

DANIEL THE PROPHET

By Scott MacGregor

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Daniel is one of the most astounding books of the Bible. It is astounding for the prophecies contained in it that have already been fulfilled, and it is astounding for the prophecies specifically about the last days of the current epoch—known as the Endtime—that are yet to be fulfilled. The accuracy of the prophecies it contains, which include among other things the exact year that Jesus would be crucified, stand as a testament to its divinely inspired author and to his God. The fact that God, around 2,500 years ago, had these messages passed on to Daniel, many of which are directed to us in the twenty-first century, is proof of God’s love and concern for us. He wants us to be aware of the cataclysmic events that are soon to come upon the world so that we can prepare for them and be part of the glorious victory with Him at the end of it all.

Examining prophecies that have been fulfilled also builds our faith in prophecies yet to be fulfilled, and God’s revelations today. Just as God was able to reveal these things to Daniel over two and a half millennia ago, He is also able to speak to us and reveal to His servants now, as Daniel was His servant then, what will happen in the very near future. We can stand in awe of the insight into the distant future that He gave Daniel, but we should also stand in awe that the God who spoke to Daniel can also speak to us today. He is as concerned about the world now as He was then, and He is concerned about you and me.

As we study Daniel’s amazing book, let it build in us the faith for the future God wants us to have, and also the faith in His Word—both the written Word and the living Word—that He wants to speak to you and me.



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We will only be dealing with the version of Daniel that appears in the Protestant and Jewish Bibles. The Catholic and Orthodox versions contain writings attributed to Daniel—namely the chapters on Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon—that are placed in the Apocrypha.

The Book of Daniel is controversial. For a start, it was written in two languages—the first part in Hebrew, the middle section in Aramaic, and the last part in Hebrew again. That, critics of the book say, is indicative of more than one author. Also, much is made by skeptics about the fact that the book is so precise and successful in predicting events that occurred in the centuries immediately following Daniel's death. They therefore declare that it must have been written several centuries after Daniel died, by a later writer or writers, and was only attributed to Daniel to make it look like he had predicted the future.

And there are other controversies. Some of these have already been laid to rest, while others still need to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Several of them will be addressed as we progress through the book. However, we must remember that many times God requires us to believe by faith. He likes to see us take Him at His word simply out of love for Him and trust in Him. We are usually willing to give those we love the benefit of the doubt; can we not do as much for God?

The text from the Book of Daniel appears on the right-hand side of the page. It is presented this way in order to avoid repeating much of Daniel's writing within the commentary. It also allows the reader to move back and forth between the two texts with relative ease. Much of Daniel's original text is self-explanatory. The twelve chapters of this book coincide with the twelve chapters of the Book of Daniel.

CHAPTER 1: CAPTIVE OF BABYLON

The Book of Daniel opens with the soon-to-be king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II, besieging the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of Judah.

To put this in perspective, a little history is needed. For centuries before this event, the Assyrian Empire had cruelly ruled most of the Middle East, including the city of Babylon. It had conquered and destroyed Israel, Judah's sister kingdom to the north, in 722 BC, had deported many of Israel's inhabitants, and had largely repopulated that land with non-Hebrew people displaced during their other conquests.

Meanwhile, people from Chaldea, south of Babylon, had settled in the city of Babylon. Their leader, Nabopolassar, established himself as Babylon's king in 626 BC, after driving out the brother of the Assyrian king who previously had been its petty king and the vassal of his brother. The Assyrian royal house then engaged in civil war between the rival brothers, so Nabopolassar found himself given a free hand to establish the Chaldean dynasty in Babylon and begin what was to become the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

The internecine warfare caused the once invincible Assyrians to fall into sharp decline. Barbarian tribes were making inroads on Assyria's northern borders. At the same time, the Medes, a confederation of powerful nomadic tribes living in the land we now know as Iran, were on the offensive in the east. Nabopolassar, sensing the winds of change, allied himself with the Medes and, together, in 612 BC they sacked Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, once thought impregnable, and left it a wasteland. Just as the Jewish prophets Nahum and Zephaniah had predicted in 713 BC and 627 BC respectively: "[Nineveh] is empty, desolate, and waste!" (Nahum 2:10) and "a desolation, as dry as the wilderness!" (Zephaniah 2:13).

Daniel 1 (NKJV)

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Nineveh

Jonah, of Jonah-and-the-whale fame, wrote of Nineveh as an "exceeding great city." It lay on the eastern bank of the Tigris River in what is now modern-day Iraq, stretching for some 50 kilometers at an average breadth of 20 kilometers. A system of 18 canals brought water from the hills to Nineveh. After a period of decline, Nineveh finally fell in 612 BC, when it was attacked and razed to the ground by the Medes, Babylonians, and others. The Assyrian Empire shortly afterwards came to an end, the Medes and Babylonians dividing its provinces between them.

Around 400 BC, when Xenophon, the Greek soldier and historian, passed where Nineveh had stood, he made no mention of it. The city was buried, out



Neo-Babylonian Empire

² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

of sight, never to rise from its ruins. In fact, the idea that there had ever been an Assyrian Empire was in doubt until recent centuries. Skeptics claimed that the stories of its greatness and the names of its leaders as recorded in the Bible were fables. Yet when the ruins of its great cities such as Asshur and Nineveh began to be uncovered in the late nineteenth century, the critics were silenced, and once again the veracity of the Bible was displayed.

The Assyrians were down but not totally out, and they had powerful allies. One of these was the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II, who in the spring of 609 BC marched north with his armies to aid them.

We are not told why, but Josiah, the king of Judah, known for his piety and restoring the Law of Moses to its prominent place in Judah, denied Necho passage through his territories on his way to the relief of the Assyrians. He met Necho in battle at Megiddo, a site that will feature in the great Endtime battle of Armageddon. Judah was beaten in battle, Josiah was mortally wounded, and the Egyptian war machine rolled northward to initially meet success against the Babylonians.

Leaving most of his army in the north, Necho marched south again to his homeland, in the process deposing and imprisoning Jehoahaz, Josiah's son who had been installed as king, and replacing him with another of Josiah's sons, Eliakim, whose name he changed to Jehoiakim. Necho also placed Judah under heavy tribute.

But the fortunes of war were to change again. Nabopolassar, now old and infirm, retired from the command of his armies and placed his active

and capable son Nebuchadnezzar in command. Nebuchadnezzar won a major victory over the Egyptian and Assyrian armies at Carchemish and pursued the Egyptians south.

While the Egyptians retreated to their own land, Nebuchadnezzar stopped the pursuit to conquer the land they had vacated in Syria and Palestine. This brought him in 605 BC to the gates of Jerusalem. The siege does not seem to have been a long one. The people of Judah threw in the towel quickly as they were tired of Jehoiakim, the puppet of Egypt, and his constant demand for silver to pay the tribute demanded by Necho.

Over one hundred years earlier, Isaiah the prophet had told Hezekiah, then the king of Judah, that Babylon was going to conquer Judah and take all the treasure of the king's house away. Hezekiah had foolishly shown the envoys of the king of Babylon, then only a minor city state and a vassal of the Assyrian Empire, all the precious items that he had in his house.

"At that time Berodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

"Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, 'What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?' So Hezekiah said, 'They came from a far country, from Babylon.' And he said, 'What have they seen in your house?' So Hezekiah answered, 'They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.' Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the Lord: Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'" (2 Kings 20:12–18).

³ Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, ⁴ young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. ⁵ And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. ⁶ Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim captive and then hastened back to Babylon, as word had come that Nabopolassar had died. He carried away to his homeland, which is also called Shinar in the Bible, gold and other vessels from the Jewish temple, as well as a number of captives from the nobility of Judah, including “young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.” Among these captives were four youths: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

It was Nebuchadnezzar’s custom to take the idols from the various places he conquered and place them in subservient positions in the great temple of Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon, probably to show their ineffectiveness vis-à-vis this chief god of the Chaldeans. Daniel writes that Nebuchadnezzar took vessels from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and in the Second book of Chronicles we are told he “put them in his temple at Babylon” (2 Chronicles 36:7). It is assumed he did this because, unlike the religions of the nations around them, the Jews had no idol of their God, Yahweh, to transport there.

Nebuchadnezzar was by that time the supreme leader of a great and ascendant empire. Soon after he was crowned, he restored Jehoiakim to his throne, but only as a vassal of Babylon, to once again collect and pay tribute—but this time to be sent to his new master.

Meanwhile, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah began their training in the administrative corps of Babylon. This would include training in the scientific and magical arts, such as astrology and the divination of omens and signs. It was not without sacrifice. Men used in this capacity were usually made eunuchs, and Jewish tradition concurs that this happened to these four and thus fulfilled that portion of the prophecy of Isaiah mentioned earlier.

Having eunuchs in the role of palace officials has been customary even through recent times in many eastern countries. It had several advantages for the reigning monarchs. It provided administrators who would not be distracted by personal family matters. Also, most cultures in antiquity would not allow someone mutilated

⁷ To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-nego.

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. ⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.

¹⁰ And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.”

in this way—or any other way, for that matter—to become king. Therefore the king was freed from wondering whether a scheming official would try to usurp the throne. It also ensured that his wives and mistresses would not end up getting into dalliances with any of these officials, who often had the run of the palace.

It would also take a toll on these four young Jews' religious lives and would ensure that they would not have a great interest in returning to their homeland. Eunuchs were not allowed to worship in the Jewish temple, and so they were permanently cut off from the gathering together with the other men of Judah in the collective worship that was at the core of Jewish religious life.

To add insult to injury, the four were also given Babylonian names, each of them having some connection to a Babylonian deity. Daniel was named Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abed-nego.

The king offered compensations of sorts. The young trainees would be housed and trained in relative luxury and fed with food and wine from the king's table. This point was, however, anathema to Daniel and company. The food from the king's table was first offered to Marduk in his temple. Already suffering the unavoidable indignities of emasculation and loss of their Jewish identities, the four drew the line where they might have a choice. They declined to eat the food that had been first offered to idols as this rendered the food non-kosher, and therefore not able to be eaten by a Jew. Instead they insisted that they drink only water and eat only pulse (legumes), translated as vegetables in the New King James Bible.

The chief eunuch was afraid that this diet would diminish the health and good looks of the four and that he would incur the king's wrath if he allowed it to happen. After all, two of the criteria by which they had been chosen were that they had no blemish and were good-looking. But Daniel persuaded the steward who had the immediate responsibility for their meals to test them on this water-and-pulse diet for ten days. After those ten days it was found that they looked better than any of the other trainees, and so it seems they continued with that diet for at least the following three years until they had completed their training.

¹¹ So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

¹² Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."

¹⁴ So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.

¹⁶ Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

At the end of their training, Nebuchadnezzar interviewed them and found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in his realm.

Third or Fourth?

Jeremiah 46:1–2, states, “The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the nations. Against Egypt. Concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, which was by the River Euphrates in Carchemish, and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.” This seemingly contradicts Daniel 1:1, which places the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, an event that happened in the same year he defeated Necho, in the third year of Jehoiakim’s reign.

This seeming discrepancy actually strengthens the case for the Book of Daniel to have been written by someone used to Babylonian usage and idiom rather than by someone living hundreds of years later in Israel, during the time of the Maccabees, as claimed by critics of its authenticity. The way Babylonians and Jews calculated the ascendancy year of monarchs differed. The Jews counted the calendar year that a king was crowned as the first year of his reign. The Babylonians, however, counted that year as his ascendancy year, and the first year of his reign beginning on the next calendar new year. So Daniel, having been schooled in all the wisdom of the Babylonians and being a high official in that empire, would very likely have written his account using Babylonian idiom, placing this siege of Jerusalem in Jehoiakim’s third year as king; whereas Jeremiah, and his scribe Baruch, would have written using Jewish idiom, placing it in the fourth year.

¹⁷ As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. ²¹ Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMAGE IN THE DREAM

The second chapter of the book of Daniel is one of the best-known prophetic passages in the Bible.

The chapter is set in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. A quick look back to chapter 1 shows that Daniel and his companions were still in the years of their training, so the events in this chapter occur before Nebuchadnezzar quizzes them upon their graduation from training and finds Daniel and company ten times better than all his other wise men.

The original text switches in verse 4 from Hebrew to Aramaic. Chapter 1 and the first three verses in chapter 2 were written in Hebrew, but from this point until the start of chapter 8, the text is in Aramaic, the lingua franca at that time of the region we now call the Middle East.

King Nebuchadnezzar had dreamt an outstanding, troubling dream, apparently recurring. He had been awakened from sleep by the dream. People in those days believed dreams to be significant, so Nebuchadnezzar was determined to find out the meaning of what he had dreamt.

He called together his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans—in other words, the “wise men”—in order that they could tell him what he wanted to know. However, there was a problem. Bible translations put different meanings to the Aramaic in the first part of verse 5. The New King James Version and others translate it as “my decision is firm.” But the King James Version translates it as “the thing is gone from me,” thus giving it the meaning that he had forgotten the dream. Perhaps The Living Bible puts it in the clearest way when it quotes Nebuchadnezzar as saying, “I tell you the dream is gone—I can't remember it” (Daniel 2:5).

Interpreting a dream might not have been too hard for these fellows, but to tell the king what the dream was in the first place was totally beyond their powers. But Nebuchadnezzar was relatively new in his job and flush from military success on all sides. He was used to getting his way and would have none of their protests that he was asking the impossible. If they couldn't tell him what he wanted to know, and do so quickly, then they were useless to him and he was going to execute them all.

Daniel 2 (NKJV)

¹ Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. ² Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. ³ And the king said to them, “I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.” ⁴ Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.” ⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, still being in their apprenticeship, apparently were not in the court of the king when he pronounced his judgment on the wise men. They heard about the sentence from Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, when he came to enforce the decree, which applied to them as well. Their lives on the line, Daniel took an enormous step of faith. He convinced Arioch to bring him before the king. Daniel told the king that he would be able to answer the matter if he was given a little time. The text of chapter 2 makes it obvious that Daniel at this point didn't know the answer, but he had faith that he could get it from God.

Returning to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Daniel told them what he had done, and the four of them earnestly sought God to give them the answer. One can only imagine how stunned Daniel's companions were when he told them what he had committed them to. But there was nothing to lose. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would face further life-and-death crises in their time in Babylon, some of which are related later in this book, but the task Daniel had set them here must certainly have seemed daunting to this group of teenagers.

Yet God came through for them, just as He does for all those who, in faith and trust, put Him on the spot and expect the miraculous. The dream was revealed to Daniel, and you can read his wonderful prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God in the text of the chapter.

Daniel then summons Arioch and asks him to halt the carnage and take

⁶ However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."

⁷ They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation."

⁸ The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm:

⁹ if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean.

¹¹ It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."¹² For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.¹³ So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

¹⁴ Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon;¹⁵ he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.¹⁶ So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.

him to the king. Picture the scene: Before the greatest potentate on earth, the teenage apprentice wise man stands. Daniel doesn't tell us that he was nervous, but if he was like most of us, you can be sure his knees were knocking. Under sentence of immediate death if he didn't deliver, the lives of all his colleagues also in his hands, Daniel begins to address the king.

Daniel, seeing a chance to show how superior God was in comparison with the idols and incantations of the heathen wise men, first highlights the inability of all the other wise men to be able to tell the dream. Some of them were probably Daniel's teachers, with years of training. He then tells the king that there is a God in heaven who can tell the dream and give its meaning. Daniel's Babylonian name was Belteshazzar, named after the Babylonian god Bel, but this was not the God Daniel was referring to.

With the reverence due to his king, he informs Nebuchadnezzar that God had revealed to him the future. A Babylonian king played a significant religious role, being also the high priest of Babylon's religion. So it would certainly have flattered the king to think that he had actually lived up to his religious calling. But Daniel doesn't dwell on this for long, as he knows the king is impatient.

Daniel launches into the description of the forgotten dream. The king had dreamt that he had seen a great statue with a head of gold, arms and breast of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, two legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. Then a stone had come and struck the image on the feet and the whole image

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,

For wisdom and might are His.

²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons;

He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.

²² He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.

²³ "I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king's demand."

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation."

²⁵ Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation."

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had crumbled into dust and was blown away. The stone then became a great mountain and filled the earth.

The king must have been thunder-struck as the details of his dream came flooding back into his own mind. But Daniel made it clear that it wasn't because he was so smart or gifted that he was able to describe the dream, but that God had done it to keep the king from killing all the wise men. And that further to that, God wanted the king to know about the future.

Daniel then moved on to the interpretation: The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar. Surely it must have massaged the king's ego to think that God regarded him so highly as to picture him at the top of the statue and being made of the most precious of metals. However, it didn't just represent him, but also his empire.



²⁶ The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"

²⁷ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.

²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:

²⁹ As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰ But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. ³² This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel then explained how each other part of the image represented another kingdom or empire which would follow Babylon. He didn't name them, but the descriptions that he gave amazingly describe the primary empires that occupied that part of the world in the centuries to come.

Nebuchadnezzar's empire was to be followed by an empire inferior to his, at least in the Babylonians' estimation, just as silver is inferior to gold. This second empire, represented by the two arms and the upper torso of the statue, was at its core a confederation of two peoples.

Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire, was to conquer Babylon and large swaths of other territory. The Persians were a tribe situated to the east of Babylon, in what is now modern-day Iran. They were closely related to the Medes, and had been their vassals before Cyrus took power. Around 550 BC, Cyrus led his Persians in revolt against his maternal grandfather, Astyages of the Medes, and won a great victory over him at Pasargadae, later to be the site of Cyrus's capital. In that battle, large contingents of Medes sided with Cyrus, and from that point on, a Mede was second-in-command of the Persian Empire.

Two hundred years later, Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia and hegemon—or leader—of the League of Corinth, which included most of the city states of mainland Greece, led his relatively small army of 40,000 across the Hellespont between Europe and Asia. Within ten years he had conquered all of the Persian Empire and much other territory.

His empire, and the Hellenistic successor states that it fractured into after his death, were represented by the belly and thighs of bronze. It is significant that Greek mercenaries were commonly called “brazen men” and fought in the service of many foreign kings, including those of Egypt and Assyria. They earned their name from the distinctive bronze armor that they wore. We will revisit the Persian Empire and its Hellenistic conquerors later in this book, as they both figure significantly in Daniel's other prophecies and visions.

The fourth empire was depicted as two legs of iron that, just as iron is stronger than bronze, broke in pieces and crushed the Hellenistic successor kingdoms of Alexander's empire. Beginning with Greece and Macedonia at the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 BC, the Roman war machine inexorably conquered most of the remnants of Alexander's territories, ending with the incorporation of Egypt in 30 BC as a Roman province. Rome eventually was to conquer much more land to the west. Significantly, it would divide in two, just as in the two legs of the image. The Western Roman Empire centered at Rome fell in 476 AD, but the Eastern

³⁶ “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings.

For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. ³⁹ But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

Roman Empire, more commonly called the Byzantine Empire, with its capital at Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), would last, albeit for much of that time as a mere shadow of its former glory, for almost another 1,000 years.

The feet were of iron and clay, representing a mixture of strength and weakness. After the demise of the Byzantine Empire, other empires arose in the Middle East and Mediterranean basin, but history also witnessed the rise of independent nation-states, smaller in size than the mighty empires of antiquity. And just as in the symbolism of the image, some were strong and some were weak, a situation that prevails to this day.

And at the very bottom extremity of the statue are the ten toes, also made of iron and clay. These represent ten nations—unidentified as of now—but connected to the old Roman/Byzantine Empire which will play a significant role in the very end of this current epoch, or, as Daniel termed it, “the latter days.” These ten nations are closely allied to the final world tyrant, a maniacal figure whom the Bible calls the Antichrist. Totally possessed of Satan, the Antichrist will try to set up his empire on earth—the final and worst of man’s empires.

We will talk more about the Antichrist and what he does later in this book, but for an in-depth study on him and his ten allies read “The Beast,” chapter 3 in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.

The toes are the ten nations that the stone, cut without hand, crashes into. Then the whole image disintegrates and is blown away. The stone is Jesus Christ, and in the days of those ten toes He will return to earth and set up His kingdom that will never be destroyed, but which will fill the whole world as a great mountain.

We now have the advantage of centuries of hindsight and can see clearly how amazingly this vision has been fulfilled so far. But even without that, Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed that before the whole court, he fell on his face

⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

⁴¹ Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

before Daniel and worshiped him and extolled Daniel's God who could reveal such secrets as the king's dream and the interpretation.

So there we have one of the most amazing prophetic sections of the entire Bible, a passage that has strengthened the faith of many believers from then till now.

Fulfilled prophecy is the watermark of the Bible's veracity, revealing the imprimatur of God behind its words. Hold a banknote up to the light and you will see an image that is hidden under normal circumstances that attests to its genuineness. Likewise, when held up to the light of history, this passage is one of the most significant authentications of the Bible's divine inspiration.

The chapter ends with the king making Daniel ruler over the province of Babylon. Then it seems Daniel asked him if he could delegate this job to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, allowing him to more closely advise the king on matters pertaining to the overall empire. Putting this last part in context with chapter 1, it seems that this promotion did not actually happen for some time, at least not until after the four companions had completed their training.

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

CHAPTER 3

THREE WHO WOULDN'T BURN

In Daniel chapter 3 the author of the book plays no part. Instead, his three companions take center stage.

After having his dream interpreted, it is plausible that the egotistical king became carried away with his self-importance, because on the plains of Dura outside the walls of Babylon, he erected a golden image approximately 27 meters high and 3 meters wide. (About 90 feet high and 9 feet wide.) Perhaps it was in the likeness of the image he saw in his dream; only this image is all gold—or more likely covered in gold leaf, since it would seem improbable for a statue nine stories tall to be solid gold.

It has been conjectured that it was a statue of the king. Others believe it was of the supreme Babylonian god Marduk, or the god Nebo, the Babylonian god of “wisdom,” after whom Nebuchadnezzar was named. Or it might even have been like the image he saw in his dream. In any case, Nebuchadnezzar decreed that all the officials and people of his kingdom fall down and worship it when they heard music—or face the music if they did not!

For a very strange punishment was announced for those who failed to obey: They would be burned alive in a fiery furnace. This would seem to be a rather extravagant form of execu-

tion. In the previous chapter, when Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the wise men be put to death, it doesn't say that the executions were to be carried out in this manner. It seems this was an especially contrived, painful and fearful means of execution. Undoubtedly the horribleness of being burned to death was meant to enforce compliance. It could also have had eternal consequences in the minds of those faced with this kind of death, as their remains would not be able to be gathered for the

Daniel 3 (NKJV)

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; ⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

correct type of burial and that could seriously jeopardize their happiness in the afterlife.

Babylon had just established itself as an empire, and perhaps this ceremony was intended to ensure the loyalty of all the officials, many of whom, like Daniel and his friends, were recruited from the conquered lands. Bowing down to this image could possibly have been a way to make sure that all the officials of the empire acknowledged the lordship and supremacy of Babylon and its patron gods.

Nevertheless, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to bow, sticking to their religious convictions. This act of defiance was not a rejection of the king's authority over them. They were probably used to bowing low in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar. But to bow to an idol was not something they would do. Jews were forbidden by the Laws of Moses to bow to any statue, whether it be of a man or a god.

And some of the Chaldeans were watching. It makes one wonder how much falling to the ground in front of the image they were doing if they took time to see that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego weren't. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were in charge of the affairs of the province of Babylon, and they most certainly had gained some envious enemies due to their quick elevation to such important positions.

Whatever gratitude that the wise men of the Chaldeans may have had to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego for saving their skins in the previous chapter had obviously evaporated by now, and so they reported the noncompliance of the three men to the king. Nebuchadnezzar was furious and demanded that the trio be brought before him. He then questioned them as to the truth of the accusations and reminded them of the punishment.

Obviously they saw that there was no way around the matter and the king was quite determined to have his decree upheld, so they took the bold approach. They told him that since there were obviously lots of witnesses to what they had done—or rather had not done—there was no need to confirm or deny it to the king.

⁷ So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

Then comes one of the most ringing statements of faith in God's power and protection in the whole Bible: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image." They had total faith that it was within God's power to protect them; but even if He chose not to in this case, they still were not going to compromise and worship the idol. (The fact that they said they would not serve the Babylonian gods adds weight to the theory that it was an idol of one of the gods and not a statue of the king.)

This insubordination sent Nebuchadnezzar over the edge. He had been angry before, but now it seems his rage turned to hate. The three whom he had promoted so quickly were defying him—and publicly, no less!

The furnace was ordered to be heated "seven times hotter," probably a figure of speech to indicate that the furnace should be heated as hot as they could make it.

It is presumed that the furnace was a kiln for the firing of ceramic tiles, of the type that adorned the façades of various monuments in Babylon like the famous Ishtar Gate. Unbaked tiles were covered with sand and minerals and superheated in these kilns, until the sand turned to glaze.

But this time the furnace was going to be hotter than even the glazing required. Normally, the tiles would be placed in the furnace, the doors bricked up, and then the heat applied. Getting something into the furnace after it was fired was a challenge. There would have been only one way to get Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the furnace after it had been heated, and that was to throw them in from the opening at the top.

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. So they brought these men before the king.

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?" ¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

And from the passage, it sounds like this is what they did. Mighty men of valor were chosen from the army to bind the condemned, who were then carried fully clothed and thrown in. And we are told that the heat was so intense that it killed their executioners, who had to get close to the opening themselves in order to throw their victims in.

In such furnaces, there were small openings in the side for the workers to look in to see if the sand on the tiles had melted. And so it seems Nebuchadnezzar was able to see the action inside the furnace through one of these.

And there he spied not just three men but four. They were walking around, no longer bound and seemingly impervious to the flames, and the fourth, Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, looked like the son of God — perhaps an angel, or, as many believe, Jesus Himself. And not just the king, but those with him, also saw the fourth person.

The king went as close as he could get to the mouth of the furnace and called out to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, whom he now called servants of the Most High God, to come out. And so they did. And everyone there witnessed that not a hair on their heads was singed, and there was not even the trace of fire or smell of smoke on their clothes.

One can only wonder at the fear that fell on those who had ratted on the three to the king, especially after Nebuchadnezzar decreed that anyone saying anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came from the midst of the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

would, from then on, be cut to pieces.

As for Nebuchadnezzar, he had more to go through before he finally realized that the God of Israel was the one and only true God.

Where was Daniel during this event? The chapter is silent on this, and so it can only be conjectured where he might have been. Perhaps he was away on a mission for the king. In an odd way his absence from the action supports the claim that Daniel was the author of the book. Critics have claimed that the book is not authentic and that it was written centuries after the time of the Babylonian Empire, during Judah's struggles with the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. It would seem strange, if this was the

case, that the author would not have placed the main protagonist of the book at the center of the action. The fact that Daniel is absent lends credence to the belief that the book is the genuine article rather than a fictional forgery.

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!" ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

Greeks in the Band?

Some of the instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's "orchestra" are of Greek origin. Skeptics claim that there would have been no Grecian influence in Babylon or in the region before Alexander's conquests hundreds of years later, and that their inclusion in the text is proof of a later authorship of the book. However, records from antiquity have been unearthed that show that there was significant Greek influence in the area. As stated in chapter 2, there were Greek mercenaries in the service of the kings in the region. There were also Greek shipwrights building Nebuchadnezzar's navy. Musical instruments originating with the Greeks could have found their way to Babylon just as easily as the Greeks themselves.

CHAPTER 4

THE MADNESS OF THE KING

Chapter 4 is astonishing, not only for its content, but also for its authorship. It is a first-person account, and from the first verse it is clear that the person relating the events is none other than Nebuchadnezzar himself.

He begins with the description of another dream he had, which again required Daniel's interpretation. This time, however, Daniel is reluctant to tell the king its meaning, and wishes it was about the king's enemies and not the king.

The king dreamt of a tree that spread its branches so high and wide that all the peoples of the world could dwell under it. Yet in its prime, an angel commanded that the tree should be cut down so that only the stump remained in the earth. The dream foretells that the king would go insane, be driven from the presence of men, and would act and look like a beast of the field for seven "times," meaning either seven years or seasons.

Daniel begs the king to repent of his sins and thus possibly escape this fate. Perhaps the king did repent at first, but twelve months later, as he was walking through his palace, he began to brag about all that he had accomplished, all the great buildings he had built, and how he had beautified Babylon. It

Daniel 4 (NKJV)

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king,

To all peoples, nations, and languages
that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

² I thought it good to declare the
signs and wonders that the Most
High God has worked for me.

³ How great are His signs,
And how mighty His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from
generation to generation.

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house,
and flourishing in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream
which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my
bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

⁶ Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the
wise men of Babylon before me, that they might
make known to me the interpretation of the
dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the astrologers,
the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in,
and I told them the dream; but they did not
make known to me its interpretation. ⁸ But
at last Daniel came before me (his name is
Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god;
in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told
the dream before him, saying: ⁹ "Belteshazzar,
chief of the magicians, because I know that the
Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret
troubles you, explain to me the visions of my
dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

¹⁰ "These were the visions of my
head while on my bed:

DANIEL THE PROPHET

seems indicative of the main sin that Daniel was referring to, that the king's insanity came about not while he was actually busy with the construction of Babylon, but rather when he was pompously congratulating himself for his accomplishments. He was extremely proud, claiming he had done it all himself, and he failed to acknowledge the true God Who had allowed him to flourish.

In the same hour that the boast left his lips, Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, turned into a madman. For seven "times," just as the prophet had interpreted, he ate grass in the field like an ox. Covered in dew, eventually his hair grew long and matted until it looked like birds' feathers, and the nails on his fingers and toes looked like talons. "Boanthropy" is the clinical term for this mental disorder.

Even though it seems that those who had been his counselors and confidants abandoned him during that time, his kingdom remained secure. When at the end of his "sentence" his mind was restored, he glorified God. And here comes the moral of this story, the great lesson learned by the now humble and humbled king: "I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

"I was looking, and behold,
A tree in the midst of the earth,
And its height was great.

¹¹ The tree grew and became strong;
Its height reached to the heavens,
And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.

¹² Its leaves were lovely,
Its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches,
And all flesh was fed from it.

¹³ "I saw in the visions of my head while
on my bed, and there was a watcher, a
holy one, coming down from heaven.

¹⁴ He cried aloud and said thus:

'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit.
Let the beasts get out from under it,
And the birds from its branches.

¹⁵ Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the
earth,
Bound with a band of iron and bronze,
In the tender grass of the field.
Let it be wet with the dew of heaven,
And let him graze with the beasts On the grass
of the earth.

¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from that of a man,
Let him be given the heart of a beast,
And let seven times pass over him.

¹⁷ "This decision is by the decree of the watchers,
And the sentence by the word of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High rules in the kingdom of
men,
Gives it to whomever He will,
And sets over it the lowest of men.'

¹⁸ "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar,
have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare
its interpretation, since all the wise men of

Just when in Nebuchadnezzar's 43-year reign this incident occurred is not known. In his later years he concentrated on the many building projects of Babylon. Perhaps the fact that this abasement occurred as he was patting himself on the back for all the beautiful buildings and other construction in Babylon would indicate that it happened after his final campaigns against Tyre and Egypt, sometime between 572 BC and his death in 562 BC. There is also a notable absence in Babylonian annals of any act or decree by Nebuchadnezzar during the years 582–575 BC, so that is another probable timeframe for his madness to have occurred.

Why he was not deposed during that time is also unclear. It could be because madness was looked upon differently in those days. In antiquity, epilepsy was known as the “sacred disease,” and notable rulers such as Julius Caesar and, by some accounts, Alexander the Great suffered from it. Far from being a curse, it was believed to be a sign that someone had been touched by the gods. Oracles, the heathen equivalent of prophets, often fell into fits of madness as they gave their prophetic utterances. So even though Nebuchadnezzar's madness would have been evident, perhaps those who could have gained power through mounting a coup were afraid of getting on the wrong side of the gods if they did so. Furthermore,

my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.”

¹⁹ Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!” ²⁰ The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, ²¹ whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home — ²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. ²³ And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’; ²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: ²⁵ They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. ²⁶ And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

Daniel was evidently in a place of high standing in the kingdom, and he may have stood in the way of any rebellion, considering that he knew God had indicated that Nebuchadnezzar would eventually regain his sanity and that the kingdom would be restored to him.

Babylonian nobility, including those of the royal family, were certainly capable of duplicity, scheming, and rebellion, as is seen in the events following Nebuchadnezzar's death. Amal-Marduk, known in the Bible as Evil-merodach, succeeded his father, Nebuchadnezzar, who died in 562 BC. He apparently reversed some of his father's policies, as is evidenced by the fact that he freed the king of Judah, Jehoiachin, from 37 years of captivity and placed him in a position of honor and comfort in his court.

Amal-Marduk was only to hold the reins of government for two years before he was deposed and killed by his brother-in-law, Nergal-sharezer, who in turn died after only four years. His young son, Labashi-Marduk, reigned in his stead for only months before being deposed and killed by Nabonidus, a usurper with no known relationship to the ruling dynasty. For a usurper who had risen to power through violence and conspiracy, Nabonidus showed an unusual disdain for the power he had coveted. He left Babylon after some years and settled in the

²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

²⁹ At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. ³⁰ The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

³¹ While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

³⁴ And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom is from generation to generation.

³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing;

He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

oasis town of Tayma, in Arabia. He there indulged his passion of the study of ancient Babylonia and its gods and temples, leaving his dissolute and apparently incompetent son Belshazzar as his co-regent in Babylon.

And so the scene is set for the next chapter.

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

The events in this chapter occur on the last night of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, during a great feast that Belshazzar was hosting in his palace.

One of the greatest conquerors and rulers of antiquity was on the move. Cyrus—who would become known as Cyrus the Great—had united the Persians and the Medes under his rule. His father was Cambyses the Elder, the king of Anshan, and his mother Mandane, daughter of the king of Media.

At his father's death, he ascended the throne of Anshan and somehow soon superseded his cousin Arsames as king of the Persians. But he was still a vassal king to his grandfather Astyages, the king of Media. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, who lived about 100 years after these events, Astyages was a cruel tyrant, and Cyrus and the Persians rose in revolt against him. During a crucial battle, many disaffected Medes went over to Cyrus, and by 550 BC, he had captured Astyages's capital of Ecbatana.

The Persians and Medes were now in complete confederation. Cyrus went by the title King of the Persians, although it seems that Nabonidus referred to him as King of the Medes. He faced dangerous enemies. Croesus of Lydia, Nabonidus of Babylon, and Amasis of Egypt were intent on uniting their armies against him.

But Cyrus struck first. He moved north and attacked Lydia, conquered its capital of Sardis, and took King Croesus prisoner. Cyrus next moved south to meet Nabonidus, who with his Babylonian armies were moving north to give battle. In June 539 BC, near Opis (which is close to modern-day Baghdad) the Persians thoroughly routed the Babylonians, and Nabonidus fled.



Perhaps the night that he parted, Belshazzar had no idea that the armies of Babylon had been routed and the Persians were nearly at the gates of his city.

Either that, or he was thoroughly satisfied that mighty Babylon could withstand the siege of the Persians, because he seemed totally unconcerned about any impending attack. It was party time, and he was feasting with a thousand of his lords, along with his wives and concubines. He even thought it great fun to drink from the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged years before from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

But then he saw a mysterious hand appear that scrawled the now-famous handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar was terrified at what he witnessed, and he called on all the wise men of Babylon to interpret what was written. But none of them could decipher it, even with the reward of being named number-three-man in the empire.

Then the queen arrives on the scene after hearing of the commotion. She was likely the wife of his father Nabonidus, since it was stated previously that Belshazzar's wives were already at the banquet. And she is old enough to remember that Daniel, who would by then be in his seventies or eighties, had been pretty good at figuring out this sort of thing.

So Daniel was urgently summoned and brought before the king to interpret the writing, and offered the third place in the kingdom if he could do so. Daniel tells the king he isn't interested in any rewards or promotions,

Daniel 5 (NKJV)

¹ Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.

² While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

⁵ In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶ Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. ⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." ⁸ Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. ⁹ Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

but that he will interpret the writings. But first he gives Belshazzar a good stiff lecture. “You have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.”

Then Daniel reads the words to him. “*MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.*”

Why couldn't the other wise men have read something so straightforward? It is recorded in Aramaic in Daniel's book, so presumably it was written on the wall in Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of the Babylonian court and populace, so why would it have been such a puzzle?

We don't really know for sure, but here is one theory: Aramaic was written right to left with the same letters that ancient Hebrew was. It was a written language without vowels and no space between words. Context, therefore, had a lot to do with understanding what written words meant. If there had been a long passage, it would have been easier to figure it out, but here was only a string of letters, the rough equivalent of “MNMNTKLPHRSN” in Roman characters. This combination of consonants could have meant a number of things.

Further to this, for those who knew their Aramaic, as even Belshazzar

¹⁰ The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change.” ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. ¹² Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”

¹³ Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?” ¹⁴ I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

¹⁵ Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. ¹⁶ And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

did, even if they did get the right words, the actual phrase written was more or less nonsense. Basically it said, “Numbered, numbered, weighed, divided.” It sounded more like rough notes scribbled by some merchant on the margin of his accounts than anything of great significance.

The challenge facing Daniel was to find out not only what the words were, but also give them meaning. While others could have read the words, only God, as the author, could have revealed their meaning.

“*MENE*: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; *TEKEL*: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; *PERES*: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Mene repeated twice meant numbered and finished numbering it. *Tekel* meant weighed, and in a clever change of vowel sounds also means found to be too light. *Upharsin* meant it was now divided or split.

This time as Daniel interprets the writing, he reads the last word in the singular tense of the verb, thus rendering *upharsin* as *peres*. By switching in a few alternate vowels between the Aramaic consonants, it now spelled “Persians.” Daniel was telling Belshazzar that God had taken his realm from him and given it to the Persians.

As he had promised, Belshazzar went ahead and clothed Daniel in the royal purple and draped the gold chain around his neck and proclaimed him third ruler in the kingdom. Whether he believed Daniel or not, we don’t know. But we do know

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

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. ¹⁹ And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. ²¹ Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. ²² But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. ²³ And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴ Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

²⁵ “And this is the inscription that was written:

that he soon discovered the truth. That very night the Persians entered Babylon ... and Belshazzar was slain.

According to the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon, the Persians diverted the water from the Euphrates that flowed through the city, and they then entered the city under the walls along the riverbed. Babylonian and Persian chronicles say that the Babylonians themselves, and specifically the priests, opened the gates to the Persians and welcomed them as liberators from the tyranny of the Chaldean dynasty. A translation of an inscription attributed to Cyrus the Great states that on the 16th day of Tashritu (equivalent to the 11th of October), 539 BC, Ugbaru the governor of Gutium (an area north of Babylon, possibly the area now known as Kurdistan), entered Babylon at the head of the Persian army, without a battle.

Why would the priests of Babylon have turned against the dynasty? Apparently Nabonidus had angered the priests of many of the various gods worshiped in the region because he brought the idols from the surrounding towns into Babylon in order to ensure greater divine protection for that city from the enemy. However, by doing that, he infuriated the people from the towns that had been stripped of their “protection.” In addition to this, the Persians had gained a reputation for religious tolerance and even participation in the religious rituals of those they had conquered. So perhaps the priests of these gods figured that their best interests looked to be with the Persians.

Or, with news of his father’s defeat by the Persians in the north, the priests could have figured Belshazzar was done for, and they wanted to back the winner and hopefully ensure that they continued in their positions.

On the 29th day of October that year, 18 days after Babylon fell to the Persians, Cyrus entered the city and was proclaimed king of Babylon.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

²⁶ “This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” ²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Who’s His Father?

In the text of this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar is referred to both by Daniel and the queen as Belshazzar’s “father.” Obviously, Nabonidus was his actual father, so why was he referred to in this way?

It was quite possibly Babylonian idiom to term a predecessor as father. There is precedent for the usage of “father” in this way. On the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, an Assyrian king, it refers to King Jehu of Israel who was no relation to the previous king, Omri, as “the son of Omri.” Assyrian and Babylonian usage is similar.

It is also quite possible, to legitimize his reign, that Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, thus making Belshazzar Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson. The same word is used for “father” and “grandfather” in Babylonian Aramaic (also called Biblical Aramaic).

There also used to be controversy as to why Belshazzar was called king in this chapter. Obviously his father Nabonidus was king, so that would only make Belshazzar crown prince. But it was often the custom of kings in antiquity to raise their sons to the rank of co-monarch to both train them on the job and to ensure a smooth succession. A clay tablet found at the site of Ur has an inscription attributed to Nabonidus that contains a prayer for himself followed by a second prayer for his firstborn son Belshazzar. The type of prayer in question was customarily offered only for the reigning monarch. Other cuneiform documents state that Belshazzar presented sheep and oxen at temples in Sippar as “an offering of the king.”

The Greek historian Xenophon also describes the last king of Babylon as “a riotous, indulgent, cruel, and godless young man” who was killed on the night Babylon was taken. Obviously Nabonidus was not a young man, and records show that he was not killed but captured and then sent into exile. By the time of Herodotus and Xenophon, the name of Belshazzar had been lost and critics of Daniel used to claim he was fictional. Archeological discoveries over the last hundred years, however, have turned up his name and position in Babylonian records. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* states that Belshazzar was coregent with Nabonidus from 550 BC.

It is also noteworthy that Belshazzar only offered Daniel third place in the kingdom. This indicates that first and second places were unavailable, most likely because they were occupied by Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

CHAPTER 6 THE LIONS' DEN

Before we look at the events in chapter six of Daniel, we will examine the issue of who is Darius the Mede that is spoken of in the last verse of Daniel, chapter 5. Darius (pronounced *da-rye-us*) is further identified in Daniel 9:1 as “Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.” There are no extra-biblical records of anyone by that name being king of Babylon during the specific time frame.

There were several kings named Darius who ruled the Persian Empire after Cyrus, but the first of these, Darius the Great, only became king seven years after Cyrus’s death. Daniel states at the beginning of Daniel 10 that the revelation he would write about in the next three chapters was given in the third year of Cyrus’s reign; and then at the beginning of Daniel 11, the angel who brings the message states that the first year of Darius the Mede’s reign was previous to this revelation. So the famous Darius the Great could not be the Darius of this passage.

As mentioned in our last chapter, a person by the name of Ugbaru led the Persian troops into Babylon. Secular records also talk about a Gubaru as being governor of Babylon four years after the conquest. For some time it was thought Ugbaru and Gubaru were the same person, but now it is known they were not, as more recently unearthed records show that Ugbaru died three weeks after the capture of Babylon.

It is possible that Gubaru the governor was the biblical Darius the Mede. It wasn’t uncommon for rulers of part of an empire to also be referred to as kings, and the overall ruler of the empire to be called king of kings. So this Darius, even though he might not have been king over the whole empire, could have still been referred to as king of Babylon.

Some scholars have suggested that “Darius,” rather than being a name, was quite possibly a title or a throne name assumed when he became king. Translated from Aramaic, it means “he who holds the scepter.”

Gubaru, according to Babylonian and Persian records, made laws for the area of Babylon and did other things that were normally only the prerogative of kings.

Another theory is that Darius the Mede was actually Cyrus. This gains weight from another possible translation of the Aramaic in the last verse in Daniel 6. And that is, “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Daniel 6:28).

Daniel 6 (NKJV)

¹ It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; ² and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

Although on his paternal side Cyrus was Persian, on his mother's side he was a direct descendant of the Median kings. If Darius was a title rather than a name, it could have been used to signify Cyrus. Daniel appears to have been on good terms with both Cyrus and the Darius featured in this chapter, a fact that could be explained quite nicely if they were the same person.

Daniel could also have written of Cyrus being a Mede to show that the prophecies in Isaiah and Jeremiah (written circa 721 BC and 595 BC) about the Medes conquering Babylon were fulfilled. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them. ... And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isaiah 13:17,19). "The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance for His temple" (Jeremiah 51:11).

The last verse of chapter 5 says Darius the Mede was about 62 when he became ruler of Babylon. Secular records show that Cyrus was around 70 when he was killed in battle, and that he had reigned for nine years after the capture of Babylon. So that would put Darius in the right age range to be Cyrus.

It is also an interesting point in this chapter that the law is referred to as being the law of the Medes and the Persians and not the Persians and the Medes, as it is referred to in the Bible's book of Esther, which covers events 100 years later in the Persian Empire. The Persians had previously been vassals of the Medes, and perhaps at this stage the Medes were still culturally more dominant. This could be another reason that Daniel refers to the king as a Mede.

However, it seems that unless further evidence turns up, we are not going to be able to pin down exactly whom Darius the Mede was or why Daniel referred to him by this name or title. Yet one thing has been proven time and time again, and that is that the Bible is accurate with regard to history. Skeptics over the centuries have charged it with fabrications, but objection after objection has with time been proven unfounded.

⁴ So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

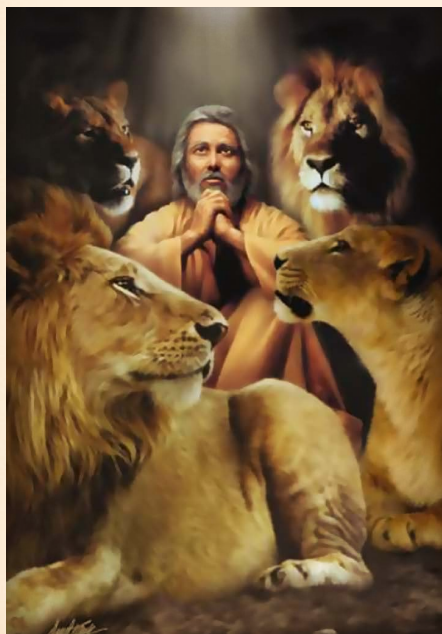
⁶ So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever!

⁷ All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

Now let us look at the events of this chapter. Darius sets up a number of officials to run Babylon, with Daniel being chosen as one of the most senior. This is again testament to Daniel's wisdom. Then Darius leans to the advice of his counselors (presumably, Daniel was absent at this point) and makes a law that whoever petitions any god or man, except the king, for 30 days, shall be cast into the den of lions. His counselors had arranged this because they wanted Daniel out of the job. They knew he had made it a lifetime habit to pray three times a day facing towards his homeland, and would be caught and thus condemned.

And sure enough, they caught him, and to the deep regret of the king, Daniel was condemned. In Median/Persian law, once a decree was signed



¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. ¹¹ Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. ¹² And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ¹³ So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." ¹⁴ And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. ¹⁵ Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." ¹⁶ So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." ¹⁷ Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

by the king, not even the king could revoke it.

Now if this was Cyrus, one must wonder how one of the wisest and most religiously tolerant kings of antiquity could make such a seemingly stupid law. One answer could be that after conquering Babylon, the king was left with the legacy resulting from Nabonidus bringing all the idols from the surrounding towns and villages into Babylon. The new king was stuck with getting them back where they belonged.

The king would have been concerned that he kept the populace of this newly conquered land happy, since they had welcomed the conquerors as liberators and the restorers of religious tradition. As king of Babylon, he had also inherited a central role in Babylon's polytheistic religion, that of being an intercessor between the people and the gods.

So perhaps the whole idea of his decree that had been sold to him by his advisers was to keep a lid on the religious situation, while the idols were taken back with all due gravity to their respective towns. If certain ceremonies and festivals were missed, the people would not incur the wrath of the gods because they were obeying a religious decree that superseded the traditional. It is an interesting possibility.

Remember also that it was done at the behest of his counselors, whom Darius would have relied on to give him good advice. But even when he saw through their scheming when they accused Daniel to him, he was still saddled with having to order Daniel to be cast into the lions' den.

¹⁸ Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. ¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

²⁴ And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions — them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

DANIEL THE PROPHET

So Daniel, now in his eighties — not the young man portrayed in many paintings of this scene — spent the night with the lions. But he was apparently not alone, because an angel kept the lions' mouths shut. One can just imagine a bunch of hungry but frustrated lions that couldn't open their mouths to eat the dinner that was so close to them.

Trial by ordeal is an ancient custom, being found in such places as the Code of Hammurabi, which were the laws of the land in Babylonia over 1,000 years before Daniel's time. So to come through an execution unscathed most likely had enough legal precedent for the king to then claim that he had fulfilled the law, that the accused had been found innocent by divine intervention, and thus he could let Daniel go free.

But such leniency was not to be shown to Daniel's accusers, who — along with their families — were thrown into the den. They all met their fate in the way they had planned Daniel would meet his. It is often the case that the enemies of God's people face poetic justice as they meet the fate they plan for others.

And this chapter ends with another heathen king from another empire writing to all those in his dominions to attest to the greatness of Daniel's living God.

For He is the living God,

And steadfast forever;

His kingdom is the one which
shall not be destroyed,

And His dominion shall endure to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues,

And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,

Who has delivered Daniel from
the power of the lions.

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign
of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the
Persian.

CHAPTER 7

THE BEASTS FROM THE SEA

We now move to the portion of Daniel's book that primarily consists of visions and revelations. As previously mentioned, the first six chapters are mostly a historical narrative.

Daniel dates the remarkable revelation he documents in this chapter a few years before the events of chapters 5 and 6. Belshazzar is only in his first year as coregent of Babylon, which the *Encyclopedia Britannica* dates as circa 550 BC. Daniel, if he had been in his middle to late teens in the year 605 BC—when he was taken to Babylon as a captive—would now be in his 70s.

In chapter 8—describing an event that happened in the third year of Belshazzar's reign—Daniel is still in royal service, but not in Babylon. He is in Shushan, also called Susa, which is at the eastern edge of the Babylonian Empire. This city had once been the capital of the powerful Elamite kingdom, but had been sacked and leveled by the Assyrians. It was somewhat rebuilt by Daniel's time and would eventually become the capital of the Persian Empire under Cyrus's son Cambyses II.

Cyrus had started his rise to power as king of Anshan, which had been for centuries the second city of the Elamite kingdom until taken over by the Persians. It is intriguing to speculate that Daniel and Cyrus may have become acquainted with each other during Daniel's stay in Shushan, since it was so close to Persia and was a likely location for any diplomatic activity between Persia and Babylon.

Daniel had been one of the most senior notables in the Babylonian court during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and yet Belshazzar apparently didn't even know who he was in chapter 5. Perhaps Daniel had been living in Shushan for some time, though he was in Babylon the night Belshazzar was killed as per chapter 5. If so, Daniel may have had the dream described in this chapter 7 while residing in Shushan.

Daniel dreams of four great beasts that form as a result of the winds stirring up the Great Sea. The Great Sea is thought to represent the Mediterranean, which implies that these four beasts are in that general area. But the Great Sea also has a further significance in that it represents the peoples of the world (Revelation 17:15).

Daniel asks a person in his dream what these beasts represent, and he is

Daniel ⁷ (NKJV)

¹ In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.



told that they are four kings, which can also be understood to mean kingdoms.

While God through this heavenly person did not reveal to Daniel the names of these empires (or perhaps, Daniel just did not write them down), Daniel described them in such terms that—as we look at history—it's easy to see the similarities between the descriptions and the empires that followed. We also have a template to follow with regards to understanding this dream, because it parallels to a large extent the dream that Daniel had interpreted for King Nebuchadnezzar about 50 years before (Daniel 2).

The first of the four beasts was a lion with eagle's wings. The wings were plucked off, and it stood on its feet and was given a man's heart. In Daniel chapter 2, the first empire described was Babylon, stated specifically so by Daniel himself. Since Daniel was living in the Babylonian Empire, it would stand to reason that the first beast revealed was likewise Babylon. And as we examine this beast, the connections are apparent. This beast seems to more specifically signify Nebuchadnezzar, who had been a mighty lion-like conqueror but had been abased during his time of madness, and in the end seems to have become a much more humble person (therefore the reference to a "man's heart") as evidenced in Daniel chapter 4.

Sculptures of *lamassu*—winged lions and bulls with human heads—were common in Mesopotamia, of which Babylon was the current master.

The second beast was a bear and corresponds to the silver arms and torso of Daniel 2. Bears are some of nature's strongest and largest predators. This represents the empire of the federation of the Persians and Medes. The bear was lifted up on one side to indicate the dominance of the Persians. The Persian Empire was to grow into the largest empire known in the Middle East up to that time. It also fielded massive armies and conquered by force of numbers.

The three ribs in its mouth are said to indicate three kingdoms that Persia either conquered or whose territories it inherited. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, conquered the territory that had previously been ruled by three main empires—Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon—that preceded Persia and had included the lands of Israel and/or Judah as parts of their realms. Another interpretation is that the ribs represented the three main kingdoms he conquered: first Media, second Lydia, and third Babylon.

And the third beast was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. This represents the empire of Alexander the Great and is equivalent to the belly and thighs

² Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.

³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. ⁴ The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. ⁵ And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' ⁶ "After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

of bronze in the image of chapter 2. The four wings are understood to represent the swiftness of his conquests, since he swept through Asia Minor, Persia, and to the borders of India in only ten years. The four heads indicate that it wouldn't remain a single empire for long, as each head pulled its own way to the four corners of the empire. And so it was fulfilled that after Alexander's death the empire quickly fragmented into separate kingdoms led by either his generals or close advisers, collectively called the *Diadochi*.

After his death, Alexander's empire was at first divided into 24 areas. All were nominally part of Alexander's empire, and each paid lip service to a regent who ruled in the name of Alexander's still unborn son. However, these soon fell into warring amongst themselves. Some parts in the far-eastern reaches of the empire quickly became independent.

Others became large independent kingdoms that expanded at the expense of their neighbors. There were four Wars of the Diadochi that are very confusing to follow, as alliances were continually formed and broken. At one point the map of the former empire crystallized into four major divisions, and these could well have been what the four heads of the leopard represent. These were Macedonia and Greece; the realms of Lysimachus, who ruled Thrace and the western half of Anatolia (now Turkey); the Seleucid empire that covered modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran; and Ptolemaic Egypt. The lands we now know as Palestine and Israel alternated between being ruled by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, and also had times of independence from both. These four kingdoms assume great importance in the next chapter.



And this brings us to the fourth beast—a dreadful, terrible, strong monster with huge iron teeth and bronze nails that apparently didn't resemble anything Daniel had seen before, because he couldn't find the words to liken it to anything.

This represented Rome, the legs of iron in Daniel chapter 2, which for centuries rolled over nearly all of its enemies and ruled the Mediterranean world with an iron fist. One thing that was different about the Roman Empire was that from its founding it suffered almost as many defeats

in battle as victories. But after each defeat it regrouped and inexorably began its expansion again. It also was much larger in area and lasted much longer than the previous empires represented by the other beasts in this vision.

And on the fourth beast's head were ten horns. If you remember, the image in Daniel 2 had ten toes. It is understood that the ten horns and ten toes represent the same ten kingdoms. Ten horns are also found on the final head of a horrible seven-headed beast described in the book of Revelation (chapter 17). There we are told that these ten are ten kings who receive their power from the Antichrist. So if these are the same ten kingdoms, which it seems they are, then these ten horns on this dreadful fourth beast are ten kings or kingdoms that are very closely related to the Antichrist empire in the Endtime. And just like the ten toes in Daniel 2, these ten horns are ten kingdoms that have their roots in the old Roman Empire.

Much of modern-day Europe was once part of the Roman Empire, and therefore there is a case to be made from chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel that these ten kings and kingdoms are Europe based. That would mean that certain European nations form a very important part of the Antichrist's empire. At least we know that nations which were once part of the Roman Empire will unite with the Antichrist as explained in Revelation chapter 17.

But then an eleventh horn, at first smaller than the others, appears and then grows greater than them all. In this new horn are found the eyes of a man, and he speaks pompous words. *Rab-rab*, the Aramaic word translated as "pompous" in the New King James Bible, is a doubling of the word *rab*, meaning captain or leader. Two other meanings of *rab-rab* are "great" and "domineering."

In the book of Revelation we are told: "[The Antichrist] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. ... Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (Revelation 13:5–6).

⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

The little horn that became greater than his fellows—and can really signify no other personage than the coming Antichrist—pulls out three of the other ten horns by the roots. It sounds violent.

The leaders of these three kingdoms most likely oppose the Antichrist, and for that they are uprooted from power. The beast in Revelation, however, has all ten horns as the final events of the Endtime unfold, so it follows that the three that are uprooted must be replaced with leaders who are allied to the Antichrist.

While Daniel was watching the beasts he sees a throne room, and then God, the Ancient of Days, is seated on the throne, surrounded by multitudes of attendants. God is dressed in dazzling white robes and His hair is also pure white. This is one of the few descriptions of God in the entire Bible.

Ezekiel wrote that he twice saw God on His throne, and this description in Daniel parallels those in many ways. Ezekiel and Daniel were contemporaries and both lived in Babylonia as exiles.

And if you multiply 10,000 by 10,000, as Daniel described the multitude before God in verse 10, you get 100 million. So there was quite a crowd in this throne room!

And then in the clouds comes the Son of Man. We know this is Jesus because He referred to Himself as the “Son of Man” on numerous occasions in the Gospels (in Matthew 8:20; 16:13; Mark 14:62; Luke 9:26; John 13:31 and about 80 more times). The Jews were well versed in their Scriptures, and Jesus at that time was deliberately letting it be known to those listening to Him that He was the Son of Man of the Book of Daniel. Just as He appears in the clouds in this vision, He will also appear in the clouds at His return at His second coming (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30).

But then as Daniel focuses back on the eleventh horn, to his horror the Antichrist persecutes and makes war against the saints, the people of God, for “a time and times, and half a time.”

⁹ “I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment was white as snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure
wool.

His throne was a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;

¹⁰ A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood
before Him.

The court was seated,
And the books were opened.

¹¹ “I watched then because of the sound
of the pompous words which the horn
was speaking; I watched till the beast
was slain, and its body destroyed and
given to the burning flame. ¹² As for
the rest of the beasts, they had their
dominion taken away, yet their lives were
prolonged for a season and a time.

¹³ “I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

We are also told of this war and persecution in Revelation. “[The Antichrist] was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ... It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Revelation 13:5,7). Forty-two months is equal to three and a half years, and so “a time and times and half a time” can be understood as three and a half years.

The length of this period is repeated a number of times throughout the Scriptures, and it covers the time known to us as the Great Tribulation, the second half of the Antichrist’s reign that immediately precedes Jesus’ second coming. It is not a pleasant time on Earth. In a later message given by an angel to Daniel it is described as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1). A thorough account of what we know about this time is covered in “The Great Tribulation,” chapter 6 of *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.

The Antichrist not only makes war, but it looks to Daniel as though he is winning the war, prevailing against God’s people. And in the process he intends to change times and laws. Changing laws is straightforward to understand. Dictators have always brought in new laws to reinforce their rule or to oppress their opponents, but what is meant by “changing times” is unclear at this point. The important thing to note is that he is stopped when God judges in favor of the saints. It might seem for a time that the Antichrist is unstoppable as he rages across the world’s stage, but that is only

¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one Which
shall not be destroyed.

¹⁵ “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶ I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ ‘Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.’ ¹⁹ “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. ²¹ I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

²³ “Thus he said:

‘The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth,

an illusion. God has him in His sights and will only allow him to go so far. The world has seen tyrants before, but admittedly not one as monstrous as this. But like all that have gone before him, he shall meet his doom. King David put it nicely when he wrote:

The wicked plots against the just,
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees that his day is coming. ...
Wait on the Lord,
And keep His way,
And He shall exalt you to inherit the
land;
When the wicked are cut off, you
shall see it.

I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a native
green tree.

Yet he passed away, and behold, he
was no more;

Indeed I sought him, but he could
not be found. (Psalm 37:12–13, 34–36)

Then the Antichrist is thrown into
a fire. Revelation also talks about
the Antichrist being thrown into the
Lake of Fire when he becomes the
big loser at the Battle of Armageddon
(Revelation 19:20).

After that the Son of Man was given
dominion and glory, and the kingdom,
and all on the Earth will serve Him.
And not only does *Jesus* receive the

kingdom, but the *saints* possess it too. (For more on this period of time after the defeat of the Antichrist, read *From the End to Eternity*.)

Although Daniel tells us that watching this whole ordeal troubled him to the point where he felt and looked very much the worse for it, we can read it and rejoice that the final victory is ours. There will be some very rough and trying times ahead, and for all intents and purposes it may look like we are losing the war much of the time, but in the end we will be victorious!

Which shall be different from all other
kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.

²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first ones,
And shall subdue three kings.

²⁵ He shall speak pompous words against
the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.

²⁶ But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy it forever.

²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under
the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of
the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall
serve and obey Him.'

²⁸ "This is the end of the account. As for
me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled
me, and my countenance changed;
but I kept the matter in my heart."

CHAPTER 8

THE RAM, THE GOAT, AND THE FUTURE KING

Daniel is now about to receive one of the most specific prophetic visions about the future recorded in the Bible. The language of the original text now switches from Aramaic back to Hebrew. Why he chose to write the rest in Hebrew, we don't know, but it is thought that Daniel was concerned that this and the rest of the book that follows was not for just anyone to read, but rather for his fellow Jews.

It is believed by most conservative scholars of the Book of Daniel—those who believe it was written by him during his lifetime and not by some pseudo-Daniel living centuries later in the time of the Maccabees—that the Book of Daniel wasn't compiled in its final form until the last few years of Daniel's life. So perhaps Daniel at that time thought it better not to have some of these prophetic passages easily available for the authorities to read, in case they would be regarded as subversive.

This vision was shown to him in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, which would place it at around 547 BC. Due to the way he words the first part, we are not sure if he was in Shushan (also called Susa), a city bordering on the Persian lands, or if he was transported there in this vision. He states he was in the fortress attached to the city, and then in the vision he is on the riverbank.

Shushan is about 30 miles west of the modern-day city of Shustar, Iran. The river called Ulai in this passage is most likely the Karūn River, Iran's only navigable river, which runs by the ruins of the ancient city.

Cyrus the Persian had already defeated the Median King Astyages and had captured his capital of Ecbatana. He was now in the process of conquering Lydia, and by 546 BC that kingdom would be his, and Croesus, its fabled king, his prisoner.

This vision to an extent parallels those in chapters 2 and 7 in which God describes empires that are to come. But what is different about this vision is that in giving Daniel the interpretation, the angel actually names two of the coming empires, something not done previously.

In the first part of the vision Daniel sees a ram with two great horns, with the second horn growing taller than the first. Then the ram pushes west and north and south, and no adversary could stand before him. Later in this chapter we are told that the two horns on the ram are the kings of Media and Persia. As we already know, the Persians came to prominence after the Medes (the second horn growing taller) and this united empire went on to conquer all before them. And indeed, they were to go north and conquer Lydia, west and conquer Babylon, and under Cambyses II, Cyrus's son, were to go south and conquer Egypt.

Daniel 8 (NKJV)

¹ In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time.² I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai.

But then a one-horned male goat came charging from the west, traveling so fast that his feet didn't touch the ground. He charged headlong into the ram, broke its two horns, knocked him down, and trampled him.

We are told later in this chapter that this goat was the kingdom of Greece and the large horn its first king. Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia and *hegemon* of the League of Corinth (the federation of most of the Greek city-states) was to come some 200 years later and within 10 short years conquer Persia and all its lands, gaining more territory in that time than the Persian Empire had in 200 years.

That the battle action in the vision took place at a river is interesting, because, of the three major battles that Alexander fought and won against the Persians, two of them took place in river valleys, and in both of those Alexander's army charged across the rivers to attack the Persians, who were massed on the other side. These were the battles of the Granicus River in 334 BC and the Battle of Issus in 333 BC.

And just as the horn was broken when the goat became strong, so Alexander died of a fever at the age of 33, at the height of his power and conquest. Then four notable kings and kingdoms arose from Alexander's fragmented empire, and details of that were covered in the previous chapter. We can see that while the animal is different, the description of Greece is very similar to the leopard in Daniel's vision recorded in chapter 7.

The vision then jumps to the Endtime, for we are told that the rest of the vision applies not to the latter time of these kingdoms but that it refers to the time of the end. And out of one of those four kingdoms came a little horn, a fierce king, who is destined to rule a great empire in the last days.

It is believed by many scholars of Bible prophecy that the little horn of this vision was Antiochus Epiphanes, the last king of any importance of the

³ Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. ⁴ I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

⁵ And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. ⁶ Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power.

⁷ And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. ⁸ Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

Seleucid empire, one of the four kingdoms. That he was in the latter time of the empire could possibly apply—although it was to limp along in an enfeebled state for a hundred years or more after his death—and he did do things in his reign that seem like they fulfilled some of the prophetic events listed in this chapter. But the fact that the vision refers to the “time of the end,” meaning the time shortly before Jesus’ return, makes it impossible for him to be the person spoken about in the rest of this chapter. And later on, we will see that an important comment by Jesus on the predictions of Daniel in chapter 11 clearly place these events as happening after His time on Earth, and therefore long after Antiochus.

Two personages appear in this vision to help Daniel understand what all this means. One is the angel Gabriel, who to Daniel looked like a man. The other is someone who instructs Gabriel to tell Daniel what the vision means. The second personage Daniel doesn’t apparently see, but rather hears His voice coming from the middle of the river. Gabriel is one of God’s archangels, and any voice that tells him what to do must be senior to him. So it is believed by scholars of the Bible that this voice belongs to Jesus.

Between what Daniel saw and what Gabriel explains to him, we are given a lot of information about the little horn, who is understood to be no less a personality than the devil-man of the End, the Antichrist. This “horn” is both a man and a spiritual entity, for he cannot do what he does only being a mortal.

⁹ And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. ¹⁰ And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. ¹¹ He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. ¹² Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?” ¹⁴ And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

¹⁵ Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.

¹⁶ And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.” ¹⁸ Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright.

The horn grows out of one of four areas that today correspond to 1) Greece, 2) Turkey, 3) Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Iraq, and Iran, and 4) Egypt.—Just which one at this time, we don't know. In chapter 7 we saw the corresponding horn come out of the head of what was the Roman Empire, and that encompassed all the lands listed except for Iran and Iraq.

He expands his control to the south, to the east, and to the Glorious Land. The Glorious Land would be a reference to Israel, sacred homeland to Daniel and the Jews who had been exiled from it for 50 or so years.

This horn, or king as he is referred to later in the chapter, grows as high as the host of heaven and casts some of them down to the earth and tramples upon them. Revelation states something similar about Satan: “His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (Revelation 12:4). Although this horn is the Antichrist and not Satan, the Antichrist is, in time, totally possessed by Satan.

We are told later that this man is a fierce-looking fellow who is in the know about some very sinister plots and schemes. He has a lot of power, but it is not really his own power. This is echoed in Revelation, where it says that “the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2).

But he prospers in all that he does and he destroys the mighty and also the holy people. We already read in the last chapter that the Antichrist makes war on the saints and prevails, and here that information is given again. Not only are the saints mentioned this time, but also the mighty, which means powerful nations that oppose him. In a later chapter we will explore just who these nations and powers may be that he overcomes and destroys, even in their prosperity.

¹⁹ And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be. ²⁰ The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. ²² As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

²³ “And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness,
A king shall arise,
Having fierce features,
Who understands sinister schemes.

²⁴ His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power;
He shall destroy fearfully,
And shall prosper and thrive;
He shall destroy the mighty,
and also the holy people.

²⁵ “Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt himself in his heart.
He shall destroy many in their prosperity.
He shall even rise against the Prince of princes;
But he shall be broken
without human means.

The Saints and the Holy People

The “saints” and “holy people” are terms used to describe the same people. They are not only the saints of the Catholic Church and other churches that some might imagine. Those saints might be included in this designation, but Daniel is writing of a much broader brotherhood of people. “Saint” comes from the Latin word *sanctus*, which means holy. “Holy” means something that is dedicated to God. These saints therefore are those that are dedicated to God, or even more broadly, those who are the believers in God. The Israelites of the Old Testament can be regarded as the “Holy People” of those days by virtue of the fact that they were the chosen people. In the New Testament era this now pertains to all those who believe in Jesus, as Paul explained, “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly ... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly ... in the Spirit.” And “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Romans 2:28–29; Galatians 3:28–29).

The King James translation of this verse says “the mighty and the holy people,” and it could be interpreted that they are one and the same, meaning a reference to God’s children who resist the Antichrist. However, we can deduce from other scriptures in Daniel and Revelation that many will oppose the Antichrist, including not only those who follow God, but others, probably on religious or nationalistic grounds.

We know, however, that at the Second Coming of Jesus when all those who believe on Him will rise to meet Him in the air, there will be multitudes of believers. (See “Jesus’ Second Coming,” chapter 8 in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.) The Antichrist’s attempts to destroy all the holy people are obviously far from thorough. Even though there is intense persecution of believers, it has only limited success, as have all persecutions of Christians through the ages.

The next verse in this chapter gives added information as to whom the Antichrist destroys when it says “he shall destroy many in their prosperity” (v.25). So it seems that the holy people referred to here might be more accurately understood as the rich and high-profile churches who have often been targets of godless and anti-religious regimes when they have come to power.

The Antichrist is a cunning devil—in fact, he is possessed by the very Devil. Deceit prospers under his rule, no doubt referring to a lot of political and other chicanery that he and his cohorts engage in.

This king then claims to be as high as the “Prince of the host.” Who is the Prince of Heaven’s host? That has to be Jesus. And this is confirmed by the apostle Paul when he wrote of the Antichrist’s self-exaltation: “The man of sin ... the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that

is worshiped ... sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

"And he takes away the daily sacrifices" (verse 11). In Daniel's time the Jewish temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jerusalem was a wasteland. There were no daily sacrifices going on, because they could only be done in the temple and nothing was left of that sanctuary. The sanctuary can refer to both the whole Jewish temple and also the central and most sacred part of the Jewish temple, called the Holy of Holies. In later prophetic messages Daniel was told again about these specific happenings. In some ways this news must have encouraged Daniel, because by deduction it meant that there was going to be a rebuilt temple and temple services were going to be revived. And the only place the Jews could rebuild the temple was on the summit of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, on the exact spot it had been located before.

Then Daniel overhears two "holy ones" speaking, and one asks the other how long it will be until the sanctuary is cleansed, which we can understand as being cleaned from something that is defiling it. And we find that there is a big and terrible thing that is defiling it in the next chapter. And the other tells him that it is going to be 2,300 days. Keep that number in mind because, in chapter 12, we are going to see how it may fit into our Endtime timeline.

But as the Antichrist rises against the Prince of princes, Jesus, he is broken. At the Battle of Armageddon he and his forces are utterly trounced and destroyed, not by the human armies, but by a heavenly force that is superhuman. That is the happy ending, or should I say, the beginning of the happy ending that we all have to look forward to.

Dear Daniel was so worn out getting this revelation that he fainted again and was sick for days. He apparently sounded out a few others about what he had experienced, but no one understood it because it was for many days in the future. But that future is now here and God wants us to understand what it is about.

²⁶ "And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For it refers to many days in the future."

²⁷ And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

CHAPTER 9 SEVENTY WEEKS

The Book of Daniel gets more and more fascinating as it progresses, and you will read in this chapter how Daniel is told of some very specific timing with regard to the sacrificial death of the Messiah and the length of the still-to-come reign of the Antichrist.

But first we are told that Daniel was studying the writings of his contemporary, Jeremiah, regarding the fate of the Jewish people and the duration of their captivity

by the Babylonians. This is quite interesting in that this shows that Daniel was acquainted with Jeremiah and understood that he was a prophet, recognition that Jeremiah sadly lacked from the majority of Jews who remained in Judah at the time.

Daniel 9 (NKJV)

¹ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— ² in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

During this tumultuous time in Judah's history, the Lord had given that nation three major prophets — Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.

Daniel, as we know, was taken away captive when Nebuchadnezzar besieged and conquered Jerusalem the first time in 605 BC.

Ezekiel was taken amongst those that Nebuchadnezzar deported to Babylonia (Ezekiel 1:1) from Jerusalem after he besieged and took the city a second time in 597 BC. The Jews had rebelled against the yoke of Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar made short work of that rebellion. Jehoiachin had inherited the throne after his father Jehoikim died, but had only reigned for a few short months before this defeat. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, his family and attendants, and 10,000 others back with him to Babylonia. And Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah, the last of Josiah's sons, as king in his nephew's stead (2Kings 24:10–17).

Jeremiah during all this remained in Judah and prophesied from the time of Josiah, all the way through the reigns of his sons and grandson, and the total destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587/586 BC. Later, after the Babylonian governor was assassinated, Jeremiah accompanied the Jews who had remained in Judah into their self-exile in Egypt.

It is interesting to note that the Lord mentions Daniel three times in Ezekiel's prophecies (Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3). It seems that Daniel's probity

and wisdom must have been proverbial amongst the Jews of the exile. And Daniel in this chapter is reading Jeremiah.

There are two places in Jeremiah's writings where the Lord said that the Jews would go into captivity in Babylon for 70 years:

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: ... And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:1-2,11)

For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10)

This is a very specific and precise prophecy that was fulfilled in two very significant ways: Firstly, the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem three times. Fed up with the continuing rebellions, Nebuchadnezzar desolated the city and the temple in 587/586 BC. Secondly, the Jews were indeed in exile in and around Babylon, serving the kings of that land for 70 years. Let's examine the dates:

Nebuchadnezzar first took captives away from Jerusalem in 605 BC, and it seems this was regarded as the start of the 70 years. Cyrus gave permission for the exiles to return in 538 BC, but that return didn't occur till 536 BC. In that year, 42,360 Jews returned under Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:7-10; 2:64) — to whom Cyrus had given the temple paraphernalia taken by Nebuchadnezzar — and under Jeshua the priest and Zerubbabel. Seventy prophetic years (see explanation of prophetic years later in this chapter) is equal to 69 solar or calendar years. 605 BC to 536 BC is 69 years.

Daniel, upon reading these scriptures, prays one of the most heartfelt prayers found in the Bible, confessing, and asking the Lord to forgive, both his and his people's iniquities. And then once again the archangel Gabriel appears to Daniel to give him another revelation. This revelation also concerns the number 70, but this time it has to do with a period of "seventy weeks."

The revelation predicted among other things the year that Jesus the Messiah would be crucified. Yet it was worded in such a way as to make its fulfillment

even more amazing than just stating a given date. It hinged its fulfillment on events, which at the time of Daniel receiving this prophecy (circa 538 BC), had yet to occur.

The word “week” is translated from the Hebrew word transliterated as *shabua*. Aside from having the meaning of a seven-day week, it also has the literal meanings of “seven” and “unit of seven.”

In Genesis there is found a passage that also uses this word *shabua*, and it is concerning the patriarch Jacob. He had been working seven years for his uncle, Laban, with the intent of earning the right to marry Laban’s younger daughter Rachel. Laban tricked Jacob by substituting his older daughter Leah in the marriage bed on the night of the wedding. Jacob was incensed, but Laban insisted that it was only proper that the older daughter should marry first, but he agreed that if Jacob fulfilled Rachel’s “week, we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years” (Genesis 29:27).

Here *shabua* means a period of seven years, and it can be assumed then that “weeks” in the prophecy of Daniel 9 can also be understood to mean “periods of seven years.”

When we add the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks mentioned in Daniel 9:25, we come up with a total of 69 weeks. Then if we multiply 69 times 7, we arrive at a figure of 483 years. God was telling Daniel that 483 years would pass between the time that the command was given to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the death of the Messiah, Jesus.

³ Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. ⁴ And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. ⁶ Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. ⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. ⁸ O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. ¹⁰ We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. ¹¹ Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. ¹² And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such

Keeping this in mind, we must now consider what is regarded as a “year” in ancient terms. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) wrote: “All nations, before the just length of the solar year was known, reckoned months by the course of the moon, and years by the return of winter and summer, spring and autumn; and in making calendars for their festivals, they reckoned thirty days to a lunar month, and twelve lunar months to a year, taking the nearest round numbers, whence came the division of the ecliptic [path of the sun’s annual rotation] into 360 degrees” (*The Coming Prince* (1894) by Robert Anderson, page 68). In other words, the year of the ancients consisted of 360 days.

A biblical confirmation of the length of what Bible scholars and commentators sometimes call a “prophetic year” is found in Genesis 7:11,24, and 8:3–4. The time that the biblical deluge in the time of Noah began until the ark came to rest on the top of Mount Ararat is given as 150 days. This period is dated as beginning on the 17th day of the second month of the year and lasting till the 17th day of the 7th month, a period of exactly 5 months. When 150 is divided by 5, we come up with a month being a period of 30 days. If we extrapolate that, then 12 months of 30 days would equal 360 days.

In Revelation 11:2–3, 42 months is equated to 1,260 days. Forty-two months is also equal to three and a half years. If we take the 1,260 days and divide it by 3½, we end up with 360 days in a year.

has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. ¹⁵ And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly!

¹⁶ “O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. ¹⁷ Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. ¹⁸ O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. ¹⁹ O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

²⁰ Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my

Next let us look at another biblical hero, Nehemiah. He was the Jewish cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus, the fifth king of the Persian Empire. According to Nehemiah's account in chapter two of his book, it was in the king's 20th year on the throne that Nehemiah was granted permission to supervise the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. Dating this event accurately to our present calendar can be done because the Persian Empire kept precise astronomical records.

The 20th year of King Artaxerxes—and thus the year this command was given to restore and build Jerusalem—is fixed with a fair amount of certainty at 445 BC. Several other decrees issued by Artaxerxes and his predecessors had allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple, but this is the one that gave them permission to rebuild the city walls. As you can read in the book of Nehemiah, this feat was completed—in spite of constant and “troublesome” interference from neighboring kingdoms—in just 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).

Now it is time to do some math. We need to convert 483 prophetic years into solar years. A solar year consists of about 365¼ days.

$$(483 \times 360) \div 365\frac{1}{4} = 476 \text{ solar years}$$

If we now add 476 years to 445 BC, we arrive at the year 31 AD. However, since the first day of 31 AD would be the end of the 476 years, to fit in with the prophecy Jesus' death would have had to happen somewhere within the year 30 AD. Most sources state that Jesus was crucified around 30 AD.

supplication before the Lord my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. ²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

²⁴ “Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.

²⁵ “Know therefore and understand,
That from the going forth of the
command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two
weeks;
The street shall be built again, and the
wall,
Even in troublesome times.

²⁶ “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah
shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to
come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war
desolations are determined.

In summary, we know that the “going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem ... and the wall” was in 445 BC. Daniel predicted that after 69 weeks the “Messiah shall be cut off.” Those 69 weeks translate into 476 years of our solar calendar, which, when added to 445 BC, results in the year 30 AD, the year of Christ’s crucifixion. That exact year being predicted over 500 years previously in the Book of Daniel is a remarkable date to arrive at!

There are indications that the Jews of Jesus’ day were expecting the Messiah to come around that time, as Luke records that “the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not” (Luke 3:15). The Jews were very well acquainted with their prophets’ writings, so it’s likely that their awareness of this prophecy from Daniel was the cause of this expectation.

The fulfillment of the first part of this amazing prophecy inspires faith that the rest of it will be fulfilled just as accurately. For, as you may have noticed, there is one “week” of years unaccounted for. Verse 24 refers to “seventy weeks” in order to “make an end of sins” and “bring in everlasting righteousness.” However, verses 25 and 26, which predict the year of Christ’s death, only account for 69 “weeks.” What and when is this last week? It certainly wasn’t fulfilled seven years after Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead, since an era of “everlasting righteousness” was not ushered in; nor was the vision and prophecy “sealed up” or completed.

As we will see, the last week starts when the Antichrist confirms the covenant with many for one week. It *really* is the last week—the last seven years.

In verse 26, the prophecy announces that the forces of a prince who is going to come shall destroy the city, meaning Jerusalem, and the sanctuary or temple. This was fulfilled to an extent by the Romans under the then-future emperor, Titus, who razed Jerusalem and its second temple to the ground again in 70 AD. Both the sack of Jerusalem and the slaughter of its inhabitants are related by the Jewish historian Josephus in his *Antiquities*.

However, verse 27 precludes Titus being the prince spoken of because it says he confirms, or makes, a covenant for a period of seven years. Titus never made such a deal.

This covenant, which plays a pivotal role in Endtime events, apparently allows the resumption of Jewish temple worship with all its requisite animal sacrifices. We deduce that because when this covenant is broken in the middle of the seven years, the sacrifice and offering is brought to an end. At the writing of this book, there is no temple and hence no temple worship. But, according to this and other prophetic passages in the Bible, one is going to be built. (Read chapter 1, “And

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate.”

He Shall Confirm a Covenant” in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist* for a more thorough treatment of this subject.)

And at the breaking of this covenant, we are told cryptically that on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate. In Daniel chapter 11 we are told about the Abomination of Desolation, which is some sort of idol, being placed in the temple. And the peoples of the world are ordered to worship this thing. It is not going to be your everyday idol, either. We don’t know everything about it, but we will delve into it more in chapter 11. (Read also chapter 4, “The Abomination of Desolation,” in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

And all this is going to happen until the consummation, the very end, when God’s frightening judgments are poured out on the desolate. (See “The Plagues of the Wrath of God” and “Armageddon,” chapters 10 and 11 in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

When that is over, the following stipulations in Daniel 9:24 will all surely be fulfilled: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

Jesus died for our sins at the end of the 69th week, and we have thus been reconciled. And after the 70th week, the transgression of the Antichrist’s reign in Jerusalem and in the temple will be finished. Everlasting righteousness will be ushered in with the establishment of God’s kingdom on Earth after Jesus’ Second Coming, which takes place at the end of the seventh year of the Antichrist’s reign. The vision and prophecy will be fulfilled and sealed, and Jesus will be anointed King of all the Earth. (See “The 1000-year Reign of Jesus Christ,” chapter 2 of *From the End to Eternity*.)

Messiah

[*meh SIGH uh*] (anointed one) — the one anointed by God and empowered by God’s Spirit to deliver His people and establish His kingdom. In Jewish thought, the Messiah would be the king of the Jews, a political leader who would defeat their enemies and bring in a golden era of peace and prosperity. In Christian thought, the term Messiah refers to Jesus’ role as a spiritual deliverer, setting His people free from sin and death.

The word Messiah comes from a Hebrew term that means “anointed one.” Its Greek counterpart is *Christos*, from which the word Christ comes. Messiah was one of the titles used by early Christians to describe who Jesus was.

In Old Testament times, part of the ritual of commissioning a person for a special task was to anoint him with oil. The phrase anointed one was applied to a person in such cases. In the Old Testament, Messiah is used more than 30 times to describe kings (2 Samuel 1:14,16), priests (Leviticus

4:3,5,16), the patriarchs (Psalm 105:15), and even the Persian King Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1). The word is also used in connection with King David, who became the model of the messianic king who would come at the end of the age (2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 2:2). But it was not until the time of Daniel (sixth century BC) that Messiah was used as an actual title of a king who would come in the future (Daniel 9:25–26). Still later, as the Jewish people struggled against their political enemies, the Messiah came to be thought of as a political, military ruler.

From the New Testament we learn more about the people's expectations. They thought the Messiah would come soon to perform signs (John 7:31) and to deliver His people, after which He would live and rule forever (John 12:34). Some even thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah (John 1:20). Others said that the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem (John 7:42). Most expected the Messiah to be a political leader, a king who would defeat the Romans and provide for the physical needs of the Israelites.

According to the Gospel of John, a woman of Samaria said to Jesus, "I know that Messiah is coming." Jesus replied, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:25–26). In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, however, Jesus never directly referred to Himself as the Messiah, except privately to His disciples, until the crucifixion (Matthew 26:63–64; Mark 14:61–62; Luke 22:67–70). He did accept the title and function of messiahship privately (Matthew 16:16–17). Yet Jesus constantly avoided being called "Messiah" in public (Mark 8:29–30). This is known as Jesus' "messianic secret." He was the Messiah, but He did not want it known publicly.

The reason for this is that Jesus' kingdom was not political but spiritual (John 18:36). If Jesus had used the title "Messiah," people would have thought He was a political king. But Jesus understood that the Messiah, God's Anointed One, was to be the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). The fact that Jesus was a suffering Messiah—a crucified deliverer—was a "stumbling block" to many of the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:23). They saw the cross as a sign of Jesus' weakness, powerlessness, and failure. They rejected the concept of a crucified Messiah.

But the message of the Early Church centered around the fact that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5:42; 17:3; 18:5). They proclaimed the "scandalous" gospel of a crucified Messiah as the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23–24). John wrote, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ [the Messiah]?" (1 John 2:22).

By the time of the apostle Paul, "Christ" was in the process of changing from a title to a proper name. The name is found mostly in close association with the name "Jesus," as in "Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24) or "Jesus Christ"

(Romans 1:1). When the Church moved onto Gentile soil, the converts lacked the Jewish background for understanding the title, and it lost much of its significance. Luke wrote, “The disciples were first called Christians [those who belong to and follow the Messiah] in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

As the Messiah, Jesus is the divinely appointed king who brought God’s kingdom to Earth (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20). His way to victory was not by physical force and violence, but through love, humility, and service.

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CHAPTER 10

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Chapter 10 of Daniel is an introduction to the revelation given him in chapters 11 and 12. The original texts of the Bible were not divided into chapters and verses. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1207–1228, is reputed to have been the first to put the chapter divisions into a Vulgate edition of the Bible in 1205. Robert Estienne, a Parisian printer, was the first to number the verses within each chapter, his verse numbers entering printed editions of the New Testament in 1565.

This bit of information is important background as to why some puzzling chapter divisions occur where they do in the Bible—notable among them, the division between this chapter and the next.

Daniel tells us in the first chapter of his book that he continued into the first year of the reign of Cyrus. The events of this chapter take place in the third year of Cyrus's reign. This is not his reign as king of Persia, but rather the third year from when he was also crowned king of Babylon.

This seeming contradiction can be explained in two ways. Perhaps Daniel continued off and on in the royal service into the first year of Cyrus, and after that he retired. So the fact that this is happening two years later is not really contradictory.

Or, the more likely reason is that the first chapter was written at the time of the first year of Cyrus's reign. The Book of Daniel is a collection of writings written over many years and not something that was written as one long narrative. And it is accepted by most scholars that the Book of Daniel wasn't compiled into a single document until the last years of Daniel's life. So perhaps at the time of the writing of chapter 1, the first statement was true, and then later at the writing of chapter 10, the second one was also true.

We are not told why, but Daniel was fasting and in mourning for three weeks prior to what is about to take place. However, we can make a calculated guess as to the reason. We know from history that Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah in his first year as king of Babylon. However, not everyone of influence in the Persian court was so accommodating toward the Jews. Historical documents tell us that Cambyses II, Cyrus's son and heir, wasn't favorable to them. And in chapter six we saw that Daniel had enemies in the Persian court. As the highest-ranking Jew in the empire, it is quite likely that personal animosity toward Daniel reflected general animosity toward the Jews.

Daniel 10 (NKJV)

¹ In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. ² In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. ³ I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

Although the decree to let the Jews go back to Judea was given in the first year of Cyrus's reign as king of Babylon, which was 538 BC, the actual return migration didn't occur till 536 BC. This would correspond to the third year of Cyrus's reign, which would make it coincidental to the events in this chapter. Could there have been events afoot to prevent the return? There were certainly some who opposed the return of the Jews, as can be seen in Ezra chapter 4, where the Samaritans appealed several times to the Persians to stop the Jews rebuilding the temple.

Daniel was a man of prayer, as shown by his prayer in chapter 9, as well as his willingness to risk his life over his need to pray in chapter 6. He wasn't in Babylon or Shushan now, as this chapter places him somewhere on the Tigris River. Unable to exert

personal influence at court on the matter, he engaged in the one thing that he knew could turn the tide, and that was to fast and pray.

After 21 days of this, Daniel has another encounter with an angel. The men with him fled in terror, even though they didn't see the angel. It was most likely the sound of the angel's voice, which to Daniel sounded like that of a multitude, which prompted this flight. But Daniel sees what he calls a "man" clothed in linen. His waist and hips were girt with fine gold. His body was like beryl. The original Hebrew word translated as "beryl" is *tarshiysh*. This precious stone is believed to be named after the country of Tarshish, believed by many biblical scholars to be an area of southern Spain where the Phoenicians had a trading post and where this jewel was plentiful. The stone itself is a greenish color with a golden luster. The "man's" face was bright like lightning and his arms and feet like brightly polished bronze. And Daniel promptly fainted at the sight.

The heavenly messenger then touches Daniel, and Daniel gets up on his hands and knees before him. The angel tells Daniel to stand up and then explains why he was there, that he had come in answer to Daniel's prayers.

He then tells Daniel of his struggle with the prince of the kingdom of Persia that had taken him 21 days, and the help of Michael the Archangel, to win. It is believed by many Bible scholars that this prince of Persia was an evil spiritual entity who had been given spiritual dominion over Persia by his master, Satan.

⁴ Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, ⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! ⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. ⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. ⁸ Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. ⁹ Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

There are two ways to look at this struggle. One is that the messenger was sent only to Daniel to bring him the message that is covered in the next chapter. That is plausible. And a demonic entity of the stature of the messenger's opponent would undoubtedly have put up quite a struggle.

The book of Revelation gives us a look into the always thrilling, sometimes frightening, and often jaw-dropping realm of the spirit. While relating the story primarily of the last years of Earth as we now know it, most of the action it talks about is not happening in the physical world, but rather in the spiritual realm that coexists with it. While there are a many hideous beings from the netherworld stalking through its pages, there are far more mighty, beautiful, and amazing heavenly beings who fight and emerge victorious at its end.

Spiritual warfare is not just the stuff of fantasy comic books. It is a very real phenomenon that is happening right now. It is not something that you can see with your physical eyes, but sometimes its effects spill over into our realm. It is a life-and-death battle not for the lives of the combatants, but for our lives—primarily our spiritual lives, but even to a degree our physical lives as well.

Revelation goes into detail a number of times with regards to the entities that war in that arena. John, Revelation's author, wrote that he was taken into that realm after being shown a door open to Heaven (Revelation 4:1-2). He first saw the glories of God's throne room and a large number of angels and good spirits such as the mighty Seraphim who surround God's throne. But soon he saw some far less pleasant sights, such as the angels pouring out God's judgments—firstly at the sound of seven sequential trumpets, and then the even more destructive seven plagues. He also saw the Devil as a vicious infanticidal dragon, but then the great archangel Michael leads the good angels in war against the dragon and his demons and completely vanquishes them from the heavenly realm.

John is brief when he describes the great spiritual war that apparently occurs a little before the period of Great Tribulation. We don't know how long that war takes, but we do know that the Devil and his ilk are powerful enough to put up "spirited" resistance. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor

¹⁰ Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. ¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. ¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the Earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7–9).

This had been preceded by this information in verse 4 of the same chapter. “And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the Earth” (Revelation 12:3–4). This passage is where we come to an understanding that one third of the angels rebelled with Satan at the great rebellion against God and His authority in the heavenly realm. Angels have often been represented by stars both in the Bible and other writings. Since both the stars and the dragon’s “angels” are cast down to the Earth, the conclusion can be drawn that they are one and the same.

It would undoubtedly have been thrilling if John had given us a fuller description of that war in heaven so we could hear how that great infernal tyrant and his underlings were defeated. Not that we glory in war, but hearing how the evil and destructive hellish enemy of all humanity got his comeuppance is something that many would have liked to have been given more details on. Especially since the warfare then reverts to his last stronghold, Earth, and the warfare becomes largely physical as the Devil-possessed Antichrist rampages around the Middle East and other areas of the world. Knowing just how Heaven’s forces defeated and then routed him and his can give us courage here on Earth that those same forces will be working effectively to continue the work they started and will be our unfailing aid in that tumultuous time.

But back to our text in Daniel 10. Many scholars think the messenger is Gabriel, since he had appeared to Daniel twice before. If that were the case, you would think Daniel would have named him. But again we come to the stumper as to why it would take both Gabriel and Michael to beat this demon, no matter how powerful he was.

There is another way to look at this, and that is to first ask why the demon prince of Persia would be trying to stop the message getting through to Daniel. We will see that it was a very important message, especially for us now. But as we will also see, it wasn’t going to have much effect on the kingdom of Persia. If this demon was concerned about his own bailiwick first and foremost, then why was he more or less abandoning his assignment to try to stop the message when it didn’t really concern him?

¹⁵ When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶ And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, “My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷ For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me.”

Could it be rather that he *was* defending his territory and that the angelic messenger had been sent to first sway decisions at the Persian court? The messenger was initially sent on the mission alone, and it is quite reasonable to assume that it would certainly take a long struggle to influence the king and his counselors to make a favorable decision, especially if he was having to deal with the demon prince at the same time. Decrees of the Persian kings were irreversible, as we read in chapter 6, so a wrong decision could have had dire effects. Perhaps wrestling with the spiritual prince of Persia was the easy part.

So why would God be so interested in influencing a decision by the king of Persia that He sent the angel there? If that decision was to have an effect on the Jews being allowed to return to Judah, it would have a very great effect, because Jesus needed to be born there, in Bethlehem. To fulfill the Scriptures, the Jews needed to be allowed to return and stay in their homeland until Jesus was born. That was indeed what happened, and they weren't driven out again until 40 years after Jesus' Ascension. Certainly the Devil and all his demons would have wanted to defeat that plan. But the angel succeeded with help from Michael.

Then when he came to Daniel after that, it was to tell him "mission accomplished" and that he could stop worrying about the matter. Daniel had been fasting and praying for something. He was not fasting and praying in order to get the message that we will study next. The fact that he got the message didn't seem to be his motivation at all.

The angel says something that perhaps gives weight to the above reasoning. He tells Daniel that he has now come to make Daniel understand what will happen to Daniel's people in the Latter Days. Does that indicate that the first part of his mission had to do with his people at that time? It seems logical.

In the first verse of the next chapter, the angel tells Daniel that he had stood next to the king in the first year of his reign to confirm him. So the angel certainly was involved with the Persian court. He also says that once he is done telling Daniel the message, he has to go back to contending with the prince of Persia, and that pretty soon he will have to do the same thing with the prince of Greece.

Whatever the reason for the battle in the spirit between the angel and the demon, this chapter clearly shows us that such conflict does occur. And it also shows that fervent and determined prayer is integral to the triumph of the good guys.

¹⁸ Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹ And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." ²⁰ Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. ²¹ But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.)

CHAPTER 11

THE KING OF THE NORTH

Here the heavenly messenger starts to reveal to Daniel future events that are to affect the Jews, Daniel's physical brethren and nation, and eventually Christians, Daniel's spiritual brethren.

Before we go further, it is good to note that this passage was relayed to Daniel and written down by him many years before the events detailed in the first 20 verses came to pass. These verses have been fulfilled in detail. What that does is give us a strong reason to believe the rest of the chapter that has yet to be fulfilled.

Although we haven't done this yet in this book, in this chapter from verse 2 on we will make note in this commentary which verse or passage is being referred to.

Verses 2–4: The angel reveals to Daniel how the fourth king of the Persian Empire, richer than those who went before, would attack Greece with all the might of his realm. This was fulfilled when Xerxes marched on Greece in 480 BC. His engineers built two pontoon bridges across the strait now known as the Dardanelles, and marched his armies across.

His father Darius had done the same, but his invasion had foundered at the crucial Battle of Marathon 10 years earlier. Xerxes would fare little better. After the stubborn Spartan resistance at Thermopylae was finally overcome, Xerxes sacked the ancient city of Athens. But his navy was defeated soon after by the Greeks at Salamis. That compromised his communications and supply lines, forcing him to retreat back to his homeland. Even though a large Persian army wintered in Greece, it was thoroughly defeated the following year by an alliance of Greek city-states at the Battle of Plataea.

The Persian invasions gave rise to calls for revenge in the Greek city-states, calls that were answered 150 years later when the Macedonians, under Alexander, launched their invasion and conquest of Persia. The primary excuse given for Alexander's aggression was that it was to avenge the past violation of the Greek homeland.

As we know, Alexander died young, and his kingdom was divided toward the four winds rather than passed on to his posterity or family, and the kingdoms into

Daniel 11 (NKJV)

¹ "Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.) ² And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. ³ Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. ⁴ And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

which it fragmented were never to achieve the same breadth of dominion his had. And as the prophecy stated and we saw in the last chapter, parts of the empire only remained under the control of the Diadochi for a few years.

After the dust settled, four major kingdoms emerged from the carcass of Alexander's empire. But before long they began fighting amongst themselves once more. Of the four, the two prominent kingdoms to emerge were the Ptolemaic realm that comprised mostly Egypt and later some areas of the Aegean and Asia Minor, and the kingdom of Seleucus. Seleucus ruled a huge area comprising the eastern half of modern-day Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and even parts of India. And these two kingdoms continually disputed over the areas comprising modern-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel.

Verse 5: We now enter into the very byzantine affairs of these two kingdoms and the dynasties that ruled them. The two personalities in the first half of this passage, the King of the South and the King of the North, are not just two individuals, but they refer to the successive kings of these two realms. The king(s) of the south are the Ptolemies and the king(s) of the north are the Seleucids.

The first two kings had been allies in their wars, so although relations between them could not be described as warm, at least they didn't fight each other. Ptolemy I, the King of the South, had occupied the lands that were in those days called Coele-Syria, meaning "hollow Syria." Strictly speaking, it is the valley of Lebanon, but it is often used to cover the entire area south of the An Nahr al Kabir River, including modern Israel, the southern part of which was then known as Judea. According to the various negotiated divisions of Alexander's empire, these lands should have been Seleucus's. However, Seleucus, the "one of Alexander's princes who had also become strong," had been much too involved in expanding his realm at the expense of many of the lesser Diadochi to go to war with his ally. This entente was not to last with their successors.

Verse 6: We now skip to the reigns of two latter kings, Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Antiochus II Theos.

Ptolemy, in order to bring the war he had been fighting for Coele-Syria with both Antiochus I Soter and Antiochus II to an end, gave his daughter Berenice

⁵ "Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion. ⁶ And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times. ⁷ But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. ⁸ And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.

Kings of the North

SELEUCUS I NICATOR Ruler and later king October 312–September 292 BC; co-ruler 292–September 280 BC — assassinated

ANTIOCHUS I SOTER co-ruler 292–280 BC; sole ruler September 280–261 BC — assassinated

ANTIOCHUS II THEOS 261–246 BC

SELEUCUS II CALLINICUS 246–225 BC

SELEUCUS III CERANUS or SOTER 225–223 BC — assassinated

ANTIOCHUS III (“The Great”) 223–187 BC

SELEUCUS IV PHILOPATOR 187–175 BC — assassinated

ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES 175–163 BC

Kings of the South

PTOLEMY I SOTER 305–282 BC

PTOLEMY II PHILADELPHUS 284–246 BC

PTOLEMY III EUERGETES I 246–221 BC

PTOLEMY IV PHILOPATOR 222–205 BC

PTOLEMY V EPIPHANES 205–180 BC

PTOLEMY VI PHILOMETOR 180–145 BC

in marriage to Antiochus II, as part of establishing a permanent peace and alliance between the two kingdoms. A condition of this alliance was that Antiochus should divorce his wife Laodice, and that the children of that former wife should be excluded from the succession to the throne. Ptolemy hoped that the Seleucid lands would thus, under the next king — his grandson — fall under the sway of Egypt. Ptolemy, however, died two years after this marriage and Antiochus, who had declared himself divine and thus earned the nickname “Theos,” meaning god, restored his former wife Laodice, and put away Berenice. Laodice then killed her fickle husband, and she and others planned the death of Berenice and her infant son. Berenice fled to Daphne, where she was captured, and she and her son were killed.

Verses 7–8: When Ptolemy III Euergetes, Berenice’s brother, the “branch of her roots,” received news of her flight, he gathered an army and headed to Daphne — initially to rescue her, and then, when news of her death reached him, to avenge her. After receiving reinforcements, he made himself master of not just the western Seleucid lands, but crossed the Euphrates and subjugated the land as far as the Tigris.

Historical writings state that Ptolemy took back with him to Egypt 40,000 talents of silver, a vast number of precious vessels of gold, and 2,400 idols. Among those were many idols of the Egyptian gods, which Cambyses II, when he had conquered Egypt, had carried off to Persia. Ptolemy restored these to the temples to which they belonged and earned the sobriquet “Euergetes,” that is, the “Benefactor.”

Verses 9–10. Seleucus II Callinicus was proclaimed king of what was left of the Seleucid realm by his mother, Laodice, but had little success as king dealing with rebellions by his brother and other vassals. But on his death his sons, Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, renewed the struggle with Egypt. Ceraunus was assassinated after only two years as king, and his brother, Antiochus III, became king at the age of 18. His campaigns of 219–218 BC carried the Seleucid arms into Coele-Syria.

Verse 11–12: In 217 BC, Ptolemy IV Philopator met Antiochus in battle at Raphia in southern Palestine. Ptolemy had an army of 70,000 infantry, including a newly levied and trained Egyptian phalanx, 5,000 horse, and 73 elephants. He was met by Antiochus with an army of 62,000 infantry, 6,000 horse, 102 elephants. In a great battle, Antiochus was defeated, and retreated to Antioch. Ten thousand from the army of Antiochus were slain and 4,000 were taken prisoner.

Verses 13–14: Philopator was a dissolute libertine who was under the thumb of his favorites and ministers. Aside from the victory at Raphia, he didn't accomplish much in the kingdom. Before that battle, the native Egyptians had mostly been kept in servitude on the land. But in order to strengthen his army, which had consisted entirely of mercenaries, mostly Macedonians, he had armed and trained native Egyptians to form the Egyptian phalanx. That expedient was to cause much trouble later on, as they left the army on their return to Egypt, weapons in hand.

Jewish mercenaries had been fighting in Egypt in the service of the Egyptians, Persians, and the Ptolemies since at least 664 BC, when their presence was recorded as garrisoning the island of Elephantine on the Nile in southern Egypt. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that Jewish mercenaries fought in Ptolemy's army. Perhaps the "violent men of your own people" refer to them.

Meanwhile, Antiochus concentrated on restoring his possessions in the north and east. It would take some time, but by 200 BC, his army had grown and was battle hardened, and he was ready to renew his claim to Coele-Syria.

By 199 BC, he had possession of it, but then the Ptolemaic general, Scopas, recovered it for Ptolemy V, who had succeeded to the throne. But in 198 BC, Antiochus defeated Scopas at the Battle of Panium, near the headwaters of the

⁹ Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land. ¹⁰ However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.

¹¹ "And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy. ¹² When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail. ¹³ For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment.

Jordan, a battle which marks the end of Ptolemaic rule in Judea.

Verse 15: Scopas retreated to Sidon with the remains of his army. There Antiochus besieged him. Relief armies sent by Ptolemy under the leadership of his best generals were also beaten, and Scopas surrendered. He and the remainder of his army quit Coele-Syria and Judea. Never again would the Ptolemies exercise dominion over that area.

Verse 16: So Antiochus III stood as king and conqueror in the Glorious Land. Although he had been received favorably by the Jews and he treated them favorably in return, still the land had borne the destructive brunt of invasion and war.

Verse 17: Antiochus concluded a treaty favorable to his interests with Ptolemy, and as part of the agreement gave Ptolemy his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage. (This is not the same as the later — and better-known — Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt, and wife of Julius Caesar

and later of Mark Antony.) A weakened Egypt was for all intents and purposes a Seleucid protectorate. In time, though, Cleopatra was to side with her husband against her father.

Verses 18–19: Antiochus next turned his attention to the Ptolemaic possessions along the coastlands of Asia Minor, and by 195 BC they were his. He then crossed over into Thrace, the land north of Greece. He expected with this action to have all the Greek city states side with him against the Romans, who had been relentlessly extending their influence eastward. But only the Greeks in southern Greece did, and the rest sided with the Romans. The Romans demanded that he free all the lands he had conquered in Asia Minor, which he refused to do. After being beaten in Battle at Thermopylae, he fled with the remnants of his army back to what is modern-day Turkey.

To his surprise, the Romans followed him. It was the first time they had crossed over into Asia. At Magnesia a decisive battle was fought. Hannibal, the famed Carthaginian general, was Antiochus's advisor, but even with an army twice the size of Rome's, Antiochus's army was annihilated. Antiochus fled, and by the Treaty of

¹⁴ "Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall. ¹⁵ So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no strength to resist.

¹⁶ But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power. ¹⁷ He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be for him. ¹⁸ After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him. ¹⁹ Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Apamea he renounced all his possessions west of the Taurus Mountains in central Turkey. He also had to pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents spread over 12 years, surrender his fleet, hamstring his war elephants, and send hostages to Rome, including his son Antiochus Epiphanes.

And so he retreated to his own land, where he was reportedly killed by an enraged mob while leading a group of soldiers in a raid on the treasury of a pagan temple.

Verse 20: Seleucus IV Philopator inherited the kingdom and spent most of his reign raising tribute in order to pay the indemnity to the Romans. Although his father had favored the Jews, Philopator, in his quest for money, even raided the temple at Jerusalem. Before he was assassinated, he secured the release of his brother from being a hostage in Rome in exchange for his own son, Demetrius.

Verse 21: The next inheritor of the Seleucid throne was Antiochus Epiphanes. He was on his way home from Rome when he heard the news of his brother's murder and that a usurper had taken the reins of power. However, with the help of others Antiochus overthrew the usurper, but instead of proclaiming his nephew king, which would have been the rightful succession, he left him to languish in Rome and eventually ascended the throne instead.

Much of what follows in this chapter can be made to fit the character and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, or "Epimanes" (the Madman), as his critics called him. He was certainly a vile person as far as the Jews were concerned. He sacked Jerusalem twice, killed tens of thousands of Jews, banned the worship of Jehovah, was said to have slain a pig in the Holy of Holies, thus defiling the temple, and erected an altar to Zeus Olympios in the temple environs. His cruel and tyrannical rule provoked the Jewish Maccabee rebellion, which eventually led to the independence of Judea for a time.

He also prosecuted the war against Egypt, capturing several key cities and the king, Ptolemy VI. In fact, the only significant part of Egypt not to fall into his hands was the capital, Alexandria. He made a great show of being the Egyptian king's protector and benefactor, all the while looting whatever he could. He invaded several times and was finally forced to withdraw for good at the threat of Roman intervention.

However, although much in the verses from 21 onwards can be applied to Antiochus Epiphanes, some things definitely cannot. Antiochus didn't come in peaceably and seize the kingdom; instead he killed the usurper, and first acted as regent for another of his nephews, whom he killed a few years later in order to assume the throne himself. And he didn't disperse the loot and plunder of his campaigns to anyone but himself. He also was master of Cyprus after his fleet captured it, so it seems no ships of Cyprus came against him. The Holy Covenant itself

²⁰ "There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.
²¹ And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

remains to a large extent a mystery up to this time, and if there was a prince of that covenant during his reign, the identification of that person remains a mystery also.

And the final blow to Epiphanes being this man was delivered by Jesus in His sermon on the signs of the times in which He clearly states, “When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15), as a *future* event, not a *past* one as would be necessary if Epiphanes had fulfilled it. So although he was a type of the “King of the North” described, we need to look for another.

What does the rest of this chapter tell us about this king?

He is vile, he uses peace and intrigue to obtain the “throne,” he also fights at least five wars, he is deceitful, he rises to power with a small number of people, he disperses the plunder to his followers, he works against the Holy Covenant, he defiles the Jewish temple (sanctuary), stops Jewish religious rituals (daily sacrifices), and places the “abomination of desolation.”

He corrupts people, he attacks those who believe in God, he claims to be greater than God and blasphemes Him. He worships a strange god of fortresses, and doesn’t care about women.

He enters the Glorious Land (Israel), plants the “tents of his palace” between the seas and Mount Moriah, and then he comes to his end.

Where have we heard some of these things before? In chapters 7, 8, and 9! And as we know from those chapters, the person they were talking about doing such things was the Antichrist.

From chapter 7 we read that he speaks against God, he persecutes the saints, and he subdues kings.

In chapter 8 we are told that he enters the Glorious Land, he attacks God’s people, he exalts himself as God, he stops the daily sacrifices, he is fierce, and he uses cunning, deceit, and sinister schemes.

And in chapter 9 we find out that he confirms a covenant, breaks it, stops the daily sacrifice, and then makes things desolate by means of an enigmatic abomination right to the end.

Even though we get more information in this chapter, there are enough characteristics, actions, and demeanor of this King of the North that line up with what we are told of the Antichrist in previous chapters that make it safe to say that the King of the North from verse 21 on is the coming Antichrist.

We cannot, from this point on, show from history what this vile King of the North who doesn’t have the honor of royalty has done, because all of this is in the future (for now), but we can get a general idea what he does.

Verses 21–22: One prominent thing is that he is engaged in a lot of wars. First, however, he comes in at least giving the impression he is predisposed to peace before he seizes the kingdom in what could be a coup, either political or military, or he takes advantage of some crisis, possibly an economic one, to gain control. Then those who oppose him are swept aside, perhaps in a war, including, it seems, the “prince of the covenant.”

There is a school of thought that perhaps verse 22 intended to say that “and he *also* is the prince of the covenant.” In chapter 9 of Daniel it says of the Antichrist that “he shall make a covenant.” So if it is the Antichrist’s covenant, then it would seem he is the prince (or principal guarantor) of that covenant. When the covenant is made and then broken, we will know the answer to this.

Verse 23: In chapter 9, we read that the Antichrist confirms the seven-year covenant and halfway through he breaks it, and in this verse we read that after he makes a league, most likely referring to the same treaty or covenant, he works deceitfully. He could already at this point be working to undermine the covenant or in some way be deceitful about his true intentions. And, it seems, he does all this with either with a “small number of people” or “a small people,” as the Hebrew מְעַט־ (transliterated as *me’ at*) is translated in the King James Version. This could mean that the Antichrist rises to power through his popularity with the “small” or poor people of the world, the masses, due to his political and economic policies, or that he does it with the help of a “small” elite group of insiders.

Verse 24: This sounds like an unopposed invasion of some place where he disperses the spoil among his supporters — something his predecessors had never done — and for a while ponders attacking some strongholds.

Verses 25–27: Then a latter-day King of the South musters his army to fight him. Who this King of the South would be is unknown for now. But we can conjecture. The King of the South has a very great and mighty army. Obviously he is very powerful. Although it would seem he would be located geographically south of the King of the North, perhaps that is only indicative of where his armies are and not necessarily where his homeland is. In the days of the Cold War, many supposed that the conflict described in this verse was between the forces of the USSR and the USA. They were the two superpowers, and both had political and strategic designs on the Middle East — not to mention that they both wanted to control the region’s oil production.

²² With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant. ²³ And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people. ²⁴ He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time. ²⁵ He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him. ²⁶ Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. ²⁷ Both these kings’ hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.

At this time (2009) we have only one superpower, the USA. The USA is totally committed to Israel—encompassing the region over which the classical kings of the north and south warred and generally speaking the focus of biblical prophecies. If Israel was ever seriously threatened, the USA has unambiguously stated that it would immediately go to war on its behalf. But if the USA, and more specifically its president, is the King of the South, then what region does the King of the North, the Antichrist, rule over initially? Could it still be Russia, as once looked so certain?

We know that the little horn in Daniel 8 came out of one of the four Diadochi kingdoms. The Seleucids were the old kings of the north, and in fact, their realm and sphere of influence went as far north as the Caucasus Mountains. Until recently the countries in that region were part of the Russian Empire and its successor, the USSR. Today they are the modern countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, as well as parts of southern Russia.

In Ezekiel 38 we are told that a leader called “Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal” (Ezekiel 38:2), “will come from your place out of the far north” (Ezekiel 38:15), with many allies “in the latter years [and] come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 38:8).

John used the name Gog in the book of Revelation as a name for Satan, so it could also be applied to the Antichrist, who is the Devil incarnate. And the “latter years” or “latter days” is often used in the Bible to identify events surrounding Jesus’ second return.

“Rosh” is rendered “Ros” in some Bible versions, and Ros is the name given to the Scandinavians who settled in the Volga River Valley in the ninth century AD, who gave their name to the land we now know as Russia. Although Moscow wasn’t to be founded till many centuries later, it sounds similar to Meshech, and Tubal sounds somewhat like Tobolsk, the historic capital of Siberia.

Perhaps this similarity in names can be dismissed as coincidental, but when all of these things are pieced together, it does build a case for the Antichrist to arise from Russia. However, it doesn’t totally preclude the other three areas that were the old kingdoms of Alexander’s successors, namely Greece, Turkey, and Egypt. Egypt has been alluded to by some modern-day prophets and prophecies as having some strong connection to the Antichrist. When these events unfold we will know.

For all the troubles Russia has experienced over the last 20 years or so since the collapse of the USSR, it is still the second-ranking military power in the world. Its nuclear weapons may be rusty, but they can still make a mighty big bang. Its army may seem to be only a shadow of its former self, but even that shadow is still a formidable force. And while in the 1990s Russia’s economy was in shambles and the country was largely dismissed as irrelevant, its economy is now growing strongly, and with a strongman at the helm it is asserting itself considerably in both the European and international political theatres.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the USA has been considered the world’s only superpower. But with military setbacks and failures in Iraq

and Afghanistan, a disastrous foreign policy that has alienated much of the rest of the world, and an economy built on government and consumer debt which is now in recession, the U.S. is looking less “super” by the day. And with the rise of China, India, the European Union, and a resurgent Russia, the world is now much more multipolar than it was 10 or 15 years ago when the USA’s position at the top looked unassailable.

The King of the South loses to the King of the North because some of those closest to him “destroy” him, and his army takes a thorough beating. At peace negotiations both these kings’ hearts are bent on evil, and they lie in whatever agreements they negotiate.

Verse 28: As the Antichrist and his army return to his home, inflicting damage on the land through which they pass, he decides that he has had enough of the “holy covenant.” It doesn’t seem that he breaks it yet, as that comes later in verse 31, but its days are numbered as far as he is concerned.

Verses 29–30: He is on the move south again in what sounds like another invasion. But this time the opposition is stronger. Ships from Cyprus, or more likely from the direction of Cyprus, come against him. The U.S. Navy is perhaps the most formidable wing of its armed services, able to project American power into the far corners of the world. So if this is a war, it seems the Antichrist is thwarted for the moment, and he retreats. He is now very angry with the covenant, and he is in collusion with others who are ready to scrap it.

Verse 31: At this point, with an armed force he enters the “sanctuary fortress.” In fact, they defile it, which by inference means it is a holy place. In chapter 9 Daniel also referred to the sanctuary, which is another name for the temple, which will eventually be destroyed by the Antichrist, but that must come a little later because he has plans for its use. The Muslims call this spot *Al-Haram al-Sharif* (the Noble Sanctuary), and the Jews call it the Temple Mount, and it is on top of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. Here he breaks the covenant and places the Abomination of Desolation in the environs of the rebuilt Jewish temple. This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the last half of the Antichrist’s seven-year reign. From this point on, unholy war is waged against the believers in God. (For more details on the Abomination of Desolation read the chapter by that name in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

Verses 32–35: He corrupts those who do wickedly against the covenant, the rejecters of its provisions, and most specifically those provisions which have to do

²⁸ While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land. ²⁹ At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. ³⁰ For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. ³¹ And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

with religious freedom and tolerance. Just as in chapters 7 and 8, these verses state that he is fighting the believers in God, the holy people.

Yet for all the opposition, those who know God are going to be strong and do exploits. Those who have studied God's Word and are spiritually prepared will understand the whys and wherefores of what is happening, and therefore they will instruct those who don't understand what's going on.

But some will be killed by sword and fire (possibly alluding to explosions, such as from bombs, or even gunfire), and some will be captured and their goods plundered. But even this "fall" has benefits, because it will refine and purify those who know and love God. And they will find help among those who may not share the same beliefs but who do recognize

the Antichrist and his world government as evil. However, as in countries today that are under totalitarian rule, some who pretend to be their friends and offer them help will in fact be government informers.

Verse 36: So the Antichrist King of the North glories in his splendor, magnifying himself above all gods, speaking blasphemy against the real God. Paul writes in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, that this "man of sin ... the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, ... sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

In Revelation we find out why his megalomania has intensified to this degree. There, this King of the North is depicted as the seventh head on an indescribably brutal and despicable beast. But this head "had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast" (Revelation 13:3). This head was dead, killed, but somehow in some marvelous "miracle" of science, or perhaps just through some infernal demonic intervention, it has come back to life. If we thought that the King of the North was bad enough before, he is now infinitely worse. He is not just a wicked man in league with the Devil, he is now the Devil incarnate.

Revelation 13 goes on to say, "So they worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave authority to the Beast; and they worshiped the Beast, saying, 'Who is like the

³² Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. ³³ And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. ³⁴ Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. ³⁵ And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.

³⁶ "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.

Beast? Who is able to make war with him?” And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for 42 months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Revelation 13:4–7).

He is given authority over all the nations of the world and can make war on the godly, but just because he is granted this authority does not mean he will be that successful at it. There will be many nations fighting him right through to his bitter end.

Verse 37: He doesn’t honor the God of his fathers. It is obvious from this that the Antichrist descends from those of a religious heritage. Some speculate that this verse could indicate that the Antichrist comes from a Jewish heritage because of the term used for God in the original. It is the Hebrew word *‘elohiym*, which is often specifically used to mean the supreme God and is distinct from *‘elowahh*, used in the rest of this passage to denote a deity. The Bible translators make this distinction by capitalizing God in “God of his fathers.” And as is corroborated in 2 Thessalonians and Revelation, this monster man exalts himself above all gods.

And he either doesn’t like women, is not attracted to them, has no inclination to listen to what they want him to do, or he is a homosexual. We won’t know till he arrives how this fits, but when he does, it will be apparent.

Verses 38–39: But he is really into honoring “a god of fortresses.” The King James Bible renders this as “god of forces.” Either way, it sounds like a warlike deity, and as we have already noted, he thinks that he is greater than any god, as well as God Himself. Could this god be referring to himself, with him being worshiped in the form of the Abomination of Desolation which he has had placed in the temple fortress? Revelation 13 tells us that the false prophet of the Beast—his number two man—“causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first Beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the Beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the Beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the Image of the Beast, that the Image of the Beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:12–15).

³⁷ He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. ³⁸ But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. ³⁹ Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.

Is this image the god of fortresses? Is it also the Abomination of Desolation? Is this the foreign god which he shall acknowledge and advance the glory of, by investing it with gold, silver, precious stones, and pleasant things? It certainly sounds likely.

Verses 40–43: And at the time of the end, right towards the end of the Antichrist's wicked rule, the King of the South comes again to attack him. And then the King of the North comes against him with everything he has. Compare this to Ezekiel 38–39 and the invasion of Gog, which we covered earlier. He passes all the way down to Egypt, apparently skirting the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon (modern-day Jordan), and the prominent people of that area are spared. And somehow Ethiopians and Libyans are involved in his invasion forces. Ezekiel 38 also names the Ethiopians and Libyans being involved with the armies of Magog, as well as Persians and the people from the tribes of Gomer and Torgamah, whom we cannot precisely identify.

Verses 44–45: From the previous verses it seems that he has led his forces into Egypt, but now news from the east and the north troubles him. If you look north and east from Egypt, you head straight to Israel. In great fury he heads out to destroy and annihilate. He places his headquarters in the region between the seas, in the area of Mount Zion, Jerusalem, which he had already conquered and where he had established the Abomination of Desolation we read about earlier.

There are three seas in that area — the Mediterranean, of course, and also the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. And it is in that region of modern-day Israel that the Antichrist finally meets his end in a terrific battle, which we learn more about by turning to the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 16 we also read of war coming from the east. In the middle of the horrific plagues of the wrath of God that are inflicted upon the Antichrist and his followers we are told: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the

⁴⁰ “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. ⁴¹ He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. ⁴⁴ But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵ And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ... And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:12–14,16).

Har Megiddo, rendered in English Bibles as “Armageddon,” is a hill situated over the ruins of the ancient city of Megiddo in the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel. It is about 25 kilometers east of the Israeli port city of Haifa. It is geographically between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee, and is about 100 kilometers north of Jerusalem. Revelation states that it is the gathering place of armies for the battle of the great day of God Almighty, which we commonly call the Battle of Armageddon. However, this battle is not confined to Armageddon, but also rages around Jerusalem. It is a battle of monstrous proportions that is fought initially between the Antichrist’s forces and his earthly opponents. But at some point in this battle the Lord descends from Heaven with His supernatural armies to wipe out the Antichrist and his bestial forces and deliver those he has been fighting against. (For a thorough treatment of this event, read “Armageddon,” chapter 11 in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

And so we come to this chapter’s end, but the heavenly messenger is not yet finished. There is more to come in chapter 12.



CHAPTER 12

THE CLOSING MESSAGE

This brings us to the final chapter of Daniel's fascinating book. As you'll recall, there were no chapter divisions in the original text, so here the heavenly messenger who started talking to Daniel in chapter 10 is now winding up his long and detailed message.

If we go back to the previous chapter, we find that the last part of it is talking about the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's reign, which is known as the Great Tribulation, and it ends with the end of the Antichrist.

Now Daniel is told that at this time Michael, the great prince and archangel, the commander of Jesus' heavenly forces, who stands watch over the "sons" of Daniel's people, will stand up.

If we go back to chapter 10, we read that it was Michael who had come to the messenger's aid and enabled him to gain the victory in the struggle with the prince of Persia. We also read in Revelation another passage about Michael:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

The Devil is cast out of the spiritual realm down to the earth, and it is at this pivotal moment that it is believed that he possesses the body of the Antichrist at the midway point of the last seven years. This is when the covenant is broken, the Abomination of Desolation is placed in the temple, and the Antichrist—the head of the beast who was killed—is possessed and resurrected by the Devil. This is when he demands that the world worship him, and begins his maniacal persecution of believers in the true God. (Read more on this in "The Beast," chapter 3 of *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

And so Daniel is told that this will be a "time of trouble such as never was." Jesus told us about this time also, and His admonitions are recorded in three of the four Gospels, in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13.

Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), ...

Daniel 12 (NKJV)

¹ "At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over
the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be
delivered,
Every one who is found
written in the book.

then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:15,21)

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ... And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20,24)

So when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), ... in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. (Mark 13:14,19)

It is the Great Tribulation, as it is commonly termed, but it won't be forever. In fact, it will only last 1260 days, as was explained in chapter 9 of this book. And as we read in chapter 11, it is also a time that great exploits are performed by those who love Jesus and who are warriors of the faith and for His cause. Revelation 11 tells us about two of these witnesses who are a particular scourge on the Antichrist and his kingdom. And the type of power these two have is not limited to them, but is available to all God's prophets and followers in that dark and violent time.

At the same time, God is afflicting the wicked with physical scourges that are released at the blowing of six of the seven trumpets of Tribulation that are expounded upon in Revelation chapters 8–10, including fire and hail from the sky, a third of the waters of the seas being turned into blood, the waters in the lakes and rivers being turned bitter, the light of the sun and stars being greatly dimmed, and plagues of monstrous insects. Although the Antichrist and his wicked henchmen try to hurt and destroy God's people, God is a much greater adversary to him and his ilk than they are to us.

Then all Daniel's people who are found written in the “book” are delivered in the great and awe-inspiring Rapture, when Jesus returns at the seventh and last trumpet and gathers His people to Him in the clouds and then zips them off to Heaven.

What is the “book” referred to here? Other passages in the Bible talk about the Book of Life, and this is what it could be referring to. (For further insight as to what the Book of Life is and contains, read chapter 8, entitled “The Great White Throne Judgment,” in *From the End to Eternity*.)

Why the passage says “sons of your people” is open to some interpretation. Saint Paul made it obvious that “if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). The inheritors of the promises made to the Jews in the Old Testament are the Christians, and this includes everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believe in Jesus as their Savior.

So Christians can be understood to be the sons, the spiritual heirs, of the former chosen people. Saint Paul further expounds on the happenings of verses 2 and 3 when he explains that “the dead in Christ shall rise first” at Jesus' return to take us home to Heaven, “and then we which are alive.”

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

³ Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51–52)

(For more information on this wonderful event, please read chapter 8, entitled “Jesus’ Second Coming,” in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*.)

And for those who have been faithful in their love and service to God, who have through their witness and lives turned many to the true righteousness of believing in our loving and mighty God, it will truly be a wonderful day. For as verse 3 tells us, those wise ones will shine like the sun and stars in the sky forever.

But for others it will not be as joyous. All who believe in and receive Jesus as their Savior have everlasting life in Heaven. For believing in and receiving Him is all we have to do to receive His salvation. But to shine like the sun there in Heaven, and to receive the eternal honor and spiritual riches there, we have to do something here. In fact, we have to do a good deal. We have to work for those stars in our heavenly crown by living a life of service to God and humanity. “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

But the Lord is just and will reward us not only by the criterion of what we did, but also by what we were able to do. Some might not seem to do much compared to others, but they are doing a lot with the resources and talents available to them. Others might seem to do a lot, but compared to what they could and should have done, it may not be much. “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12).

But there are those who are saved, who have at some time received Jesus’ salvation, but became rejecters of truth, and even accusers of the saints. These will find themselves ashamed and will be held in contempt for their actions, not necessarily by the other citizens of Heaven, who will undoubtedly exhibit the godly virtues of forgiveness and charity, but they will forever—or at least for a long time—feel contempt for themselves because of their actions.

Then Daniel is told to close up the book—which seems to infer that he was writing this all down as he received it—as the message is not to be fully understood till the Endtime, when he is told that many shall run to and fro and knowledge will be increased. (If you want to know how these two signs of the End are being fulfilled, read *The Future Foretold*.)

And so the messenger was almost done when Daniel looked and saw what must have been two other heavenly beings, one on the one bank of the Tigris River and one on the other.—And the angelic messenger is floating above the water in the middle. Poor Daniel must have been flabbergasted by all that he had been told, and it seems that he needed some reassurance as to when the good times would finally come. Perhaps in an effort to help Daniel understand, one of the heavenly beings asks the angelic messenger a question, one that will be important to those who will live through these future times.

How long is this time of trouble going to last? Or in the precise words of the questioner, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” And much like a witness in a courtroom who swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the messenger raises his hands and swears by God that it is going to last three and a half “times,” and then when the power of the holy people is completely shattered, it shall be finished.

Well, that doesn’t sound too promising to those of us who regard ourselves as part of the holy people because we are believers in God. But take heart, because it is not talking about the *individuals* themselves being completely shattered, but “the *power* of the holy people” such as the power the often politically and financially influential Christian denominations and other religions wield. We know that the Antichrist is going to persecute Christians and it is going to be a very great and dreadful persecution. However, as we have also read in the last chapter, he is going to be fighting wars, and he is going to be invading Israel on a number of occasions and has wars with the King of the South. And at the beginning of the Battle of Armageddon he totally shatters the power of his remaining opponents before Jesus and His heavenly forces intervene and destroy him.

⁴ “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. ⁶ And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” ⁷ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

⁸ Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” ⁹ And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

The book of Revelation also talks about the Antichrist and his allies destroying something that is enigmatically called “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots.” For a fuller treatment of this subject, read chapter 7, “Mystery Babylon,” in *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*. But in a nutshell, we believe this represents the world capitalist system epitomized by the USA.

So this reference to shattering the power could possibly be referring to the military and temporal power of the state of Israel and that of its “Christian” backers like the USA. It can also be understood to mean that it is referring to the persecutions against all godly believers mentioned in Daniel 7:21, 8:24, and 11:33–35. And certainly the “many who would be purified, made white, and refined” would refer to believers in the last days.

This information apparently whetted Daniel’s curiosity for a little more, because he still didn’t understand. So he repeats the question. The angel then tells him that basically it wasn’t for him to understand, that the picture painted by all this information wouldn’t really crystallize till the time of the End, and that the wicked wouldn’t understand even then, but only the wise would.

And now—when we thought we had all the timing down, that the Tribulation would be three and a half years, 42 months, or 1,260 days—the angel throws in more numbers for us to juggle.

He tells us that from the time the daily sacrifice in the temple is stopped and the Abomination of Desolation is set up in its place, it is going to be 1,290 days, and he who waits and comes to 1,335 days is going to be blessed.

Before we let this upset the applecart, we need to remember that we already have been told repeatedly throughout the books of Daniel and Revelation that the Tribulation period during which the Antichrist is fully possessed by Satan, wages repeated wars, and most specifically, persecutes the believers in God, is three and a half years. It is said so often that it almost begins to sound like a broken record. Jesus really wants us to understand this point.

Here are those scriptures:

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a *time and times and half a time*. (Daniel 7:25)

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the *middle of the week* he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. ¹¹ And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a *time, times, and half a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

The court which is outside the temple ... has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for *forty-two months*. (Revelation 11:2)

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, clothed in sackcloth. (Revelation 11:3)

Then the woman [who represents the body of believers] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*. (Revelation 12:6)

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a *time and times and half a time*, from the presence of the serpent. (Revelation 12:14)

And [the Antichrist] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for *forty-two months*. (Revelation 13:5)

Even the angelic messenger in Daniel 12 has already made it clear that it will be three and a half years by the time all the previous things he has been talking about have happened, including Daniel's people being delivered. The believers both alive and dead at the end of this 1,260-day period will have been caught up to Jesus in the Rapture. It seems there must have been a different nuance to Daniel's question, "What shall be the end of these things?" than the other question, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?" because it elicited a different answer. In reply he is told that it shall be 1290 days, and that he who waits till 1335 days will be blessed. In other words, the "fulfillment" and the "end" are somehow different and there is an extra 30-day period followed by a further 45-day period.

We know from the book of Revelation that the Rapture happens before the seven bowls containing the plagues of God's wrath are poured out on the wicked (Revelation 16:1–21). When that happens, *all* the waters of the earth turn to blood, horrible sores and a scorching sun afflict the wicked, and then the world is plunged into darkness.

And in line with what the angel explains to Daniel regarding the wicked still not understanding but continuing in their wickedness, Revelation tells us that the wicked followers of the Antichrist at this time of wrath "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds" (Revelation 16:11).

The forces of the Antichrist are being gathered at Armageddon at this time of wrath, but the great battle by the same name may not yet have begun when “the seventh angel poured out [the final bowl of wrath] into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth” (Revelation 16:17–18).

Notice the line “it is done” spoken by the angel. Could the day of this pronouncement after the final wrath of God is poured out be the “end” in Daniel’s question, “What shall be the end of these things?”

Before going on, we need to look at something else that is happening at the same time as this wrath period. While all this hell on earth is happening, there is an event going on in Heaven called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where, during all the celebrations, Christians are rewarded according to their service for the Lord. It is a celebration of the marriage that has existed for millennia between Jesus and His church, the Christians of all ages. The Bible uses the imagery of a Christian’s relationship with Jesus Christ being like a wife and husband. Paul the Apostle stated in his letter to the Romans that we should be “married” to Jesus (Romans 7:4). The book of Revelation also pictures believers collectively as Jesus’ wife. “For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” (Revelation 19:7–9).

And at the end of the Marriage Supper, John the Revelator “saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ... And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ... And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (Revelation 19:11,14,19).

Zechariah writes that “then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two” (Zechariah 14:3–4).

When Jesus ascended into the sky at the end of His first coming to Earth, He did so from the Mount of Olives. “While [His disciples] watched, [Jesus] was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men [undoubtedly angels] stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9–11). It seems from Zechariah that “in like manner” did not only mean that as He went up into the sky that He will come back from the sky, but that He will land at the same spot, the

Mount of Olives, just across from Mount Moriah where the abominable image of the Antichrist stands in the Temple grounds.

Undoubtedly one of the first things Jesus will do after He lands in Jerusalem is destroy the Abomination of Desolation, and as Daniel was told in chapter eight, “The sanctuary will be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14). The angel said that it would only be 1,290 days from the time it is set up to its end. So it is possible that at the end of this first 30-day period will be when Jesus returns to wage war on the Antichrist.

And what about the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14?

In Daniel chapter 8 we were told:

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?” And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” (Daniel 8:13–14)

This refers to the activities that take place in the soon-to-be-rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The Holy Covenant apparently allows the temple to be built and the daily animal sacrifices to resume. We know that the covenant is made for seven years, or a total of 7 times 360 days, which totals 2,520 days. Yet this verse only accounts for 2,300 days. And further to that, we know that the Antichrist is finally stopped and his image is destroyed after he and his endure the horrific plagues of the wrath of God. We assume that the sanctuary is cleansed and the Abomination destroyed shortly after Jesus lands on the Mount of Olives (which cracks in half as he does) as He and His armies descend for the Battle of Armageddon. So we would seem to need to add at least another 30 days to the 2,520 days before this happens, for a total of at least 2,550 days.

If we subtract 2,300 from 2,550, we are left with a 250-day period, which, it seems, must be the period when the temple is under construction, between the time the covenant is signed to the dedication service in the temple when the first animal sacrifice is performed.

But what is the additional 45-day period that follows the start of the Battle of Armageddon, if it seems to be all over, bar the shouting, at this point? Surely Jesus and His heavenly armies will make short shrift of the Antichrist and his ilk. Nevertheless, even if the major engagement is over quickly, any battle of the proportions of Armageddon will probably take some time to conclude. Although we are told that at some point the Antichrist and his false prophet are captured and are

“cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20), we are not told when they are caught.

And even when the battle is over, it is going to take some time to conduct mopping-up operations worldwide, to cleanse the whole earth from the Antichrist’s bestial followers.—For all of them will be killed. Yet if 45 days may seem a long time to you before all his followers are purged from the Earth, you may be right.

There will be three general divisions of people in the last days. First, there are the saved believers who, at the time of the Rapture, are taken to Heaven.

Second, there are the wicked Antichrist worshippers who are now being wiped out.

And third, there are the people who fall in between these two categories. They were neither believers in Jesus nor Antichrist worshippers. They live through this grisly Wrath and Battle of Armageddon period and undoubtedly do not have a pleasant time of it. Even though they are not the primary targets of it, they will nevertheless be caught in the fallout. What if you were one of those people? Wouldn’t you feel blessed once all this was over?

The verse doesn’t say that Armageddon and its aftermath will take a full 45 days, although it may; it simply states that whoever reaches that point will be blessed. How will they be blessed? They will be blessed to be alive, for a start, and to enter into a new world where war has ceased. It may be an awful mess after the massive destruction caused by the Antichrist and his wars, but with the supernatural help of Jesus and His angels and saints, everything from this point on is going to get better.

So although the major battle could be over quite quickly, it may take considerably longer to round up and destroy the Antichrist’s followers. And once that is done, it may take even longer for the survivors to come out of hiding and start to get adjusted to the new order of things. So as the dust settles and the night-like conditions of the Wrath of God begin to subside and the sun starts to be visible once again, you can imagine the survivors feeling pretty blessed to have come out on the other side alive.

It is, however, important to state that what happens during the 30- and 45-day periods is not specified in the Scriptures, and the hypothesis written here is just that, a hypothesis. It is conjecture, but it is an educated guess based on Scripture and the events we know will come to pass.

The restoration of the war-damaged Earth will then begin. Jesus will rule on Earth for 1,000 years, assisted by those who had been His followers in their earthly lives. This time is commonly called the Millennium and it will be a veritable golden age compared to the world that preceded it. Peace and harmony will be largely restored to the world and the enmity between animals, and between animals and man, will be gone. The survivors, those who are the blessed, will live on in a simpler and righteous world, where loving God and others will be the governing rule.

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His

kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him (Daniel

2:44; 7:27). They shall beat their

swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).

¹³ But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”

The whole earth is at rest and quiet. [The Lord] will even make ... rivers in the desert. The beast of the field will honor [Him]. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 14:7; 43:19–20; 11:6–9)

And all that is just the beginning of Heaven on Earth. If you want to read a whole lot more about it, you will find it covered in detail in *From the End to Eternity*.

And as for Daniel, he was then told that he should just do what he has been doing till his end, for he will die and “rest.” He certainly deserved to rest after such a life as his. And as we, who are now in the latter days, understand more and more the meaning of the prophetic messages within his book, we will be forever grateful that he recorded them so we can have the benefit of knowing these things.

IN CONCLUSION

There is a lot in Daniel's short book. There are amazing accounts of triumph from trial and deliverance from execution. Daniel and his three companions refused to compromise their convictions, and even though that kind of stand could have cost them their lives, it ended up ensuring their protection and elevation to the very top in the administration of foreign empires. Kings trembled in awe before them and made them their counselors and confidants. If all this book contained were these accounts, it would still be one of the Bible's most read and loved books.

But there is much more. It is the Old Testament's single most prophetic look into the future. It contains amazingly accurate predictions of events that were to follow its writing, events now fulfilled to the letter, which we now can only sit back and marvel at. They are so accurately fulfilled that skeptics, in order to debunk them, claim that the predictions post-dated the events. They can't deny the accuracy, so they snipe at the delivery.

Yet it is not the *fulfilled* prophecy that is the greatest thing in this book. It is the prophetic predictions of the soon-to-be-upon-us *future*, the Endtime, that are its greatest gift to us. For by them we are forewarned and forearmed and at least

somewhat prepared to face those coming days with faith instead of fear. Being aware of what is occurring and knowing what their outcome is and how long they take can give us faith to endure. They will be momentous days, and the Antichrist will be a dreadful and demonic tyrant who will do his damndest to destroy all believers and lovers of the one true God.—Not to mention the war and havoc he will wreak on the world.

Yet his doom is sure. He and his puppet master, Satan, are destined for calamity and defeat. We can rest assured that even if at times it looks like they are the sure winners, they are nothing but the ultimate and foreordained losers. And even when it looks like we are losing, we are the sure winners because it has been written in God's book that we are. For we are on the side of the One Who cannot lose, the God of love Who is also the unbeatable God of gods and Lord of lords.

The events of the future covered in this book might sound frightening to some, and understandably so. They will be dark days for the world, but we who believe in and love Jesus, and do our best to serve Him, have His special protection. The book of Revelation states that the servants of God are sealed and that at least some of the calamities and plagues of the Tribulation only affect those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3; 9:4).

Furthermore, we must remember that Jesus has a vested interest in preserving us. He wants us to reach others with His love and truth, and so if we are doing what we can in that respect, then we can be assured that He is doing His part to protect us. Daniel wrote that those “that know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits” (Daniel 11:32). You may not feel capable of that right now, but He gives power for the hour, usually when you need it and not before.

Christians have endured many hard times before. But the end result has always been a victorious one for Christianity. It is in time of trial that Jesus has the greatest opportunity to show His power. The accounts in Daniel of his and his companions' deliverances from danger are not just for us to enjoy reading. That same power will be put to use on our behalf by the same God who protected and prospered them. You might not feel you have the same courage or faith to face dangers like they did, but you do. It is not our strength that will save us but God's. He doesn't expect us to be fearless, but He will make us fearless and bold and triumphant as we call out to Him to come to our aid. His Word says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5–6).

I pray that this book leaves you with your faith strengthened. We have nothing to fear. Even if there are some dark days ahead, those days are numbered. And after that, those who believe in Jesus and His atonement have only the brightest of futures—everlasting and filled with joy and happiness—to look forward to.

I look forward to seeing you all there!

