king did not remember him? The queen in question was apparently not Belshazzar’s wife but, perhaps (as

some have speculated), the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or Evil Merodach, so she had been the queen when Daniel was serving in a more visible role than he was in his senior years. It had been around 60 years since Daniel first started serving as an advisor and administrator to King Nebuchadnezzar.

IV. Belshazzar's Request of Daniel 5:13-16

A. The Question to Daniel 5:13-14

Q - What does Belshazzar's ignorance of Daniel tell us about the king and his kingdom? Belshazzar (along with the Babylonian empire) was still clearly not attuned to the reality of the God of Israel, but was still engaged in the pagan worship of many so-called "gods."

B. The Offer to Daniel 5:15-16

Q - What did Belshazzar's offer to Daniel reveal about him? His kingdom? Belshazzar's offer revealed that the king had learned of Daniel's previous successes in interpreting mysteries. And it reveals that he was desperately seeking an understanding of the message written on the wall if he was willing to place Daniel third in command in the Babylonian empire (apparently after himself and his father - as co-regents, if he could interpret the handwriting on the wall.

Think About It: When it comes to revealing mysteries only the Lord has all the knowledge needed to do it accurately. He knows the flow of history because He sovereignly controls the flow of history.

Apply It: Are we committed to the fact that only God, in His inspired word, is the interpreter of future events and spiritual mysteries, or are we trusting "wise men" who are not so wise?

“Daniel and the Handwriting on the Wall” (Part Two)

Daniel 5:17-31

Q - Who have you ever known who was too “big-headed” for their own good?

The pages of Scripture and of human history are filled with examples of human beings who thought more highly of themselves than they should have thought. The problem actually began in the heavens when the devil desired to make himself “like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14) Babylon’s King Belshazzar was such a person, and his “big head” cost him both his kingdom and his life!

I. Daniel’s Reply to the King 5:17-24

A. The Promise of an interpretation 5:17

Q - What did Daniel’s response to the king tell us about Daniel? Daniel had no interest in the promise of reward - not even as third ruler in the Babylonian kingdom - but was happy to be of service to the king in view of his need for help in understanding the writing on the wall.

B. The Reminder of the Past 5:18-21

Q - What feelings was Daniel’s reminder of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation likely to produce in Belshazzar? Daniel’s reminder was likely to cause some concern on Belshazzar’s part that, like his forefather Nebuchadnezzar, he was going to be humbled for failing to recognize the God of Israel as he should have - especially at a time when he had called for the use of the gold and silver vessels which had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem in mockery of Israel’s God!

C. The Application for the Present 5:22-24

Q - What did Belshazzar do to exalt himself above the Lord of heaven as Daniel charged? He had failed to recognize and glorify the Lord God of Israel, who exercises sovereignty over kings and nations - exalting himself against the Lord of Heaven, and adding insult to injury by calling for the vessels from the temple of the Lord to be used in a setting where the so-called "gods" of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone were being praised, in spite of the fact that they were unable to see or hear or understand what was going on.

Q - What did Belshazzar's persistence in pride and idolatry reveal about him? Belshazzar's persistence in pride and idolatry revealed that he thought far too highly of himself and of his worthless idol-"gods" and far too little of the true God whom he was insulting at his feast.

II. Daniel's Interpretation of the Handwriting 5:25-29

A. The Content of the Message 5:25

Q - What strikes you about the message written on the wall of Belshazzar's palace? The brevity and simplicity of the message seems striking - plus, of course, the divine origin of the message.

B. The Meaning of the Message 5:26-28

Q - What is evident about Daniel by his interpretation of the handwriting? It seems evident that Daniel had divine insight into the meaning of the handwriting because the words themselves, written in Aramaic (the language of Babylon), were not actually difficult to understand - only difficult to interpret.

Mene - a “mina,” a coin worth 50 shekels.

Tekel - a coin worth one “shekel.”

Upharsin - “and half-shekels,” smaller coins.

Like Hebrew words, the same set of Aramaic consonants could be read with different vowel markings to turn the words into verbs as occurred in this case as Daniel explained.

Mene, as a verb related to “mina,” meant “numbered.” The repetition of mene may have signified that the “numbering” had occurred more than once and was going to have impact soon.

Tekel, as a verb related to “shekel,” meant “weighed.” Daniel added the divine assessment that the Lord’s act of weighing Belshazzar had determined that he was “underweight” - a virtual “lightweight” by the evaluation of the Lord (in stark contrast to Belshazzar’s supposition that, as king of the Babylonian empire, he was a “heavy-weight” - as Nebuchadnezzar had also erroneously imagined concerning himself).

Upharsin, as a verb related to a “half-shekel” (preceded by “and”), meant “divided.” It signified that the Lord was about to bring about a division of kingdoms - a division which occurred on the very night of Belshazzar’s “great” feast! As Daniel reported the fuller message of the division about to take place, the Medes and Persians were about to replace the Babylonian empire with their own Medo-Persian empire!

C. The Promotion of Daniel 5:29

Q - What was there about Daniel that repeatedly resulted in his exaltation by foreign, pagan rulers? Daniel’s ability to accurately interpret divine messages, whether delivered in dreams or by handwriting on palace walls, set him apart as a servant of the Lord, God of Israel, and a faithful and insightful

servant of the various kings in whose courts he served so faithfully. Though he never requested exaltation for his services (though he did request favors for his three Jewish “friends” when he accurately revealed and interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream - chapter 2), both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar sought to honor him by advancing him in the authority he was privileged to exercise as an advisor and administrator.

III. Belshazzar’s Succession by Darius 5:30-31

A. The Death of Belshazzar 5:30

Q - What does Belshazzar’s fate reveal? Belshazzar’s fate revealed that Daniel was correct in his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall; that Belshazzar’s idolatrous faith was an exercise in futility (worshipping “gods” who were unreal and impotent); and that the Lord is sovereign in the affairs of men - even men who are supposedly high and mighty.

B. The Ascension of Darius 5:31

Q - How does this verse fit into the great statue dream of chapter two? This verse records the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy that the head of gold on the great statue (representing Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire) would be followed by a kingdom inferior to the Babylonian Empire.

Think About It: The Lord is not going to permit His glory to be trampled underfoot indefinitely by men - not even those in highest authority. It is always in our best interests to give Him the glory which He deserves!

Apply It: What are some practical ways in which the Lord is receiving the glory He deserves by the way in which we are living out our lives?

“Daniel in the Lion’s Den” (Part One)

Daniel 6:1-15

Q - Do you think it always pays to do what is right? Why or why not?

Doing what is right in the sight of the Lord will sometimes place God’s people in danger because of the world’s indifference toward spiritual values and their resulting opposition to people who are motivated in the things they say and do by their devotion to the Lord. Daniel was a man who was deeply committed to doing what was right - and it got him thrown into a den of lions!

I. The King’s Servants Plot Against Daniel 6:1-9

A. The Appointment of Satraps and Commissioners 6:1-2

Q - What does Daniel’s appointment tell us about him?
Daniel’s appointment as one of three commissioners over the 120 satraps appointed by King Darius, after having served for more than sixty years as a top administrator in the Babylonian empire, spoke very highly of his effective service over many years - recognized now even by the king of a successive empire.

B. The Success of Daniel as a Commissioner 6:3

Q - What enabled Daniel to distinguish himself among the commissioners in Darius’ kingdom? The fact that he possessed an extraordinary spirit distinguished Daniel above the other two commissioners in the thinking of Darius, causing him to be considered for an appointment over the entire kingdom.

C. The Opposition to Daniel by His Peers 6:4-5

Q - What must have motivated Daniel's peers to seek a ground of accusation against him? It was almost certainly jealousy and anti-Semitism on the part of his peers that a Jewish captive should be considered for a position which would place him over them.

D. The Plot Against Daniel by His Peers 6:6-9

Q - Why did Darius apparently not see through the plot of Daniel's peers? In addition to the fact that the plot of Daniel's peers was flattering to King Darius (who would be treated as a "god"), they lied to the king by their assertion that "all the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors had consulted together to back the suggested decree. So King Darius was led to believe that Daniel was also in agreement with the idea, though he obviously was not.

II. The King's Servants Report About Daniel 6:10-15

A. The Devotional Practice of Daniel 6:10

Q - What is evident about Daniel by his refusal to be intimidated by the king's decree? Daniel was so devoted to the Lord that he continued to do what had been his habit - praying three times a day in his roof chamber where there were windows facing Jerusalem - well aware that there was no point in praying to any mere human being (even if he was a king). It had been Solomon's recommendation, at the dedication of the temple in his day, that God's people pray toward the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple he had built (I Kings 8:48).

B. The Finding of Daniel in Prayer 6:11

Q - Why do you suppose Daniel made no attempt to conceal his practices? Because Daniel feared the Lord (as the Scriptures say everyone should - Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Ecclesiastes 12:13), he was not fearful of men - so he continued to do what he was in the habit of doing with reference to his prayer life.

C. The Report About Daniel 6:12-13

Q - What false assumptions were Daniel's peers making in bringing their accusations against Daniel? They were falsely assuming that Daniel paid no attention to the king or to his decree (which Daniel was well-aware of, cf. v. 10), rather than recognizing that Daniel was so deeply committed to His God, and the reality that only He deserves the worship of men, that he could not change his behavior in disrespect of His God.

D. The Distress of Darius Over Daniel 6:14

Q - What does the king's distress over Daniel's fate reveal about the situation? It reveals that he had high regard for Daniel and probably realized now that Daniel had not been in agreement with the decree from the beginning - suspecting that the intent of the decree had been to frame Daniel in the first place.

E. The Reminder of the Enemies of Daniel 6:15

Q - What does the insistence of Daniel's enemies reveal about them? Their insistence revealed the depth of their animosity toward Daniel and their brashness in pressing the king to follow through on a decree he now realized had been ill-advised from the start.

Think About It: Honoring the Lord can make enemies and bring anxious moments. The world will not always appreciate a believer's devotion to the Lord, and may even use it to create problems for God's devoted people.

Apply It: Do we allow the world's opposition keep us from doing what we believe the Lord would have us do?

“Daniel in the Lions’ Den” (Part Two)

Daniel 6:16-28

Q - What is the worst jam your faith in and obedience to the Lord has ever gotten you into?

Many of God’s people have learned through difficulty that commitment to Him is not always an easy road to travel. Jesus told His disciples (John 15:18), “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” Long before Christ’s warning, Daniel was hated by his world.

I. The King’s Orders Concerning Daniel 6:16-18

A. The Casting of Daniel to the Lions 6:16

Q - Why do you think King Darius might have said what he said to Daniel? Having tried everything he could think of to save Daniel from the lions’ den without success, Darius knew that the only hope for Daniel was hope in his God - and he expressed hope himself that Daniel’s God would come to his rescue. Whether he believed God could save Daniel or not, he wanted to assure Daniel of his best wishes!

B. The Sealing of Daniel in the Lions’ Den 6:17

Q - What does the king’s action illustrate about Medo-Persian law? His action illustrates the fact that Medo-Persian law really could not be changed once it was established - not even by an anxious king. And it illustrated his commitment to seeing that the law was carried out without the possibility of anyone’s interference.

C. The Concern of the King for Daniel 6:18

Q - What does the king's behavior during Daniel's stay in the lions' den tell us? The king's behavior clearly demonstrates that he was anxious about Daniel's fate and was sincerely hopeful that Daniel would survive being thrown to the lions.

II. The King's Relief Regarding Daniel 6:19-24

A. The Question of the King 6:19-20

Q - What strikes you about the king's question to Daniel? The king's question reveals that he did have some hope, however faint, that the God of Daniel might have been willing and able to save him from death in the lions' den - realizing, as he did, that Daniel was deeply committed to His God.

B. The Reply of Daniel 6:21-22

Q - What did the Lord's protection of Daniel demonstrate? The Lord's protection of Daniel clearly demonstrated His complete control of the affairs in the lives of His devoted servants in the fact that Daniel was completely uninjured by the lions in the den he had been thrown into.

C. The Condition of Daniel 6:23

Q - What does Daniel's uninjured condition tell us? His uninjured condition tells us that the Lord had fully rewarded his unflinching commitment because, even though the lions had not injured Daniel, being thrown into the den could easily have resulted in some kind of injury.

D. The Condemnation of Daniel's Enemies 6:24

Q - What are some lessons we can learn from the fate of Daniel's enemies? We can learn that the lions in the den were

clearly hungry and dangerous, and that the Lord not only rewarded Daniel for his unflinching commitment, but chose to severely judge the officials who had attempted to remove Daniel as an obstacle to their own advancement in the Medo-Persian kingdom.

III. The King's Decree Concerning the God of Daniel 6:25-28

A. The Recipients of the King's Decree 6:25

Q - How does God use the wrath of man to praise Him? The Lord has the power to cause all things to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28) - and He can use what the enemies of His people intend to harm them to become their own undoing (as He did, for example, in the case of Haman, the mortal enemy of Mordecai in the book of Esther).

B. The Content of the King's Decree 6:26-27

Q - How do you suppose the king arrived at the wording of his decree? The wording of the king's decree sounds as if he had some help from an enlightened believer in the God of Israel - perhaps the assistance of Daniel himself.

C. The Success of Daniel 6:28

Q - Should Daniel's success be expected by all who stick their necks out to honor the Lord? Because even Jesus suffered and died because of His commitment to the will of the Father, it is evident that honoring the Lord will not always result in the success Daniel experienced throughout his lengthy career as a public servant to Babylonian and Medo-Persian kings. But the Scriptures reveal that the Lord is highly likely to reward those who are faithful to Him by their obedience to His word.

Think About It: The Lord can protect His people from any attack of their enemies, though whether He does or not and how He does what He does is up to Him. What He wants from His people is their trust and obedience.

Apply It: Are we able to stand up for the Lord - whatever price we may be called to pay because of our faith and obedience?

“Daniel’s Vision of Four Great Beasts” (Part One)

Daniel 7:1-14

Q - When have you ever had the impression that the flow of human history might get out of control?

The seventh chapter of Daniel provides assurance that the Lord is fully in control of human history - whatever may appear to be the case as it unfolds before us. The fact that we may not see it doesn’t change the fact that the Lord is sovereign in the affairs of mankind!

I. The Background for the Vision 7:1-3

A. The Time of the Vision 7:1

Q - How does the time of this chapter relate to the other events in Daniel? Occurring during the first year of the reign of Babylonian King Belshazzar, chapter seven takes place before the end of the Babylonian kingdom as described in chapter 5 of Daniel’s prophecy.

B. The Setting of the Vision 7:2-3

Q - What might the “four winds of heaven” and the “great sea” represent? The “four winds of heaven” would be winds at each of the four points of the compass, and the “great sea” pictures the chaos which occurs on earth as a result of the opposition of the nations to the control of the Lord (cf. Psalm 89:9; 93:3-4) as the four beasts arising from the wind driven sea indicate.

II. The Content of the Vision 7:4-14

A. The Entrance of the Four Beasts 7:4-8

1. The First Beast Described 7:4

Q - What was unusual about the first beast? It was a lion which had wings like an eagle; its wings were plucked off, and it was made to stand up on two feet like a man, and it was given a human mind.

2. The Second Beast Described 7:5

Q - What was unusual about the second beast? It was a bear which was lifted up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and it was instructed to arise and to devour a large quantity of meat.

3. The Third Beast Described 7:6

Q - What was unusual about the third beast? It was a leopard which had four wings like a bird; it also had four heads and it was given dominion.

4. The Fourth Beast Described 7:7-8

Q - What were the unusual features of the fourth beast? It was a non-descript beast which was dreadful, terrifying and extremely strong, with large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the other beasts with its feet. It was different from the previous beasts in part by the fact that it had ten horns. As Daniel contemplated the ten horns, he saw another small horn with eyes like a man and a mouth uttering great boasts come up among them, and he saw three of the ten horns pulled up by their roots by the small horn.

B. The Entrance of the Ancient of Days 7:9-12

1. The Description of the Ancient of Days 7:9-10

Q - Who is "The Ancient of Days"? The "Ancient of Days" must be the Lord. How can we be sure? We can be sure He is the Lord because -

He is "ancient"

He is enthroned,

His clothes are as white as snow,

His hair is white like pure wool,

His throne is ablaze with flames,

It has wheels of burning fire,

A river of fire was flowing out from before Him,

He was attended by thousands of thousands and myriads upon myriads standing before Him,

He apparently presided over the court at which the books were opened.

2. The Fate of the Fourth Beast 7:11

Q - What is significant about the fate of the fourth beast? Its boastful words were silenced when it was slain, and its body was destroyed and burned in the flames.

3. The Fate of the Other Beasts 7:12

Q - What is the meaning of the fate of the other three beasts? The fact that their dominion was taken away indicates that the dominion of the "Ancient of Days" exceeded their dominion.

C. The Entrance of the Son of Man 7:13-14

Q - Who is "the Son of Man," and how do we know of His identity? The "Son of Man" is the Lord Jesus. We know of His identity

Because of the title which Jesus frequently applied to
Himself during His earthly ministry,
Because He comes with the clouds of heavens (speaking
of His heavenly descent),
Because He approaches “the Ancient of Days” (His
Heavenly Father),
Because He is given dominion, glory and a kingdom
Because He is served by all the peoples, nations and men
of every language
Because He possesses a dominion which is eternal and a
kingdom which will never be destroyed.

Think About It: Though it may not always be evident from human perspective, the flow of history is firmly in the hands of “the Ancient of Days” and His divine Son.

Apply It: How do you see the hand of the Lord in the events of human history in our days?

“Daniel’s Vision of Four Great Beasts” (Part Two)

Daniel 7:15-28

Q - Do you think it is possible to know too much about the future? Daniel may have thought so!

One of the clearest evidences that the Bible is God’s inspired word is the fact that it contains so much prophetic revelation of things no man could know apart from the mind of the Lord. It might seem, at times, that it would be good to know more of the details of future events but, as Daniel discovered before he had completed his prophecy, too much information can be overwhelming (cf. 10:2-3, 8-9, 15-17). Daniel chapter seven is another chapter which includes some amazing glimpses of the big picture of the prophetic horizon from Daniel’s time into the distant future in the form of prophetic vision.

I. The Explanation of the Vision 7:15-27

A. The Meaning of the Vision 7:15-18

1. Its Effect 7:15

Q - Why do you think Daniel’s vision was so alarming to him? The vision Daniel saw was filled with beasts unlike any he had ever seen which left Him wondering about their significance regarding future events - though the fact that there were four in number may have recalled his explanation of the four parts of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2.

2. Its Interpreter 7:16

Q - Who must have been “standing by” to interpret

Daniel's vision? It seems most likely that it was an angel, as angels are known to have spoken to the prophets to provide answers to their questions (cf. Zechariah 1:9,19).

3. Its Explanation 7:17-18

Q - What was the short explanation of the vision? The short explanation was that the four beasts represented four kings (with their kingdoms) - leading up to the time when the saints will inherit a kingdom which will last forever (the kingdom of God, millennial and eternal).

B. The Question About the Fourth Beast 7:19-22

1. Its Description 7:19

Q - How was the fourth beast different from all the others? The fourth beast was exceedingly dreadful, with teeth of iron and claws of bronze - devouring, crushing and trampling down the other kingdoms with its feet.

Q - What was unusual about the horns of the fourth beast? The fourth beast had ten horns, then an eleventh small horn came up with eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, causing three of the ten horns to fall and becoming larger than any of the other horns.

2. Its Defeat 7:21-22

Q - What caused the prominent horn to lose its place of prominence? The prominent horn was waging war against the saints and overpowering them, until the Ancient of Days came to pass judgment in favor of the saints, who took possession of the kingdom.

D. The Meaning of the Fourth Beast 7:23-26

1. The Explanation of the Beast 7:23

Q - What sets apart the fourth beast and his kingdom from the kings and kingdoms represented by the first three kings and their kingdoms? The fourth beast and his kingdom will be set apart from the others by its ability to devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

2. The Explanation of the Horns 7:24-25

Q - What can be said about the prominent horn from these verses? The prominent horn (king) will rise up among the ten horns (kings) and will subdue three of them - speaking out against the Most High, and wearing down the saints of the Highest One, intending to make alterations in times and in law, which he will succeed in doing for a time, and times, and half a time (three and a half years).

3. The Judgment of the Single Horn 7:26

Q - Whose must be the “court” which brings the prominent horn to judgment? The court which brings the prominent horn to judgment must be the court ruled over by the Lord, the “Ancient of Days,” which was mentioned earlier in verse 10.

D. The Dominion of the Lord 7:27

Q - Could this verse be a description of the church in the present age? This verse cannot be a description of the church in the present age because the church has not been given the sovereignty, dominion and greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven in this age. The kingdom described is the kingdom of the Highest One which will last forever with all

kingdoms obeying and serving Him - initially the millennial kingdom, followed by the eternal kingdom of the Lord.

II. The End of the Vision 7:28

Q - Why do you think Daniel found his thoughts so “alarming” even after learning the meaning of his vision? The broad scope of prophetic vision included in Daniel 7 was so vast that it left him feeling overwhelmed by the beastly nature of human kingdoms on the horizon until the distant time, from his perspective, when the Lord would bring all human kingdoms under His sovereign control.

Think About It: The Lord clearly knew in Daniel’s days who His future foes would be, what tactics they would use, and what their outcome would be!

Apply It: The Lord’s clear knowledge of the future reveals His control of the future as the sovereign God of heaven - obviously deserving of our trust!

“Daniel’s Vision of the Ram and Goat” (Part One)

Daniel 8:1-14

Q - When have you, as a believer, had God use an unbeliever to “teach you a lesson” of spiritual importance?

There have been many times through the centuries when the Lord has used the enemies of the faith to teach important lessons to the people of God. The history of the nation of Israel provides numerous examples. The period of the judges which is recorded in the book of Judges, for instance, records the oppression of Israel by Ammonites, Canaanites, Midianites, Moabites and Philistines as the Lord judged His sinful people for turning from His word and ways. In the eighth chapter of his prophecy, Daniel could see ahead to some times when Israel was going to experience chaotic experiences in middle-eastern history which would call attention to their spiritual failings.

I. The Background of the Vision 8:1-2

A. The Time of the Vision 8:1

Q - When have we previously been with Daniel during the reign of Belshazzar? The seventh chapter of Daniel records a vision Daniel received during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, and the fifth chapter of Daniel recorded the last day of Belshazzar’s reign when the Lord interrupted his feast with the message written on the wall - mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.

B. The Place in the Vision 8:2

Q - What do we learn about Susa in Nehemiah 1:1 and Esther 1:2 and 2:8? We learn in Nehemiah 1:1 that Nehemiah was serving as the king's cup bearer in Susa, the capital city of Susiana, a province of Persia. And we learn from Esther 1:2 and 2:8 that the citadel in Susa was the site of the palace and the throne of the Persian King Ahasuerus in the time of Esther.

II. The Content of the Vision 8:3-14

A. The Appearance of the Ram 8:3-4

1. The Horns of the Ram 8:3

Q - What was unusual about the horns of the ram in Daniel's vision? The ram in Daniel's vision (depicting the Medo-Persian Empire) had two long horns, one longer than the other (depicting Persia), with the longer horn coming up later than the shorter one.

2. The Power of the Ram 8:4

Q - What might be the significance of the ram's power and prominence? The power and prominence of the ram in Daniel's vision signifies the dominance of the Medo-Persian Empire over nations toward all four points of the compass surrounding the Empire.

B. The Appearance of the Goat 8:5-8

1. The Approach of the Goat 8:5

Q - What were the unusual features of the goat in Daniel's vision? The goat in Daniel's vision (depicting the Greek Empire), with a conspicuous horn between his eyes (depicting Alexander the Great), was coming from the west over the sur-

face of the land without touching the ground as it came (reflecting the rapid conquest by Alexander of middle-eastern nations).

2. The Defeat of the Ram 8:6-7

Q - What might the dominance of the goat over the ram indicate? The dominance of the goat over the ram depicts the defeat of the Medo-Persian Empire by Alexander the Great and his Greek Empire.

3. The Breaking of the Horn 8:8

Q - What could the replacement of the large horn with four other horns mean? Alexander the Great, the “large horn,” died when he was only 33 years old, leaving no sons who were old enough to successfully follow him on the throne. His kingdom was eventually divided up among his generals, known as the Diadochoi - “successors” (among them were Cassander - Greece, Ptolemy - Egypt, Antigonus - Asia Minor, and Seleucus - Syria and Persia).

C. The Appearance of the Small Horn 8:9-14

1. The Growth of the Horn 8:9-11

Q - What might the new horn’s growth toward the “Beautiful Land” mean? The new “small horn,” arising out of one of the “four conspicuous horns” of verse 8 (Seleucus and the Seleucid Kingdom), depicts Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who expanded his control to include Israel, the “Beautiful Land.”

Q - What do verses 10 and 11 indicate about the horn’s success? The “small horn” became influential enough to take control away from the priestly class of Israel, magnifying him-

self to divine status by his dominance of the Jerusalem temple and its ritual, profaning the temple by his sacrifice of a pig on its altar.

2. The Dominion of the Horn 8:12

Q - To what was the horn's success over the "host" attributed? The horn's success over the "host" was to be attributed to transgression on the part of the host (particularly the priests), resulting in the throwing of truth to the ground with the dominance of the "small horn" and his pagan practices.

3. The Length of the Horn's Dominion 8:13-14

Q - How long was Daniel told that the little horn would be allowed to prosper? He was told that the small horn would be allowed to prosper for 2,300 evenings and mornings before the holy place would be restored - perhaps the time between the death of Onias III, the high priest, in 170 B.C. until December 14, 164 B.C. when Judas Maccabeus cleansed and rededicated the temple.

Think About It: The Lord sometimes uses pagan powers of earth to rebuke His sinning people. He did it in Israel's earlier history, and Daniel could see prophetically that He was going to do it again.

Apply It: We can avoid hard lessons brought by unbelievers when we avoid the sinful behavior which brings the Lord's judgment.

“Daniel’s Vision of the Ram and Goat” (Part Two)

Daniel 8:15-27

Q - What is something about the future you would like to know - which only the Lord knows?

The Scriptures reveal that the Lord has provided His people, by His divine power, “everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and excellence” (II Peter 1:3). So there isn’t really anything we need to know about the future which the Lord has not revealed in His word. But that doesn’t keep us from wondering what our future is going to be like - so we can be grateful for things the Lord has revealed about the future through the human authors of Scripture like the Prophet Daniel.

I. The Meaning of Daniel’s Vision 8:15-26

A. The Interpreter of the Vision 8:15-17

1. The Appearance of the Interpreter 8:15

Q - Why does Daniel describe the interpreter as one who “looked like” a man? Daniel was well-aware that the Lord has sometimes sent messengers to His servants who appeared as men but were actually heavenly messengers (i.e. angels).

2. The Identity of the Interpreter 8:16

Q - What does the name Gabriel tell us about Daniel’s interpreter? The name means “man of God” (*geber El*), the name of an archangel who appeared twice to Daniel (8:15, 9:21), once to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:19), and once to Mary’s espoused husband Joseph (Luke 1:26) with revelation from the

Lord.

3. The Summary of the Interpreter 8:17

Q - What “time of the end” is in view in Daniel’s vision? Daniel’s vision provided information concerning the affairs of nations centuries later than Daniel’s time - toward the end of the age of the Old Testament era and of Israel’s semi-independence in their own land after their return from deportation by Assyria and Babylon - but the reign of Antiochus IV also prefigures the reign of the Antichrist at the very end of the church age.

B. The Meaning of the Ram and the Goat 8:18-22

1. The Time Element 8:18-19

Q - What could the “final period of the indignation” refer to? The “final period of the indignation” referred to the end of the indignities imposed on Israel by the Seleucid Kingdom which was in power in the middle-east in the third century before Christ - though the indignities imposed by the Seleucids also prefigure the indignities which will be imposed by the Antichrist during the “final period of the indignation.”

2. The Meaning of the Ram 8:20

Q - Why was the ram of this vision an appropriate symbol for Media and Persia? The ram had two horns, representing the nations of the Medes and Persians. The longer horn coming up after the shorter horn represented the eventual dominance of the Persians (who appeared later in middle-eastern history) during the reign of the Persian King Cyrus over the Medes.

3. The Meaning of the Goat 8:21-22

Q - How was the shaggy goat an appropriate representation of the kingdom of Greece? The shaggy goat with the large horn between his eyes pictures the Grecian Empire which came to prominence during the reign of Alexander the Great.

Q - What was the significance of the “broken horn” and the “four horns” which arose in its place in verse 22? The broken horn refers to Alexander the Great who died at an early age (33), and the four horns which arose in its place refers to the division of the Greek Empire into four kingdoms under the leadership of four generals from Alexander’s empire.

C. The Meaning of the Small Horn 8:23-26

1. The Rising of a King 8:23-24

Q - What was to characterize the king described in verse 23? The king of verse 23 was to be characterized by insolence and his skill at intrigue (*chidoth* - riddles, enigmatic or perplexing sayings).

Q - If this king is mighty in a power not his own, whose power could it be? It appears to be the power of the devil - in view of the destruction which would characterized his reign (v. 24).

2. The Actions of the King 8:25

Q - What unusual things were to characterize this powerful king? The king’s reign was to be characterized by shrewdness, deceit, pride, destruction of peaceful people, and opposition to the Prince of Princes (i.e. the Lord).

D. The Truth of the Vision 8:26

Q - Since Daniel's vision was true, why should it be kept secret? Because the vision described future events which Daniel's contemporaries did not need to know but would find disturbing (as it was for Daniel himself), it was to be kept secret until its relevance could be more easily understood by future generations of Israel and of humanity.

II. The Effect of Daniel's Vision 8:27

Q - Why do you think the vision had the impact on Daniel that it did? The beasts described in the vision were frightening, and the disturbing message regarding future disturbances for both nations and the people of Israel was discouraging to a man who did not understand all that was revealed.

Think About It: God not only knows all about the kingdoms of the future, but even about their individual leaders and their specific characteristics.

Apply It: How should the Lord's knowledge of future events be a source of encouragement in our lives?

“Daniel’s Preparation for His Seventy Weeks Prophecy”

Daniel 9:1-19

Q - Can you think of any promises God has made to His people on earth today which we can expectantly wait for Him to keep? Daniel could think of some!

The Apostle Paul wrote, in I Corinthians 1:20, that “as many as are the promises of God, in Him [Jesus] they are yes.” So, when the Lord makes promises we can be sure that He is going to do what He said He will do - meaning that we can live in anticipation of the fulfillment of many things which the Lord has said He will do in the pages of His word. Because he was a diligent student of God’s word, the Prophet Daniel lived in expectation in view of the promises of God of which he was aware during the many years of his prophetic ministry.

I. Daniel’s Observation 9:1-3

A. The Time of His Observation 9:1

Q - When in Daniel’s prophecy have we previously been in the reign of Darius? Daniel 5:1 recorded the beginning of the reign of Darius; Daniel 6:1 recorded the appointment of 120 satraps by Darius, and 6:5 and 9 report on the scheme of the satraps to trap Daniel, with 6:25 and 28 reporting on the vindication of Daniel by Darius.

B. The Source of His Observation 9:2

Q - What “desolations” did Jeremiah 25:8-12 say would happen in the seventy years Daniel referenced in verse 2? The desolations anticipated were those the people of Israel would experience when Nebuchadnezzar and other northern peoples

under his influence would attack and dominate Israel and other nations in their region for a period of seventy years.

C. The Search for Understanding 9:3

Q - How did Daniel demonstrate his seriousness in seeking understanding from the Lord? Daniel turned to the Lord in prayer and supplications accompanied with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

II. Daniel's Prayer 9:4-19

A. The Confession of Israel's Sinfulness 9:4-8

Q - What important truths did Daniel acknowledge about God in verse 4? Daniel acknowledged that the Lord is a great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness with those who love and obey Him.

Q - What important truths did Daniel acknowledge about himself and his people in verses 5 and 6? Daniel acknowledged that he and his people had sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from the Lord's commandments and ordinances, and that they had failed to listen to the voice of His prophets.

Q - How did Daniel feel about the current state of things between his people and their God in his day? Daniel felt shame because of the sins he and his people had committed in their relationship with the Lord.

B. The Acknowledgment of God's Righteousness 9:9-14

Q - What did Daniel hope to obtain from the Lord for his people, though he knew they didn't deserve them? Daniel

hoped to obtain compassion and forgiveness in view of his people's rebellious disobedience to the word of God which had resulted in the unparalleled calamity which his people and their holy city of Jerusalem had experienced.

Q - What did Daniel see and acknowledge as the sins of his people in verses 10-11? Daniel saw and acknowledged that his people had failed to obey the voice of the Lord by walking in the teachings which they received from His servants and the prophets. He acknowledged that Israel was under the curse of the Lord because they had turned aside from His word by their transgressions.

Q - Why did Daniel believe his nation was in the sorry state that it WAS in his day according to verse 12? Daniel believed that his nation was facing calamity because the Lord was doing as He said He would do if Israel failed to observe His law.

Q - What did Daniel believe his nation needed to do in view of their sorry state in his day according to verse 13? Daniel believed that his people needed to seek the favor of the Lord by turning from their iniquity and paying attention to His truth.

Q - How does verse 14 indicate that Daniel felt toward the Lord in view of his people's troubles in his day? Daniel acknowledged that the Lord was righteous in keeping calamity in store and delivering it to his people in view of their disobedience to His voice.

C. The Request for God's Mercy 9:15-19

Q - On what bases did Daniel call on the Lord to make the necessary difference in his people's lives -

In verse 15? He acknowledged the Lord's amazing

power in having delivered His people from slavery in Egypt in the days of Joseph.

In verse 16? He requested that the Lord turn his anger and wrath away from Jerusalem in order to diminish the reproach the people of Israel were experiencing from surrounding nations.

In verse 18? He requested that the Lord extend undeserved compassion upon the people of Israel by inclining His ear to hear, and opening His eyes to see the desolations which had come upon Israel and their holy city, Jerusalem.

In verse 19? He asked the Lord to hear his prayer and take action by forgiving His sinful people for His own sake because His own holy name was associated with His people and their capital city.

Think About It: Daniel knew that his people were in a deplorable state because the Lord was judging their sins, so he confessed the sins of his people and asked the Lord to restore His favor.

Apply It: Though human beings deserve divine judgment because of their sins, the Lord can be requested to restore His favor in response to their confession and repentance.

“Daniel’s Revelation of the Seventieth Week”

Daniel 9:20-27

Q - Have you ever met anyone who knew both future events and their timing?

We frequently check the weather forecast for the day and the week, hoping to learn what to expect of the weather as we make plans for the hours and days ahead. But we have all learned to exercise some skepticism about the forecast the weathermen have projected because we know that their forecasts aren’t always dependable. The advantage of weather satellites which can see cloud formations from far above the earth has made weather forecasting somewhat more dependable, but we are frequently reminded that only the Lord knows what is ahead and when it will happen. So projections regarding the future, like Daniel’s projections in 9:20-27, are very helpful because his projections were coming from the Lord!

I. Daniel’s Visitor 9:20-23

A. The Appearance of the Visitor 9:20-21

Q - What activities on Daniel’s part resulted in Gabriel’s visit? Daniel was praying to the Lord, confessing his sins and the sins of his people - asking for favor from the Lord on behalf of the “holy mountain” of the Lord when the Lord sent Gabriel to give Daniel some insight.

B. The Purpose of the Visitor 9:22

Q - What did Gabriel have to give that Daniel needed? Gabriel told Daniel that he had come to provide some insight with understanding about the prayer he was praying.

C. The Challenge of the Visitor 9:23

Q - Why did Daniel need the challenge Gabriel gave him to give heed and gain understanding? The vision Daniel was to receive contained some mysterious insights, so careful attention was in order.

II. Daniel's Revelation 9:24-27

A. The Decree of the Seventy Weeks 9:24

Q - What did Gabriel apparently mean by "seventy weeks" or "seventy sevens"? Because of the way the word "week" was used in Jacob's life for weeks of years (seven year periods), and because of the things Daniel was told were to be accomplished, it seems almost certain that Gabriel was referring to seventy periods of seven years (i.e. 70 x 7 years - 490 years).

Note the things which were to be accomplished in "seventy weeks":

To Finish the transgression

To make an end to sin

To make atonement for iniquity

To bring in everlasting righteousness

To seal up the vision and prophecy

To anoint the most holy place

B. The Events of the First Sixty Nine Weeks 9:25

Q - What did the conditions of Jerusalem's rebuilding imply for Israel? The prediction that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would take place during "times of distress" indicates that the rebuilding of the city would not be done without difficulties or opposition.

C. The Cutting Off of the Messiah 9:26

1. The Death of Messiah

Q - In what sense was Messiah to be “cut off and have nothing”? The cutting off of Messiah anticipates His premature death on the cross, and the prediction that He would have nothing may anticipate that He would not be sitting on His kingdom throne as Old Testament prophecies indicated that the Messiah would be in His millennial kingdom.

2. The Destruction of Jerusalem

Q - To whom might “the prince who is to come” refer? His “people”? The “prince who is to come” and “his people” apparently refer to the Roman emperor and the armies led by Titus who destroyed the temple of Herod and the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

3. The Conditions of the End Time

Q - What did the prediction of coming war and desolations forebode for Israel? It anticipated the wars and desolations to which the people of Israel have been exposed down through the centuries between their dispersion by Rome and their exaltation at the end of the tribulation as the millennial kingdom of Christ begins.

D. The Events of the Final Week 9:27

1. The Making of the Covenant

Q - What kind of covenant will Israel be needing to make with the “prince”? Israel will need to make a covenant with the prince who is to come (antichrist) - assuring their protection

from enemy nations who will have tried to annihilate them during the battle of Gog and Magog predicted in Ezekiel 38-39.

2. The Breaking of the Covenant

Q - What is significant about the breaking of the covenant? The breaking of the covenant in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period refers to the time when the antichrist will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering as he “takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (II Thessalonians 2:4) - the “abomination of desolation” to which Jesus referred (Matthew 24:15-16), prefigured by the desecration of the temple during the time of Antiochus IV.

3. The Destruction of the Desolator

Q - Why will the destruction of the “desolator” be good news for Israel? The destruction of the “desolator” (antichrist) will mark the end of his “desolations” and the second coming of Christ which will introduce the millennial kingdom for which the people of Israel have waited for thousands of years.

Think About It: Daniel’s prophecy of “seventy weeks” provided a time frame for the coming of Messiah - and beyond.

Apply It: What does the precision of Daniel’s “seventy weeks” prophecy reveal about the Lord’s control over human history?

Daniel's Vision of 70 Weeks

7 (days per week) $\times 69$ ("weeks") $\times 360$ (days in the Jewish year on the calendar) = 173,880 days from the going forth of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah's death. But the date of the "commandment" to rebuild Jerusalem is uncertain.

Ezra was sent by King Artaxerxes to Jerusalem to teach the laws of God in 457 B.C. 457 B.C. plus 173,880 days leads to a date around 26 A.D.

Nehemiah was sent by King Artaxerxes to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city on March 14th of 445 B.C. 445 B.C. plus 173,880 days leads to a date around 38 A.D.

If Jesus was crucified around 32 A.D. (as some have speculated), the 173,880 days of Daniel's prophecy would take us back to a date of 441 B.C. as the date of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem - but no such commandment is known at that date.

So it is not exactly clear how the math works out for Daniel's prophecy, but each calculation would take us to the approximate time of the crucifixion of Jesus. So there are some details not yet clear about the prediction of this passage.

Bible scholar Alva McLain has stated that the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem was given March 14, 445 B.C., and that March 14th of 445 B.C. plus 173,880 days leads to April 14, 32 A.D. On this day Messiah was to be "cut off." But the math he cites does not add up, so Daniel's prediction is seemingly still clouded in some mystery.

“Daniel’s Prayer and Final Vision” (Part One)

Daniel 10:1-11:1

Q - Why is it, when God’s truth is so important and so available, that so few people accept it as the truth it is?

The tenth chapter of Daniel gives us an unusual look behind the scenes at the spiritual forces which oppose God’s truth! So mankind’s rejection of God’s truth results, in part, because of man’s sinful nature - inclining mankind to reject God’s word as man pursues his own agendas (seeking to control his own life rather than submit to the control of the Lord). But mankind’s rejection of God’s truth is also influenced by the presence of deceptive spiritual beings (i.e. Satan and his army of demons) who wage spiritual warfare against human beings. As the Apostle Paul warned (Ephesians 6:12), “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” The Prophet Daniel received some “inside information” on the subject in the tenth chapter of his book.

I. The Reception of Daniel’s Vision 10:1-9

A. The Background of the Vision 10:1-3

1. Daniel’s Revelation of the Vision 10:1

Q - In what sense do you think Daniel’s message was one of “great conflict”? The message delivered to Daniel was one of “great conflict” because it came from an angel who revealed that he had been opposed in delivering it by the prince of the kingdom of Persia - a powerful demon who resisted the Lord and His word throughout the Persian Empire (v. 13).

2. Daniel's Preparation for the Vision 10:2-3

Q - What unusual experiences prepared Daniel for the message he was about to receive? Daniel had been mourning and fasting for three weeks out of his concern for the well-being of the people of Israel in his day (9:3) and his awareness of Jeremiah's prediction (9:2) that Jerusalem would be "desolated" for the seventy years of their Babylonian captivity, which now was about over.

B. The Interpreter of the Vision 10:4-9

1. The Vision's Location 10:4

Q - What might have kept Daniel in Persia when many of his countrymen were returning to Israel? By this time in his life Daniel was well along in years (84?), and he was still recognized as a prophet of the Lord by some in the Persian government.

2. The Vision's Deliverer 10:5-6

Q - What might we surmise about the man Daniel saw in his vision by Daniel's description of him? We are safe to assume that the man Daniel saw in his vision was an angelic messenger of the Lord because of the splendor of his being and his attire - dressed in linen, his waist girded with a belt of pure gold, his face like lightening, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

3. The Vision's Impact 10:7-9

Q - What might have caused Daniel's companions to run when they didn't see the vision? Daniel's companions could

see the impact that the vision was having on Daniel, so they ran in great dread to hide themselves from a phenomenon with which they were unfamiliar.

Q - What might have caused Daniel's unusual reaction to the vision he was witnessing? Daniel was apparently frightened by the unusual person he was seeing and hearing, so he responded with awe and fear - passing out when he heard the sound of the voice of the person who had appeared to him.

II. The Resistance to Daniel's Vision 10:10-17

A. The Opposition to the Vision 10:10-14

Q - What do these verses teach us about the action "behind the scenes" in the spiritual realm? These verses teach us that there are both good and evil angels who move about in realms we are not tuned into, who seek (in the case of good angels) to serve our interests or who seek (in the case of evil angels) to obstruct the Lord's plans for our good.

Q - Why might Satan be so intent on keeping the understanding of Daniel's vision from him? Satan was certainly aware that the Lord had taken a special interest in the life and ministry of Daniel, and had given him revelation which would be very helpful to future generations if Daniel had all the information which the Lord wanted him to communicate by his inspired writings.

B. The Impact of the Vision 10:15-17

Q - What is there about the content of Daniel's vision which might account for the spiritual conflict which accompanied it? The fact that Daniel's vision contained revelation about what would happen to his people (and the world at large)

in the latter days meant that Satan had a special interest in interfering with prophetic insights which would help God's people navigate life in an informed manner.

III. The Resources for Daniel's Vision 10:18-11:1

Q - What do we learn about the activities of angelic beings in these verses? We learn that angelic messengers serve the Lord's purposes for good in the lives of both His chosen people (Israel, in Daniel's case) and in the lives of Gentile rulers and their nations. And we learn that evil angels seek to disrupt the Lord's work in the lives of people on earth.

Think About It: The revelation of divine truth is not something the forces of Satan allow without opposition! We possess and understand divine truth only because of God's significant provision!

Apply It: Are we empowered by God's word and His Spirit to understand spiritual revelation which Satan wants to keep from us?

“Daniel Anticipates Pre-Christian History”

Daniel 11:2-4

Q - Have you ever heard of a historian who could write about the events of human history before they took place?

We don't normally think of Daniel as a historian, but chapters 11 and 12 of his prophecy read like history - even though they were written BEFORE the events they so accurately predict and describe! His predictions were so detailed and accurate that his critics have argued that he couldn't have written the book which bears his name five hundred years before Christ. Some have suggested that the book was written by someone else, in his name, around 165 B.C. But, as we have seen early in our study, his book was translated in its entirety into Greek 200 hundred years before Christ, and it was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls which date back to two hundred years before Christ. So it already existed decades before his critics say it must have been written! Daniel 11:2-35 provides an accurate revelation of pre-Christian history written by Daniel centuries before it took place!

I. The Kings of Persia 11:2

v. 2 "And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all *of them*; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole *empire* against the realm of Greece."

Q - Who were the four kings of Persia referenced in Daniel 11:2? The four kings of Persia predicted in verse 2 are:

1. Cambyses (530-522 B.C.)
2. Pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata (522 B.C.)

3. Darius I (522-486 B.C.)

4. Xerxes I (486-465) - who attempted to conquer Greece in 480 B.C. (The Ahasuerus of the book of Esther)

The four Persian kings of Daniel's prophecy were not the ONLY Persian kings who followed Cyrus - there were nine in all - but they are the only kings worthy of mention because, after Xerxes, the Persian empire was never again a great power to be reckoned with.

Q - What significant facts did Daniel 11:2 anticipate about the fourth Persian king? Daniel 11:2 anticipated the riches and the rivalries of the fourth Persian king.

The fourth king of Persia after Cyrus was Xerxes (the Ahasuerus of the Bible who married the Jewish girl Esther) who reigned from 486-465 B.C.

1. His Riches

Xerxes is known to secular history as a person who accumulated great wealth - and who used his wealth to finance a large military force.

2. His Rivalry

Leopold (in Exposition of Daniel, p. 477) has written:

“It is a matter of historical record that Xerxes spent four years gathering his army from all parts of his empire, and that the sum total of his men amounted to more than two and a half million.”

Though, in Daniel's day, the Greek empire was still a future development, God predicted that it would be the nation which would arise to compete with Persia - which, of course, is

exactly what happened!

II. The Kingdom of Greece 11:3-4

(3) “And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. (4) But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded; for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.”

Q - Who is the early “mighty king” of Greece who is well described as one who “did as he pleased”? The “mighty king” who is well described in Daniel 11:3-4 is Alexander the Great.

This prophecy was very clearly fulfilled in the ascendance of Alexander the Great - a “mighty king” who earned his title “the Great” by the speed and soundness with which he established his kingdom and eliminated his enemies.

Q - What are we to understand by the fact that Daniel predicted that this “mighty king” would “do as he pleases”? Historians tell us that Alexander demonstrated his authority and did as he pleased by virtue of the fact that he seldom consulted his counselors for advice in the actions which he took, but he made many decisions on his own because his decisions were almost always wiser than the decisions of his counselors anyhow!

Q - What happened to the kingdom of the “mighty king” when his sovereignty was uprooted? As we learned earlier in Daniel’s prophecy (8:8), Alexander’s untimely death was followed by the disintegration of his kingdom. He died at such a young age (33) that he had no sons old enough to take his place, and no one else had the power and ability to take his kingdom over; so (following power struggles among varying

contestants) his kingdom was divided into four parts, each part led by one of the generals of his army.

Q - What were the four divisions of the kingdom of the “mighty king” when his sovereignty was uprooted? The four divisions of the Grecian empire mentioned in verse four are:

1. Macedon and Greece (ruled by Antipater and Cassander)
2. Thrace and Asia Minor (Lysimachus)
3. Syria (Seleucus I)
4. Palestine and Egypt (Ptolemy I)

The plans of Alexander’s generals that his sons should eventually assume the rule of his kingdom did not work out, so Greece quickly faded from the scene as a united kingdom and major world power as the divisions of Alexander’s kingdom became rival factions and entered into power struggles against each other.

Think About It: Though he didn’t live to see his all of his predictions realized, the Prophet Daniel accurately predicted the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece, leading up to the time of Christ and the advent of His church.

Apply It: For people who are interested in knowing what the future holds there is no better source of accurate information than the information the Lord has provided for us in His word!

“Daniel’s Vision Regarding Egypt and Syria”

Daniel 11:5-19

Q - What would make the history of Egypt and Syria of significance to the Jewish Prophet Daniel and the people of Israel? Israel, located between Egypt and Syria, was going to be “caught in the middle” of the tensions between them.

The division of the Greek Empire into four kingdoms following the untimely death of Alexander the Great was going to be relevant to much of the middle east where so many of the events recorded in the Bible have taken place - and are **yet** going to take place (as Daniel’s unfolding prophecy will reveal).

I. The First Contest Between Egypt and Syria 11:5-6

(5) “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.

Q - Who is the king of the South who grew strong as predicted in Daniel 11:5, and who would gain ascendancy over him? Seleucus I Nicator (385 - 281 B.C.), driven from Babylon by Antigonus, went south to serve under Ptolemy Soter (323 - 285 B.C.) - returning to Babylon when Antigonus died to retake his former authority over Babylon, Syria and Media and become stronger than Ptolemy.

The first of Alexander’s generals to become established in the land that he was to control was “the king of the South” (i.e. Egypt). When Seleucus (of Syria) fled from Antigonus of Babylon he joined forces with Ptolemy (“king of the South”) until he was in a position to re-establish himself as a powerful king over Syria and again “obtain dominion.” His kingdom (as

“king of the North”) eventually extended from Palestine to India.

(6) And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times.”

Q - What daughter of the king of the South would seek a “peaceful arrangement” with the king of the North, and how would the arrangement turn out? After an interval of sixty years, the king of the South, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246), tried to make peace with Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) by sending his daughter Berenice to marry him. But his first wife, Laodice, poisoned Antiochus and Berenice, fulfilling Daniel’s prediction.

About 60 years pass between verses five and six in Daniel 11. New kings are on the thrones in Egypt and Syria - but they are still called the “king of the South” and the “king of the North” (in reference to Israel).

At this time Antiochus II of Syria, called “Theos” (the Divine), was compelled to take the daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt as his wife, and to put aside his own wife Laodice. The “daughter of the king of the South” was Berenice. Her marriage to Antiochus ended when his former wife, Laodice, conspired to have Berenice and Antiochus put to death!

II. The Second Contest Between Egypt and Syria 11:7-9

(7) “But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the for-

tress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength.

Q - Who succeeded the king of the South when his daughter and the king of the north were unable to retain their power? Ptolemy II was succeeded by Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 B.C.). He retaliated for the death of his sister by invading the Seleucid Kingdom and conquering its capital, Antioch.

Ptolemy III Euergetes was "one of the descendants of her line" - a brother to Berenice. He went up against Seleucus Calinicus of Syria (246-226 B.C.) and did considerable damage against the Syrians. He re-established Egyptian predominance for the duration of his reign.

(8) And also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. (9) Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land."

Q - What was the new king of the South able to do in his contest with the king of the North? When an ancient nation's temples and idols were captured and/or destroyed, that nation was about as low as a nation could get, so it is obvious that the Syrian nation would fall on hard times at the hand of "Egypt" (called by name only in verse 8).

The wealth that Ptolemy III brought back from Syria from his campaigns earned him the name "Euergetes" - the "Benefactor." Jerome reported that there were 40,000 talents of silver and 2,500 idols. But Syria wasn't finished.

Q - How would you characterize the relationship between the kings of the South and North as described in Daniel 11:8-9?

The fact that the king of the South would refrain from attacking the king of the North for a period of time, and the fact that the King of the North returned north after a brief venture into Egypt indicates that the two nations were experiencing a time of relative peace.

The expedition which Seleucus Callinicus mounted against Egypt was not much of a success, though it does establish the fact that Syria was not yet to be dismissed from the action.

III. The Third Contest Between Egypt and Syria 11:10-19

Verses 10-19 describe a time of Syrian dominance over Egypt under the leadership of Antiochus “The Great” - the contest which occurred between the Egyptian king Ptolemy Philopater (222-205 B.C.) and his Syrian rivals Seleucus III (227-224 B.C.) and Antiochus III, “The Great” (224-187 B.C.).

A. The Attack by the North 11:10-13

v. 10 “And his sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress.”

Q - Whose sons does Daniel predict will “mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces” and “keep on coming and overflow and pass through” up to the whose very fortress? The sons of the Syrian king of the North are the ones who mobilized and assembled a multitude of great forces against Egypt. Though Seleucus Callinicus hadn’t had much success in his earlier attack against Egypt, his successors did much better. Seleucus met his death, but Antiochus carried on with notable success. Antiochus of Syria was so successful in his contest with Ptolemy Philopater of Egypt that he penetrated as far as

the “fortress” of Raphia southwest of Gaza.

At that point, though, the Egyptian King Ptolemy Philopater decided it was time to leave his vices and leisure to defend himself.

V. 11 “And the king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former.”

Q - Who does Daniel 11:11 predict will “go forth” to fight with whom, and what does Daniel predict will be the outcome of the hostilities predicted? Ptolemy Philopater of Egypt gathered a force of 73,000 men and 73 elephants, and though the forces of Antiochus were greater (72,000 soldiers, 6,000 horse soldiers, and 102 elephants) the “King of the South” prevailed in battle - until his head became swollen.

(12) “When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail.”

Q - What does Daniel 11:12 predict will be the outcome for the victorious king of verse 11 whose “heart will be lifted up”? It predicted that he would cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he would not prevail.

Ptolemy IV Philopater of Egypt responded quickly to the advances of Antiochus III and administered a severe defeat at Raphia - causing tens of thousands of the forces of Antiochus to fall. But his initial victory did not cause him to prevail.

Antiochus, who was called “The Great” for good reason, again raised large forces and moved with power against the Egyptians - who by now were facing internal struggles which

weakened their power.

(13) “For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.”

Q - What does 11:13 explain would keep the king whose “heart will be lifted up” from ultimately succeeding? The king of the North would raise a greater multitude than the king of the South, pressing on years later with a great army and a great amount of equipment.

B. Dominance by the North 11:14-19

“Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.”

Q - What role were “violent ones” among the people of Israel to play in defeating the King of the South? “Violent ones” in the nation of Israel, who were tired of the heavy taxation policies imposed on them by the Egyptians) would lift themselves up to fulfill the vision of the king of the North, but they would “fall down” when General Scopas of the Egyptian army, angered by their rebellion against the rule of the Ptolemies of Egypt, would rise up to punish the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah.

11:15 “then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.”

Q - What conquest by the King of the North was to turn the tide in the conflict between Syria and Egypt according to Daniel 11:15? Antiochus III “the Great” (the king of the

North) fought against General Scopas and the forces of Egypt at the battle of Panium (near Paneas, which is NT Caesarea Philippi), a “well fortified city,” in 198 B.C. The Egyptian forces fled to Sidon where they were soundly defeated, and all the efforts of Egypt to regain their losses proved fruitless. and General Scopas finally surrendered.

11:16 “But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand.”

Q - What impact was the victorious King of the North to have on the land of Israel according to Daniel 11:16? In connection with these events Antiochus entered “the Beautiful Land” (i.e. the land of Israel). Historians tell us that he “released Jerusalem from all taxes for three years, and afterward from one third of the taxes: (Leupold, quoting Rappoport, p. 489) - so it is obvious that Antiochus was in control of the affairs of Israel at this point! The fact that we are told that “destruction [would be] in his hand” indicates that Antiochus would make a show of his power during his stay in Israel.

11:17 “He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side.”

Q - What was the King of the North to do in his attempt to further his influence over the King of the South according to Daniel 11:17? Antiochus the Great decided to propose a peaceful settlement with Egypt - though his heart was full of deceit in the matter. To that end he offered his daughter, Cleopatra (not the Cleopatra who was married to the Roman general Antony), to Ptolemy Epiphanes in marriage - intending to use her as a tool against her husband to ruin the treaty of peace which he proposed. His plan didn’t work, though, be-

cause Cleopatra turned out to support her Egyptian husband rather than her Syrian father.

11:18 “Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. (19) So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.”

Q - How do verses 18-19 in Daniel 11 explain the end of the influence of Syria at the hand of the Romans? The coastlands toward which Antiochus decided to turn were the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea to the south and north - the coasts of Egypt and Asia Minor. He seemed to be making an attempt to set back the growing power of Rome. This turned out to be a mistake, though, because he soon found himself taking a sound thrashing from Lucius Scipio, a Roman official, who put a stop to his scornful ways and repaid him with defeat!

Returning to his own turf with “his tail between his legs,” Antiochus met his end and faded out of the picture - just as Daniel predicted he would.

Think About It: Daniel’s prophecy in 11:2-19 reads like history because the Lord knows what will happen before it happens!

Apply It: What other possible explanation could be offered for Daniel’s ability to describe in such detail what would happen hundreds of years later than the explanation that Daniel was inspired to prophesy by God’s Holy Spirit! No other book in existence contains such clear evidence of divine inspiration as the Bible does!

“Road’s End for Syrian Power”

Daniel 11:20-35

Q - What would you think if someone brought you a book, written before you were born, which mentioned you by name and told about some of the events of your life?

According to tradition, the prophet Daniel took Isaiah’s prophecy with its mention of the Persian King Cyrus by name and read it to Cyrus! Daniel 11:20-35 continues to provide an angelic explanation of Daniel’s final vision - unfolding an amazing revelation of Pre-Tribulation History (11:2-35). Having predicted four kings of Persia (11:2), and the kingdom of Greece (11:3-4), the angel went on to tell of coming contests between Egypt and Syria in 11:5-35. Daniel 11:20-35 continues the saga by telling of two oppressive Syrian kings.

I. Daniel’s Prophecy of Seleucus Philopater (187-176 B.C.) 11:20

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

Q - What would be a good way to get rid of the “oppressor” (exacter of tribute) sent to Israel by a Syrian despot without violence (like that which killed his father) or warfare? Seleucus Philopater was poisoned to death by his own tax collector, Heliodoros.

After the reign of Antiochus III, “the Great,” who personally entered the land of Israel after some of the Jews (v. 14) raised up in rebellion against their Egyptian masters, the plot would thicken for the people of Israel, who now would be under the control of the Syrian kings.

Antiochus “The Great” was followed by Seleucus Philopater who - as Daniel predicted - sent an “oppressor” through the “Jewel of his kingdom” (i.e. the land of Israel).

Because Seleucus Philopater had to pay a large amount of tribute to the Romans each year, he sent a tax collector named Heliodorus to Israel to take some of the riches of the temple at Jerusalem to help him pay the Romans. This situation came to an end when the king was removed from his throne. Daniel predicted that he would be shattered, “though neither in anger nor in battle,” so the report that he was poisoned by Heliodorus, his tax collector, makes good sense.

II. Daniel’s Prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) 11:21-35

Antiochus Epiphanes is a man who is well-known to history - the “little horn” of Daniel 8:23-25 - a king who pictures the antichrist of the last days (whom we will meet later in this chapter).

A. His Power 11:21-24

1. His Takeover 11:21-22

11:21 “In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. (22) The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.”

Q - How did Daniel predict Antiochus Epiphanes would gain control over the Persian Kingdom? He would gain control of the Israel in a time of tranquility by intrigue.

“a despicable person”

So called because of the unusual difficulties he would cause for the Jews by his thoroughly pagan practices.

“On whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred”

Antiochus became the king of Syria, but he did it by force - not by virtue of his right to the throne.

“but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue”

At the time king Seleucus Philopater died there were two sons who were the legitimate heirs to the throne. One of the sons, Demetrius, was a hostage of the Romans; the other was a baby named Antiochus. Antiochus Epiphanes, the brother of the late king, became the guardian of the boy-king Antiochus. When, through circumstances not clearly understood to history, the boy-king was murdered, Antiochus Epiphanes had his murderer (Andronicus) put to death and assumed the throne - “by intrigue.”

“and the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered”

Antiochus’ position would, at first, be a precarious one, with enemy forces “flowing” through his land, but he would soon gain the power to field his own forces to “flood” them out of his land and destroy all opposition in his land.

2. His Alliance 11:23

11:23 “After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.”

Q - What was the value of the alliance which was made by Ptolemy VI (“the prince of the covenant”) with Antiochus Epiphanes? Antiochus Epiphanes entered into a close relationship with Egypt for a time - but it soon became evident that he

was “practicing deceit” when he tried to use one nephew, Ptolemy Philometer, against another of his nephews, Ptolemy Euergetes, in Egyptian politics. By causing division in Egypt, Antiochus soon had brought things to the point where he could exercise control with only a “small force of people.”

3. His Schemes 11:24

“In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.”

Q - How did Antiochus Epiphanes make use of the time of tranquility to accomplish what his fathers never were able to accomplish? He used scheming methods to buy the favor and allegiance of people in power - something his predecessors had never done.

While it was common for ancient kings to gather “plunder, booty, and possessions” from their military victories, they normally used these things to enrich themselves. Antiochus Epiphanes, however, used them in his scheming way, to buy the favor and allegiance of people of power - something his predecessors had never done! We are told that he even managed to control some Egyptian fortresses, like Pelusium, by this means - keeping some of his own troops there as a way to gain entrance to Egypt if he needed it - though, as Daniel predicted, this only worked “for a time.”

B. His Problems 11:25-35

1. Problems with Egypt 11:25-27

a. War with the King of the South 11:25

11:25 “And he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.”

Q - What enabled Antiochus Epiphanes to prevail in war against his Egyptian counterpart, Ptolemy VI? Antiochus made more than one expedition into Egypt, and though there were the usual military losses on both sides, Antiochus’ “schemes” put him, for a time, on top in the contests which took place.

b. Trouble with the King of the South 11:26-27

11:26-27 “And those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. (27) As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.”

Q - How do verses 26 and 27 account for the failure of Ptolemy VI to succeed in war against Antiochus Epiphanes? Antiochus’ scheming was seen in the fact that even some of the intimates of the king of the South - “those who eat his choice food” (i.e. sit at his table) - rose up against him so that, even though he had a large and powerful army, the Egyptian suffered many casualties.

As verse 27 indicates, both the king of the North and the king of the South were intent on scheming each other out of existence, but neither one was completely successful, so that hostilities continued until the time which God “appointed” for such things.

In the mean time, though, Antiochus turned his frustrations against Israel . . .

2. Problems with Israel 11:28-35

a. His Intent Against the Covenant 11:28

“Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take actions and then return to his own land.”

Q - How does Daniel refer to the brutality of Antiochus in killing eighty thousand Jews and plundering the temple on his way back to Syria after defeating Egypt? Daniel writes that “his heart will be set against the holy covenant.”

What it was that set Antiochus’ heart “against the holy covenant” is not clear, but as he returned to his own land through Israel, loaded down with the spoils of his wars with Egypt, he also plundered the temple at Jerusalem, then returned to Syria.

b. His Actions Against the Covenant 11:29-31

11:29 “At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before.”

Q - How does verse 29 anticipate the outcome of the next hostilities of Antiochus against Egypt? Still hostile to Egypt, Antiochus attacked the south again, but this time he came up against new problems . . .

11:30 “For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened, and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take actions; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.”

Q - How would the interference by “ships of Kittim” (apparently ships from Cyprus) alter the plans of Antiochus according to verse 30? “Ships from Kittim” (Cyprus), sent by Rome, brought the Roman general c. Popillius Laenas to confront Antiochus and force him to submit to Roman power.

“Ships of Kittim” (Cyprus) came from the emperor at Rome to stop Antiochus’ plans against Egypt. In an incident well-known to history, the Roman general c. Popillius Laenas met Antiochus at the borders of Egypt and told him to leave the land. When Antiochus indicated that he would consider it, the Roman general drew a circle around him in the dirt and told him to make up his mind before he stepped out of the circle or face the forces of Rome in war!

Angered by the intervention of Rome, Antiochus headed home, but as he passed through Israel he decided to carry out some of his hostility against the Jewish covenant which he, for some reason, despised - so he stopped in Israel to find out how many Jews had forsaken the covenant and might be rallied to his side in a contest in Israel.

11:31 “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.”

Q - How does verse 31 anticipate that the people of Israel would be adversely affected by the frustrated plans of Antiochus against Egypt? Antiochus would put a stop to temple ritual in Jerusalem, desecrating the temple by placing idols in the temple and sacrificing a pig on the altar.

Forcing an end to the normal ritual of Old Testament temple worship, Antiochus erected in the temple an idol to Zeus Olympius (and possibly another idol) in an act which created abhorrence in the hearts of those in Israel who were

seeking to follow the law in regard to the worship of the Lord. In addition to the idol(s) he erected in the temple, he also sacrificed a pig on the temple alter - an act which was abhorrent to most Jews.

c. His Atrocities Against the Righteous 11:32-33

11:32 “By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.”

Q - What tactic would Antiochus use in his attempt to gain the support of some of the Jewish people? Antiochus offered gold and silver to the Jews who would ignore his insult to their God and His temple and follow his lead (I Maccabees 2:18; 7:24).

Though there were many in Israel who didn't care that Antiochus had desecrated the temple, and who sided with him, there were others who took very strong exception to Antiochus' acts and who went into action to undo what had been done.

11:33 “Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.”

Q - How did Daniel predict “the people who know their God” would respond to Antiochus - at what cost? He predicted that they would stand up against Antiochus, but that they would be defeated by Antiochus, losing their lives for their faith.

Seeking to oppose a current world power in Antiochus, things did not go well for the forces of righteousness among the Jews. Many lost their lives in the struggle - though they were keenly aware that they were supporting the right cause, because

some of their number had the insight to understand and explain the issues at stake as they really were.

d. His Impact 11:34-35

(34) “Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. (35) And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.”

Q - What outcomes did Daniel anticipate would take place among the Jews under the influence of Antiochus? Daniel predicted that the Jews would be “granted a little help” in their conflict with Antiochus - which came to them under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus, who cleansed and restored proper worship to the temple. He also predicted, though, that many true believers would fall in the conflict..

Under the leadership of the well-known Judas Maccabaeus, the forces of righteousness were “granted a little help” - i.e. they were able to repulse the forces of Antiochus and to cleanse and restore proper worship to the temple.

Many students of history have objected that, what seemed to the righteous Jews a decisive and major victory, should be called in Scripture only “a little help.” The truth is, though, that it WAS “a little help” by comparison with the complete and final victory the Lord is going to give His people under similar circumstances in the final days of the present age!

Q - What transition is anticipated in Daniel’s account in the last part of verse 35? The transition of Daniel’s message to events of the “end time” is anticipated in his prediction that “those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure until the end time, because it is still to come at

the appointed time.”

Verse 35 is a description of what has been happening to the Jews ever since the days of Antiochus. Because after the Babylonian captivity the Jews never really, wholeheartedly returned to their God - but even rejected and crucified His Son Jesus when He walked among them - they have been faced with the refining fires of pressure and persecution, a thing which Daniel predicted would happen until the end time - the end appointed by the Lord who obviously knows and controls all things!

Think About It: The events described in Daniel 11:20-35 have all been confirmed by the unfolding of the history which followed Daniel's amazing predictions.

Apply It: Though the events of these verses are in the past from our perspective (they read like history to US), they were still FUTURE events from Daniel's perspective - clearly showing that the Lord is well aware of the details on the road ahead for His people, including those today who trust Jesus as Savior.

“Daniel’s Revelation of Tribulation History”

Daniel 11:36-45

Q - What predictions in the book of Daniel make it very evident that there is no reason to assign the writing of his prophecy to as late a date as 165 B.C.?

The prophecy of Daniel has demonstrated numerous times that Daniel was given detailed information from the Lord concerning future events which were well beyond the life of the prophet himself. His first explanation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream concerning the great statue in chapter 2 already looked far beyond the prophet’s own time to the future kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome - including glimpses of the final days of the region which was ruled by Rome. Daniel not only prophetically anticipated the centuries which immediately followed his day, but also the events of the still future “Tribulation.” His reference to “the end time” and events still to come “at the appointed time” in 11:35 transitions his prophecy far beyond the affairs of the Egyptian kings of the South and the Syrian kings of the North.

I. The Powerful King of the End Times 11:36-39

A. His Self-Exaltation 11:36-37

(36) “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.”

Q - What unusual acts of self-exaltation will characterize the end-time king? He will exalt himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods.

Q - What finished “indignation” will bring about the end of the prosperity of the end-times king? The end-times king will come to his end with the end of the tribulation.

B. His Self-Magnification 11:37

(37) “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.”

Q - Who might be some of the “gods of [the] fathers” of the end-times king for whom he will show no regard? Because the antichrist will apparently rise up in Europe, the “gods of his fathers” might refer to the materialistic distractions which are primary in so many lives in our increasingly secular age.

Q - What might be the “desire of women” for which the end-times king will have no regard? Probably the attraction to women which has historically characterized men down through the millennia of human history - implying, perhaps, an interest in the homosexual agenda.

Q - What will account for the end-times king’s disregard for “any other god”? The end-time king’s effort to exalt himself above any other god would account for his disregard for the true God or “any other god” (cf. II Thessalonians 2:4).

C. His Object of Worship 11:38

(38) “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.”

Q - What does the end-time king’s interest in a “god of fortresses” tell us about him? It tells us that he will have particular interest in military preparedness and in some supposed

“god” who is behind military preparedness.

C. His Practices 11:39

“For he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.”

1. His Militarism 11:39a

Q - What evidence does Daniel give of the end-time king’s military strength? Daniel says that the end-time king “will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god.”

2. His Promotions 11:39b

Q - On what basis will the end-time king grant promotions and authority in his realm? The end-time king “will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.”

II. The Feats of the King of the End Times 11:40-45

A. His Opponents 11:40-42

1. From North and South 11:40

Q - Who might we expect the kings of the South and North to be in view of the earlier parts of Daniel’s prophecy? Because the kings of the South and North in earlier times were kings from Egypt and Syria, it is possible that Egypt and Syria will once again play a significant role in end-times affairs in the middle east - most likely in alignment with other southern and northern nations with hostile intent toward Israel.

2. From Palestine 11:41

Q - While Israel will fall under the control of the end-time king, which surrounding regions will not? Edom, Moab and parts of Ammon will not fall under the control of the end-time king. Though the restoration of Edom is not mentioned in the prophetic writings, both Moab (Jeremiah 48:47) and Ammon (Jeremiah 49:6) are mentioned by the Prophet Jeremiah as nations whose fortunes will be restored in the latter days.

3. To the South 11:42

Q - Since the king of the South has already been mentioned, what is significant about the fact that Daniel singles out Egypt for mention in verse 42? The fact that the “king of the south” was from Egypt in ancient times makes Daniel’s reference to Egypt in verse 42 appear more likely that Egypt will once again be either the “king of the south” or a part of a coalition of nations constituting the “king of the south” in Daniel’s end-times prediction.

B. His Successes in Battle 11:43

Q - What does this verse reveal about the end-time king’s control? Verse 43 reveals that the end-times king will be successful in dominating Egypt and its treasures, and that Ethiopia and Lybia will probably be aligned with Egypt in the coalition of nations who are referred to in these verses as the “king of the south.”

C. His Concern for Rumors from the East and North 11:44

Q - Why might rumors from the east and north concern the end-time king? Rumors from the east could well anticipate the threat which a nation like Iran or China (among others) may pre-

sent to the ambitions of the end-times king, and rumors from the north could well anticipate the threat which nations like Syria and Turkey and Russia (among other possibilities) could present to his ambitions.

D. His Defeat 11:45

Q - What is significant about the end-time king coming to his end with no one to help him? The fact that the end-times king will establish his presence “between the seas and the beautiful holy mountain” (i.e. on the coastal plane or hills between the Mediterranean Sea and Mt. Zion in Jerusalem), but will come to the end of his influence with no one to help him, makes it seem likely that it is the Lord Himself who will bring an end to his life and his influence at the “battle of Armageddon” which is described in Revelation 19:17-20.

Think About It: Israel’s final woes in the present age will come from an end-time king who will be much like the ancient Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes.

Apply It: There is no human power, including Satan’s masterpiece who we know as antichrist, which will prevail against the power of the Lord and His commitment to His people Israel.

“Daniel’s Prayer and Final Vision” (Part Five)

Daniel 12:1-13

Q - What is the “pay-off” for ancient men of Israel like Daniel who faithfully served the Lord in difficult times?

The prophetic writings of the Bible provide not only some understanding of both the past and the future; they also provide insight and encouragement for God’s people as we live out our lives on a sin-cursed earth. Many times the Scriptures assure God’s people that there will be a rich reward in the future for those who are faithful to the Lord in this life. Daniel is certainly among the finest examples of faithfulness to the Lord during his long and colorful life!

I. The Final Time of Distress 12:1-4

A. The Prediction of Distress 12:1

Q - What do other portions of Scripture (e.g. Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21) call the “time of distress” referred to in this verse? Jeremiah refers to this time as “the time of Jacob’s distress,” and Jesus referred to this time as an unparalleled time of “great tribulation.”

B. The Prediction of Resurrection 12:2

Q - When does this verse indicate the resurrection of the end-time saints of Israel will take place (cf. Revelation 20:4-6; 11-15)? Daniel 12:2 seems to indicate that the resurrection of the end-time saints of Israel will take place at the end of the tribulation.

C. The Position of the Victors 12:3

Q - In what sense will those who “have insight” and who “lead the many to righteousness” “shine brightly” as this verse indicates? In the words of Jesus (Matthew 13:43), quoted from Daniel 12:3, “THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father.” Revelation 7:9,14 explains that believers coming out of the great tribulation will be clothed in white robes, made white after having been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

D. The Sealing of the Book 12:4

Q - Why was Daniel’s prophecy to be sealed up until the end of time? Because even Daniel himself did not fully understand the significance of the things he was writing, no one else in his time would have understood them. So the Lord instructed him to conceal his words and to seal up his book until the end of time when knowledge would increase. From our perspective in time what Daniel wrote is much clearer to us than it was to him as the author!

II. The Conclusion of the Vision 12:5-13

A. The Timing of These Events 12:5-7

Q - What length of time is probably described by “time, times and half a time,” and when is this period of time likely to take place? Comparing this passage with others in the book of Revelation, where other temporal references are described in terms of days (“1,290 days,” Revelation 11:3 and 12:6) and in terms of months (“forty two months,” Revelation 11:2 and 13:5), it seems evident that Daniel’s reference is describing three and a half years.

B. The Understanding of These Events 12:8-10

Q - In what sense have the wicked not understood while those with insight have understood the “concealed and sealed up” writings of Daniel? Most people have little or no interest in Scripture in general or in the book of Daniel in particular, and they lack the spiritual appraisal to which Paul referred in I Corinthians 2:14, so they do not understand what Christians are able to understand because of the believer’s interest in God’s word and illumination by His Holy Spirit.

C. The Timing of the Final Days 12:11-12

Q - If the 1,290 days marks the end of the tribulation, what might the 1,335 days of this verse signify? Though no one knows for certain, the time between the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the millennial kingdom may be the time in which the Lord renews the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 65:17) and arranges the new earth for the habitation of His people throughout the millennial age.

D. The Personal Word to Daniel 12:13

Q - What does the promise of an “allotted portion” for Daniel indicate concerning the future for Old testament saints? The “allotted portion” for Daniel (and other Old Testament saints) refers to the rewards which the Lord has in store for all the saints of the Old Testament era who, like Daniel, were faithful to the Lord in terms of their faith and their service.

Think About It: End-time judgments are going to be followed by end-time glory which will include people like Daniel who were blessed with divine insight and who served the Lord faithfully.

Apply It: Like faithful saints of the Old Testament era, the Lord has rewards in the kingdom age and the eternal state to follow

for all who have committed their lives by faith in service to His cause.