

Daniel

Introduction

Overview

Author:

Daniel

Purpose:

- To prepare the king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar to receive the bad news of chapter 4 by building confidence in the reliability and truthfulness of Daniel's prophecies and the omnipotence of his God in the preceding chapters.
- Reassure the Israelites (captives and first returnees to the Land) that God is in control of history and that His prophet Daniel was telling the truth when he spoke of a prolonged period of oppression before the final phase of God's kingdom.
- To prepare the generations of the distant future for the persecution that will await them in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- To prepare believers in the even more distant future for the coming of the Messiah in the time of the fourth kingdom.

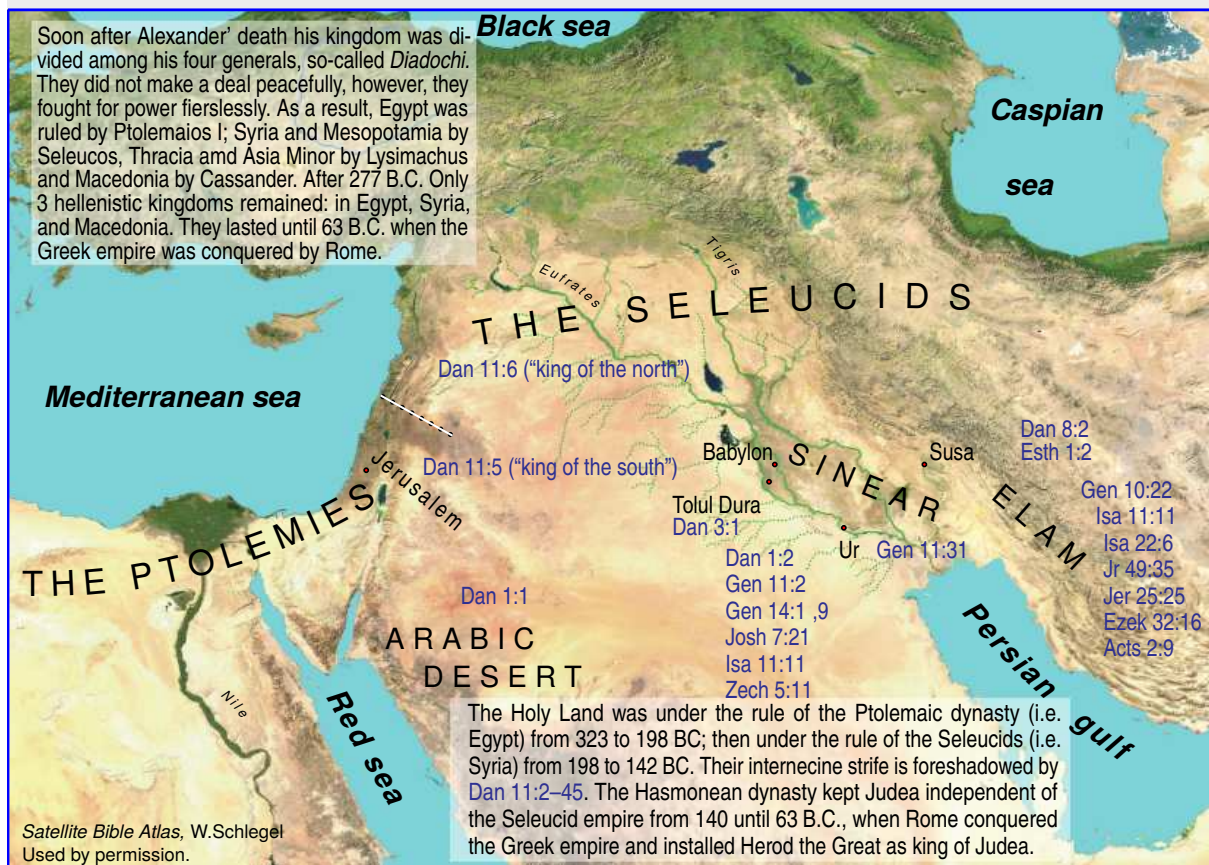
Date:

Shortly after 539 B.C.

Key truths:

- Daniel and his friends were faithful to God even in exile.
- Daniel can be trusted to tell the truth because he never compromised his faith, even under pressure from his slavers.
- God is the absolute ruler of all history.

The empires of Daniel's distant visions



- Israel's slavery is prolonged until a total of four kingdoms (of which Babylon is the first) succeed in dominion over her because God's people have not turned away from their sins.
- Although there is much suffering in Israel's future, God's Anointed, Christ, will one day come to bring salvation.

Author

The authorship of Daniel is a subject of protracted debate among interpreters. Many scholars date the book's composition between 170 and 165 B.C., during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, long after the lifetime of the prophet Daniel (the so-called Maccabean dating, cf. the article "Who was Darius the Mede?"). This date, however, is contradicted by the book itself, which indicates that Daniel is its principal author (9:2; 10:2) and that it was written shortly after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C. Furthermore, Christ himself explicitly links the book to the prophet Daniel (Matt 24:15).

Time and place of origin

The dispute over the dating of the book of Daniel involves three basic issues:

1. the nature of the prophecy,
2. the alleged historical errors in Daniel, and
3. the linguistic features of the Hebrew and Aramaic in the book.

Generally speaking, Israel's prophets were primarily concerned with religious and social circumstances affecting themselves and their peers. When the prophets predicted the future, it usually concerned near future events. For this reason, some interpreters are of the opinion that Daniel's vision concerning „king of the north“ and „king of the south“ (11:2–12:3) is too detailed to have been written by Daniel, who lived some 200–300 years before the events depicted in the prophecy.

However, this position denies the supernatural nature of the prophecy, as is the case with the occasional practices of other prophets (e.g., 1Kgs 13:2; Isa 44:28). Although the passage Dan 11:2–12:3 is unusual, it is certainly not impossible that Daniel knew such details; after all, it was to him that God revealed secrets as to no one else (cf. e.g. 2:19–23).

Some advocates of late dating argue historical inaccuracies attributed to the book by Daniel. They question Belshazzar's relationship to Nebuchadnezzar (see note 5:2), as well as the identity of Darius the Mede (see note on 6:1).

In addition, they identify the four kingdoms foretold by Daniel (chs. 2; 7) as Babylon, Medea, Persia, and Greece (including the Seleucids and Ptolemies). However, this identification is problematic because there is no historical evidence for an independent Mede kingdom in the interval between the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia. The Persian king Cyrus (550–530 BC) conquered Medea in 549 BC and Babylon in 539 BC (see notes 5:1 and 5:31).

Advocates of the early dating of the book understand the four kingdoms sequence to predict Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This view is supported by the allusion to the „Medes and Persians“ in 5:28, which shows that the author considered both nations to be parts of one kingdom.

Supporters of the late date argue that several terms borrowed from Greek to refer to musical instruments occur in the text (see note 3:5), as do late Hebrew and Aramaic terms (see note 2:4). None of these arguments, however, is convincing. There is abundant evidence of contact between the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East before the time of Alexander the Great. These are quite sufficient to explain the existence of a minimal number of words taken from Greek before Alexander's conquest.

The original names of musical instruments commonly accompany their bearers without a corresponding equivalent in the local language; compare today's Czech untranslated terminology associated with musical instruments: „gibson“, „jumbo“, „stratocaster“, „telecaster“, „Les Paul“, „stage piano“, „hohner“, „humbucker“, „single-coil“, etc. On the contrary: Proponents of Maccabean dating have trouble explaining the complete absence of terms adopted from Greek, *outside* musical terminology. If the book had been written under Greek rule, commercial, military, political, administrative, etc. terminology would have been rife with Greek terms. But there is nothing of the sort in the book.

The Aramaic and Hebrew of the book of Daniel can be dated anywhere between the late sixth and early second centuries B.C. In other words, the linguistic evidence does not give much weight to either aspect: neither late nor early dating.

The argument for a second-century B.C. date is at odds with the biblical claim regarding the date and authorship of the book of Daniel, and the late dating does not demonstrate the late dating convincingly enough. A date shortly after 539 B.C. (see 1:21) best fits the nature of the prophecy, the historical dates, and the language of the text.

Purpose and Distinctiveness

Daniel contains two different types of material. In the first six chapters there are six historical narratives; in the second half (chapters 7–12) there are four visions, almost exclusively predictive. Among the six narratives of the first half, chapter 2 stands out because it also contains a prediction.

An examination of the content of the historical narratives shows that they are independent wholes, pieced together with a purpose. The narrative offers neither a history of Israel under Babylonian or Persian rule nor a biographical account of Daniel and his friends. It has two main emphases.

On the one hand, the stories show how God's absolute sovereignty extends into the affairs of all nations (2:47; 3:17–18; 4:28–37; 5:18–31 6:25–28). Jerusalem was in ruins, God's people in captivity, and wicked rulers seemed to triumph, but God remains sovereign. According to his unwavering will, he enters among the kingdoms of this world to establish a universal kingdom of which there will never be an end.

Although all nations have believed that deities are territorial, that they have power only over the territory where their people dwell (and because they want to rule the whole world, their people must conquer other territories for themselves and establish their religion there), the experience of the Israelites in captivity shows that their Lord is not limited in any way, not even territorially; He is Lord over the whole earth, including the deities of other nations. And that he does not abandon his people wherever they go. Sometime around that time, the idea began to emerge that since the sacred is not a place on earth where God dwells apart from other places, then time will be sacred. And the holidays on the calendar began to take on importance.

The visions of chapters 7–12 contain predictions of future times during which the truth of the narrative will become more important to God's people. Although the Israelites suffered under

the rule of both the Babylonians and the Persians, they did not suffer any widespread and systematic attack on their faith. This did not occur until Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ruler over the Seleucid empire between 175–164 B.C., sought to eradicate the religion of the Jews and force them to conform to Greek religious practices. Many Jews obeyed him, but others resisted and suffered adversity. One of the main reasons for writing the book of Daniel is to prepare God's people for the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and to encourage perseverance in those who would live through the coming times of persecution.

The book also looks beyond the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the coming of Christ who will one day destroy all human empires and establish His eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. All of these events are in view in the prophecies of Daniel. The book has served as a powerful encouragement to God's people suffering oppression and continues to be an inspiration to persecuted believers today.

Christ in Daniel

Daniel's focus on the restoration of Israel after the exile turns the attention to Jesus quite directly. Like some other prophets, Daniel predicted a glorious future for God's people, the fulfillment of which the New Testament is linked to the first and second coming of Christ, as well as to the whole history of the Church.

While much controversy surrounds the details of the fulfillment of Daniel's visions, the basic structure of Daniel's visions leaves no one in doubt that Christ is the fulfillment of the prophet's hopes. This is most clearly seen in the way Jesus refers to Himself as the „Son of Man“ (e.g., [Matt 9:6](#); [10:23](#); [12:8](#)). Daniel used the term in the sense of God's exalted Davidic king, representing God on earth. Jesus, the Messiah, is the ultimate Davidic King; only he fulfills the predictions of the Son of Man in Daniel's visions (see [notes on 7:13](#) and [7:14](#); see the theological article [Kingdom of God Mt 4](#)).

One never does evil so fully and gaily, as when one does it through a false principle of conscience.
Blaise Pascal

In addition, Daniel learned in chapter 9 that Jeremiah's prediction of 70 years of exile would be extended to „seventy weeks“ years (9:24), or about 490 years. This prediction reaches its initial fulfillment at Christ's first coming. The delay corresponds to the series of four foreign empires that will oppress God's people (2:1–49) and to the rock that became „a great mountain that filled the whole earth“ (2:35), which Daniel refers to as „a kingdom that will not be destroyed“ (2:44). This is the kingdom of Christ, which was inaugurated by His first coming, continues and grows to this day, and will reach its consummation at Christ's glorious return (see the theological articles [The Kingdom of God Mt 4](#) and [The Plan of the Ages Heb 7](#).)

Daniel foresaw other, even more concrete events that have come to the fore again in the New Testament. For example, Jesus refers to Daniel's prediction of „exact abomination“ (see [note on 9:27](#); [11:31](#); [12:11](#)), which originally pointed to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Greece (see Introduction: Intent and Peculiarities) as a foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus in 70 CE (see [notes on Mt 24:15](#) and [Mk 13:14](#)).

Most Christians associate this typology with Antichrist, whose spirit is already at work in the world (see [notes on 1Jn 2:18](#)) and will appear in fullness, apparently as a specific person, near Christ's return (see [notes on 2Te 2:3](#)).

Outline

I. Narration (1:1–6:28)

- A. The loyalty of Daniel and his friends (1:1–21)
- B. (2:1–49)
- C. Deliverance from the fiery furnace (3:1–30)
- D. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (4:1–37)
- E. The Judgment of Balsazar (5:1–31)
- F. Deliverance from the lion's den (6:1–28)

The stories of Daniel and his friends illustrate both their loyalty to God and his supremacy over all nations.

II. Vision (7:1–12:13)

- A. Vision of the Four beasts (7:1–28)
- B. The vision of the ram and the goat (8:1–27).
- C. Vision of the seventy weeks (9:1–27)
- D. Vision of the future of God's people (10:1–12:13)
 - 1. The angel's message to Daniel (10:1–11:1)
 - 2. From Daniel to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21–12:3)
 - 3. Final message to Daniel (12:4–13)

Daniel's visions of the future of God's people, looking back to the long after the end of the exile. God revealed to Daniel that the four great kingdoms would dominate and persecute Israel. At the time of the fourth of these, God will set up His kingdom, of which there will be no end.

Daniel Finds Favor in Babylon

1 In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon advanced against Jerusalem and laid it under siege.² Now the Lord delivered King Jehoiakim of Judah into his

1:1–21 *Vindication of Daniel and His Friends.* The prophet set the context of his book by narrating his (and his companions') personal history of captivity, training, faithfulness and service to King Nebuchadnezzar. **1:1–6:28** *The Narratives.* This first section of the book highlights both God's absolute control over the kingdoms of this world and the sincere devotion that Daniel and his friends offered to God. Daniel wanted his readers to learn that although God's people are sometimes persecuted, kings and kingdoms rise and fall according to God's purpose. Daniel also taught that God would greatly bless those who paid attention to him as God's faithful spokesman. This material divides into six separ-

ate narratives: the vindication of Daniel and his friends (1:1–21), Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49), deliverance from the furnace (3:1–30), Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (4:1–37), judgment on Belshazzar (5:1–31) and Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions (6:1–28).

1:1 **In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim.** In 605 B.C., the same year Nebuchadnezzar defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish and initiated Babylon's rise to international power. Subsequent to victory at Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jehoiakim (2Ki 24:1–2; 2Ch 36:5–7) and took Daniel and a number of

You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first.

C. S. Lewis

power, along with some of the vessels of the temple of God. He brought them to the land of Babylonia to the temple of his god and put the vessels in the treasury of his god.

³The king commanded Ashpenaz, who was in charge of his court officials, to choose some of the Israelites who were of royal and noble descent - ⁴young men in whom there was no physical defect and who were handsome, well versed in all kinds of wisdom, well educated and having keen insight, and who were capable of entering the king's royal service - and to teach them the literature and language of the Babylonians. ⁵So the king assigned them a daily ration from his royal delicacies and from the wine he himself drank. They were to be trained for the next three years. At the end of that time they were to enter the king's service. ⁶As it turned out, among these young men were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷But the overseer of the court officials renamed them. He gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar, Hananiah he named Shadrach, Mishael he named Meshach, and Azariah he named Abednego.

⁸But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the royal delicacies or the royal wine. He therefore asked the overseer of the court officials for permission not to defile himself. ⁹Then God made the overseer of the court officials sympathetic to Daniel. ¹⁰But he responded to Daniel, "I fear my master the king. He is the one who has decided your food and drink. What would happen if he saw that you looked malnourished in comparison to the other young men your age? If that happened, you would endanger my life with the king!" ¹¹Daniel then spoke to the warden whom the overseer of the court officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: ¹²"Please test your servants for ten days by providing us with some vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who are eating the royal delicacies; deal with us in light of what you see." ¹⁴So the warden agreed to their proposal and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵At the end of the ten days their appearance was better and their bodies were healthier than all the young men who had been eating the royal delicacies. ¹⁶So the warden removed the delicacies and the wine from their diet and gave them a diet of vegetables instead. ¹⁷Now as for these four young men, God endowed

other Judahites captive. This was the first of three invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The second was in 597 B.C. (2Ki 24:10-14) and the third in 587 B.C. (2Ki 25:1-24). The apparent discrepancy between Dan 1:1 and Jer 25:1 and 46:2 (where Jeremiah placed Nebuchadnezzar's attack against Jehoiakim during Jehoiakim's fourth rather than third year) may be explained by the difference between the Babylonian and Jewish systems of chronology. Under the Babylonian system, which Daniel apparently used, the first year of a king's reign was viewed as an "accession year," and the reign itself was counted as beginning on the first of the month of Nisan in the following year. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians to victory at Carchemish in 605 B.C. as crown prince and commander of the army. Shortly after this victory he assumed the Babylonian throne upon the death of his father, Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.). Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 B.C.) forms the historical background for much in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

1:2 Now the Lord delivered. Israel's defeat by the Babylonians is not to be explained simply by analysis of the military and political conditions of the time. God was sovereignly at work in the affairs of the nations. He used the Babylonians to judge his own people' breaking their covenant obligations (2Ki 17:15,18-20; 21:12-15 24:3-4).

He brought them. Refers to the plunder of vessels from the temple, not to the deportation of captives.

The treasury of his god. Marduk was the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon (cf. Jer 50:2).

1:4 The literature and language of the Babylonians. Babylonian literature was written in cuneiform and primarily on clay tablets. Thousands of these tablets have been discovered. Study of this literature would have introduced Daniel and his friends to the polytheistic worldview of the Babylonians, which prominently featured magic, sorcery and astrology.

1:5 From his royal delicacies. Jehoiachin later received the same provision under the rule of the Babylonian king Evil-

Merodach(2Ki 25:27-30).

1:6 Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Characteristic Hebrew names. Two of them contain the Hebrew component el, meaning "God," and two the component yah, a shortened form of "Yahweh" ("the LORD"). Daniel means "My judge is God," Hananiah "Yahweh is gracious," Mishael "Who is what God is?" and Azariah "Yahweh has helped."

1:7 Belteshazzar ... Shadrach ... Meshach ... Abednego. The meanings of these names are disputed. Suggestions for Belteshazzar: "Bel [another name for Marduk, the chief Babylonian god] protect his life" or "Lady, protect the king." Shadrach: "I am very fearful (of God)" or "The command of Aku [the Sumerian moon god]." Meshach: "I am of little account" or "Who is what Aku is?" Abednego: "Servant of the shining one."

1:8 He would not defile himself. The reason for Daniel's conclusion that the king's food would defile him and his friends is not given. Perhaps eating it involved violation of the dietary laws of the Mosaic legislation (Lev 11:1-47), which prohibited eating pork or meat from which blood had not been drained (Lev 17:10-14). It may also have involved partaking of food that had been offered to Babylonian idols.

1:15 Their appearance was better and their bodies were healthier. God blessed Daniel and his friends for their obedience to the Lord and their refusal to compromise their faith in a heathen environment (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4).

1:17 God endowed them with knowledge and skill in all sorts of literature and wisdom. God's blessing was not limited to physical well-being but included outstanding success in intellectual development during their three years of Babylonian education. visions and dreams of all kinds. With a view to what follows in the book (chs. 2; 4-5) Daniel was distinguished from his companions by his ability to interpret dreams and visions, much as Joseph had been set apart by the same in the court of Pharaoh (Ge 40:8; 41:16).

them with knowledge and skill in all sorts of literature and wisdom - and Daniel had insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.

¹⁸When the time appointed by the king arrived, the overseer of the court officials brought them into Nebuchadnezzar's presence. ¹⁹When the king spoke with them, he did not find among the entire group anyone like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, or Azariah. So they entered the king's service. ²⁰In every matter of wisdom and insight the king asked them about, he found them to be ten times better than any of the magicians and astrologers that were in his entire empire. ²¹Now Daniel lived on until the first year of Cyrus the king.

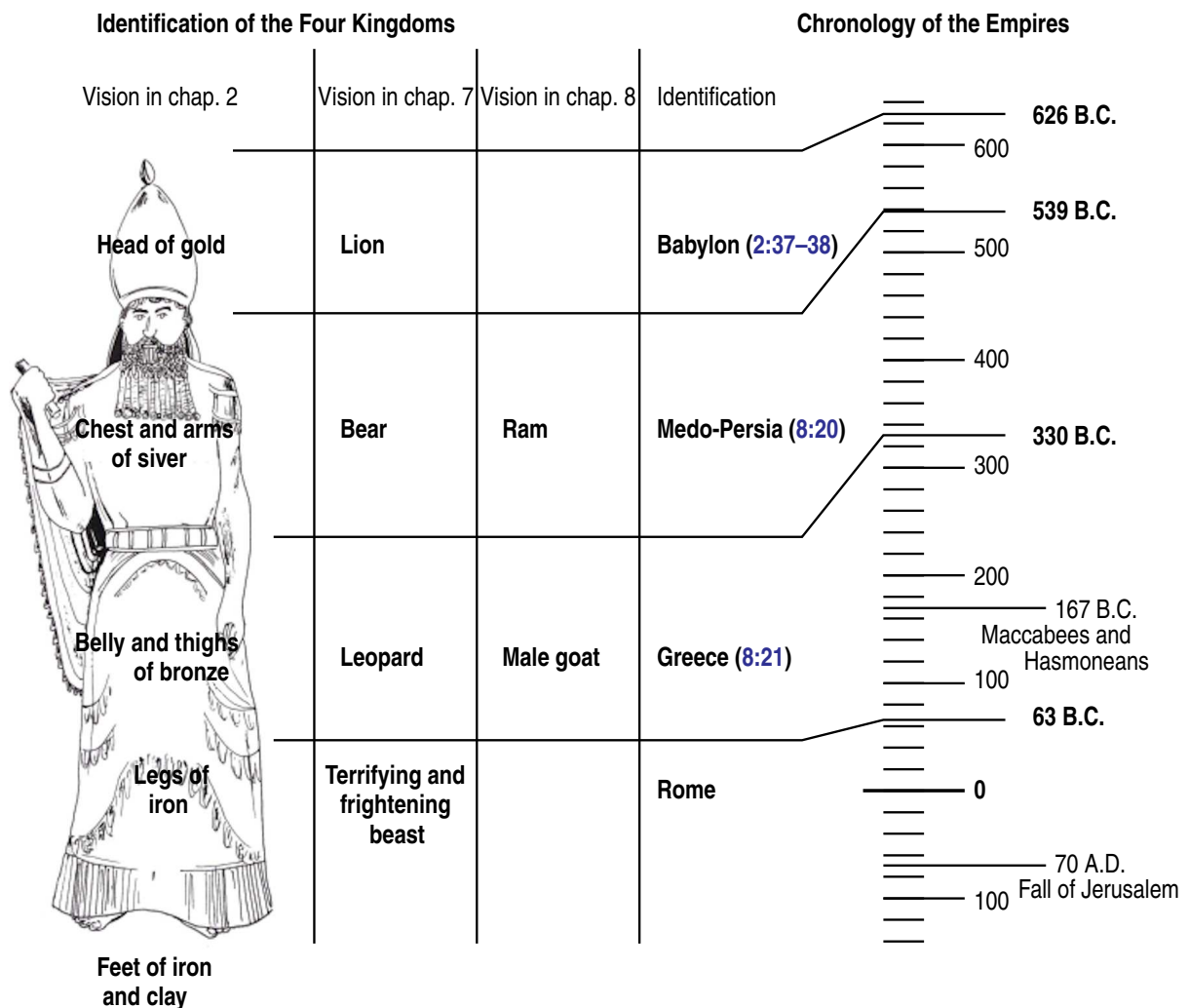
1:18 When the time appointed by the king arrived. After the three years mentioned in [verse 5](#).

1:20 **Magicians and astrologers.** The term here translated "magician" is also used in [Ge 41:8](#) and [24](#) and [Ex 7:11](#). The term translated "enchanters" occurs only here and in [2:2](#) and is sometimes rendered "conjurer" or "soothsayer." Daniel and his friends demonstrated superior insight on the matters about which they were questioned.

1:21 **Until the first year of Cyrus the king.** Babylon fell to Cyrus in

539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon. Daniel lived through the entire period of the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus issued a decree in the first year of his reign that permitted the Israelites to return from captivity and to take with them the vessels from the temple that had been seized by Nebuchadnezzar ([Ezr 1:7-11](#)). The statement does not signify that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus's reign ([10:1](#)).

Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms



Nebuchadnezzar Has a Disturbing Dream

2 In the second year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar had many dreams. His mind was disturbed and he suffered from insomnia.² The king issued an order to summon the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and wise men in order to explain his dreams to him. So they came and awaited the king's instructions.

³The king told them, "I have had a dream, and I am anxious to understand the dream."⁴ The wise men replied to the king: *What follows is in Aramaic* "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will disclose its interpretation."⁵ The king replied to the wise men, "My decision is firm. If you do not inform me of both the dream and its interpretation, you will be dismembered and your homes reduced to rubble!"⁶ But if you can disclose the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts, a reward, and considerable honor. So disclose to me the dream and its interpretation!"⁷ They again replied, "Let the king inform us of the dream; then we will disclose its interpretation."⁸ The king replied, "I know for sure that you are attempting to gain time, because you see that my decision is firm."⁹ If you don't inform me of the dream, there is only one thing that is going to happen to you. For you have agreed among yourselves to report to me something false and deceitful until such time as things might change. So tell me the dream, and I will have confidence that you can disclose its interpretation."

¹⁰The wise men replied to the king, "There is no man on earth who is able to disclose the king's secret, for no king, regardless of his position and power, has ever requested such a thing from any magician, astrologer, or wise man."¹¹ What the king is asking is too difficult, and no one exists who can disclose it to the king, except for the gods - but they don't live among mortals!"

¹²Because of this the king got furiously angry and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.¹³ So a decree went out, and the wise men were about to be executed. They also sought Daniel and his friends so that they could be executed.

¹⁴Then Daniel spoke with prudent counsel to Arioch, who was in charge of the king's executioners and who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon.¹⁵ He inquired of Arioch the king's deputy, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.¹⁶ So Daniel went in and requested the king to grant him time, that he might disclose the interpretation to the king.¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his home and informed his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the matter.¹⁸ He asked them to pray for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that he and his friends would not be destroyed along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.¹⁹ Then in a night vision the mystery was revealed to Daniel. So Daniel praised the God of heaven,²⁰ saying,

"Let the name of God be praised forever and ever,
for wisdom and power belong to him.

²¹He changes times and seasons,
deposing some kings
and establishing others.

2:1–49 *Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream.* While in the service of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel interpreted the king's dream, revealing that Daniel was greatly blessed by God and that God was moving history toward the establishment of his kingdom.

2:1 **In the second year.** There is no contradiction between this statement and the completion of the three-year period of training for Daniel and his friends mentioned in 1:5 and 18–20 if one understands that the first year of training was considered Nebuchadnezzar's "accession year," while the second and third years would correspond with the "first" and "second" years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It was during Nebuchadnezzar's second year, according to the Babylonian system of accession-year dating, that the dream occurred (see [note on 1:1](#)).

His mind was disturbed and he suffered from insomnia. It was widely believed in the ancient Near East that the gods spoke to human beings in dreams. Nebuchadnezzar's agitation is understandable because the dream had implications for the future of his kingdom. When a dream could not be remembered, it was believed to be a sign that the deity was angry with the person involved.

2:2 **Magicians, astrologers.** See [note on 1:20](#).

Sorcerers. Practitioners of divination through means such as witchcraft. Their activities were prohibited by God ([Ex 22:18](#); [Dt 18:10](#); [Isa 47:9, 12](#); [Jer 27:9](#)).

Wise men. This term translates the Hebrew term for Chaldeans; it is probably used here as a designation for a class of soothsayers

concerned with astrology rather than as a designation for an ethnic group. See [1:4](#); [3:8](#); [5:30](#); [9:1](#) and NIV text notes.

2:4 **Aramaic.** From here until the end of chapter 7 the text is written in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew ([Ezr 4:8–6:18](#) was also written in Aramaic). It is not clear why the two languages were used, but Aramaic may have been used for the sections containing prophecies that would have been of more interest to non-Jews.

2:5 **If you do not inform me of both the dream and its interpretation.** Nebuchadnezzar formulated a plan for testing his advisors. If they could not relate the dream back to him he would have no confidence in their interpretation (see [v. 9](#)).

2:11 **No one exists who can disclose it to the king, except for the gods.** The wise men were forced to confess that they were unable to do what the king asked. They claimed that only the gods have such power and that they do not reveal such things to men. See [Exod 8:18–19](#).

2:18 **Mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery.** Daniel also realized that human wisdom was insufficient to meet the king's demand (see [note on 2:11](#)). Daniel addressed God as the ruler of the stars to which the heathen astrologers looked for guidance.

2:19 **Mystery.** Here the word denotes an enigma that can be interpreted only by God's revelation. The term was later used by Daniel as a reference to God's hidden purpose at work in history ([4:9](#)).

2:21 **Deposing some kings and establishing others.** Daniel alluded to the content of the dream. See [BC 36](#).

He gives wisdom to the wise;
 he imparts knowledge to those with understanding;
²²he reveals deep and hidden things.
 He knows what is in the darkness,
 and light resides with him.
²³O God of my fathers, I acknowledge and glorify you,
 for you have bestowed wisdom and power on me.
 Now you have enabled me to understand what I requested from you.
 For you have enabled me to understand the king's dilemma."

²⁴Then Daniel went in to see Arioch (whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon). He came and said to him, "Don't destroy the wise men of Babylon! Escort me to the king, and I will disclose the interpretation to him!"

²⁵So Arioch quickly ushered Daniel into the king's presence, saying to him, "I have found a man from the captives of Judah who can make known the interpretation to the king." ²⁶The king then asked Daniel (whose name was also Belteshazzar), "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I saw, as well as its interpretation?" ²⁷Daniel replied to the king, "The mystery that the king is asking about is such that no wise men, astrologers, magicians, or diviners can possibly disclose it to the king. ²⁸However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the times to come. The dream and the visions you had while lying on your bed are as follows.

²⁹"As for you, O king, while you were in your bed your thoughts turned to future things. The revealer of mysteries has made known to you what will take place. ³⁰As for me, this mystery was revealed to me not because I possess more wisdom than any other living person, but so that the king may understand the interpretation and comprehend the thoughts of your mind.

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

³¹"You, O king, were watching as a great statue - one of impressive size and extraordinary brightness - was standing before you. Its appearance caused alarm. ³²As for that statue, its head was of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of bronze. ³³Its legs were of iron; its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴You were watching as a stone was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its iron and clay feet, breaking them in pieces. ³⁵Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were broken in pieces without distinction and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors that the wind carries away. Not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a large mountain that filled the entire earth. ³⁶This was the dream. Now we will set forth before the king its interpretation. ³⁷"You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has granted you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. ³⁸Wherever human beings, wild animals, and birds of the sky live - he has given them into your power. He has given you authority over them all. You are the head of gold. ³⁹Now after you another kingdom will arise,

2:22 He reveals deep and hidden things. See [note on 2:11](#).

2:23 God of my fathers, I acknowledge and glorify you. Daniel was deeply grateful for God's mercy in responding to his prayer. The divine revelation he received was in stark contrast to the silence of the false deities of the heathen soothsayers. Only God knows all things and is sovereign over all creation. God chose to exalt Daniel by imparting to him special knowledge.

2:24 I will disclose the interpretation to him! Daniel spoke here only of the interpretation of the dream. The text assumes that he already knew the content.

2:28 There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. As Joseph had done in Egypt ([Ge 10:8](#); [41:16](#)), Daniel attributed his knowledge of the dream and its interpretation to divine revelation. God showed himself superior in his ability to reveal secrets and mysteries. In days to come. Literally, "in the after part of the days." This expression can mean "in the end times" or "in the last days," which is the time of restoration after the exile (see [Dt 4:30](#)). The phrase may also simply refer to the general future ([Ge 49:1](#); [Dt 4:30](#); [31:29](#)). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) interprets it here as "in the last days," although it is difficult to determine Daniel's intended usage. The Greek expression is used five times in the New Testament, two with reference to the age begun at Pentecost ([Ac 2:17](#); [Heb 1:2](#)) and three with regard to the end of the age preceding the second advent of Christ ([2Ti 3:1](#);

[Jas 5:3](#); [2Pe 3:3](#)).

2:32-33 Head ... gold, ... breast and arms ... silver, ... belly and thighs... brass, legs ... iron, ... feet part of iron and part of clay. Moving from the head to the feet of the image, there is a decrease in both the value and weight of the materials but a general increase in its strength. The image was clearly too heavy with fragile feet.

2:34 Not by human hands. Unlike the kingdoms represented by the statue, this rock would be formed by God himself. In the Old Testament a rock is often associated with kingship; here it is linked to the kingdom itself (see [1Co 10:4](#) and its [note](#)). It is likely that Daniel had in mind the Messiah, the great son of David, who would establish God's kingdom over all of the earth—including the Gentile nations ([v. 35](#))—after the restoration from exile. See theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Matthew 4](#). It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay. Some interpreters view the mixture of iron and clay in the feet of the image as representing a second phase of the fourth kingdom—as distinguished from the legs, which were made of solid iron (cf. [vv. 41-43](#)).

2:38-40 You are the head of gold ... another kingdom ... third kingdom ... fourth kingdom. The four kingdoms represent the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. The climax of the dream occurs in the time of the fourth kingdom (see "Introduction" and chart "Visions in Daniel," at Daniel 2).

one inferior to yours. Then a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule in all the earth.⁴⁰ Then there will be a fourth kingdom, one strong like iron. Just like iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything, and as iron breaks in pieces all of these metals, so it will break in pieces and crush the others.⁴¹ In that you were seeing feet and toes partly of wet clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom. Some of the strength of iron will be in it, for you saw iron mixed with wet clay.⁴² In that the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, the latter stages of this kingdom will be partly strong and partly fragile.⁴³ And in that you saw iron mixed with wet clay, so people will be mixed with one another without adhering to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.⁴⁴ In the days of those kings the God of heaven will raise up an everlasting kingdom that will not be destroyed and a kingdom that will not be left to another people. It will break in pieces and bring about the demise of all these kingdoms. But it will stand forever.⁴⁵ You saw that a stone was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands; it smashed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold into pieces. The great God has made known to the king what will occur in the future. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is reliable.”

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed down with his face to the ground and paid homage to Daniel. He gave orders to offer sacrifice and incense to him.⁴⁷ The king replied to Daniel, “Certainly your God is a God of gods and Lord of kings and revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery!”⁴⁸ Then the king elevated Daniel to high position and bestowed on him many marvelous gifts. He granted him authority over the entire province of Babylon and made him the main prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.⁴⁹ And at Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon. Daniel himself served in the king’s court.

Daniel’s Friends Are Tested

3 King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden statue made. It was ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. He erected it on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.² Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent out a summons to assemble the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other authorities of the province to attend the dedication of the statue that he had erected.³ So the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other provincial authorities assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They were standing in front of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

2:43 Without adhering to one another. The fourth kingdom would constitute a composite of peoples who would not adhere together well. Efforts to combine the diverse elements of the kingdom would not succeed.

2:44 In the days of those kings. Some interpreters surmise that “those kings” refers to the succeeding kings of the fourth kingdom. It seems best, however, to understand them as referring to the succession of the rulers of the four kingdoms previously mentioned in this chapter. The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Like other prophets Daniel spoke of the kingdom of God that would be established after the exile as permanent (e.g., *Isa 9:7*; *Joel 2:26–27*; *Am 9:15*). The New Testament explains that the kingdom began with the first coming of Jesus and will reach its consummation at Christ’s glorious return. See theological article “The Kingdom of God” at *Matthew 4*.

2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed down with his face to the ground. In a remarkable reversal of roles Daniel was exalted to a position of great honor by virtue of the Lord’s intervention on his behalf. Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction anticipated the coming kingdom of God.

2:47 Your God is a God of gods. Nebuchadnezzar’s statement does not signify that he recognized Israel’s God as the only true God, but he did perceive him to be superior to the deities of the Babylonian pantheon.

And Lord of kings. Nebuchadnezzar declared that Israel’s God was supreme also over human rulers and their kingdoms. This is a unifying theme of Daniel 1:1–6:28.

2:48 Authority over the entire province of Babylon. The Babylonian Empire was divided into provinces. Daniel was appointed the ruler (cf. 3:2) of the province in which the capital city was located. For accounts of similar ascents to political power by Jews in foreign lands, see *Ge 41:37–44* (Joseph) and *Est 8:1–2* (Mordecai). Daniel’s friends

were similarly exalted as his assistants (v. 49). The divine approval of Daniel is another dominant theme in this portion of the book. Although prominent in Babylon, he never compromised his faith: he was a reliable prophet of God.

3:1–30 Deliverance From the Furnace. Daniel recounted God’s miraculous deliverance of his friends from the fiery furnace to instruct his readers that God’s people must admire Daniel’s companions and be faithful to God alone. He also illustrated that God would eventually frustrate even the mightiest kings who tempt his people to abandon their God to worship another.

3:1 Golden. Probably gold overlay, the fabrication of the image being much like that described in *Isa 40:19*, *41:7* and *Jer 10:3–9*.

Statue. Opinions differ as to whether this extraordinary image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself or of a Babylonian deity or whether it was merely an obelisk. From what is known of Babylonian religious tradition, it seems likely that the image was either of Bel or of Nabu, Nebuchadnezzar’s patron deity. Prostration before the image of this deity would also indicate submission to Nebuchadnezzar, the deity’s representative (cf. 2:46).

Ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. The proportions are the reason some have concluded that the image was an obelisk rather than a human form (the proportions of the human body are six to one). However, the image may have stood on a pedestal or had a stylized shape.

The plain of Dura. Its location is uncertain. It is usually associated with Tolul Dura, located about six miles south of Babylon.

3:2 The satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates. The precise responsibilities of these seven different types of officials are not known. Five of the seven terms seem to be of Persian origin, perhaps indicating that Daniel did not complete the writing of this account until after the beginning of Persian rule in 539 B.C.

⁴Then the herald made a loud proclamation: “To you, O peoples, nations, and language groups, the following command is given: ⁵When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must bow down and pay homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has erected. ⁶Whoever does not bow down and pay homage will immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire!” ⁷Therefore when they all heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and language groups began bowing down and paying homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

⁸Now at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought malicious accusations against the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰You have issued an edict, O king, that everyone must bow down and pay homage to the golden statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music. ¹¹And whoever does not bow down and pay homage must be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. ¹²But there are Jewish men whom you appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - and these men have not shown proper respect to you, O king. They don’t serve your gods and they don’t pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected.”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in a fit of rage demanded that they bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before him. So they brought them before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don’t serve my gods and that you don’t pay homage to the golden statue that I erected? ¹⁵Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must bow down and pay homage to the statue that I had made. If you don’t pay homage to it, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. Now, who is that god who can rescue you from my power?” ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to King Nebuchadnezzar, “We do not need to give you a reply concerning this. ¹⁷If our God whom we are serving exists, he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O king, from your power as well. ¹⁸But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we don’t serve your gods, and we will not pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected.”

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his disposition changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was normally heated. ²⁰He ordered strong soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. ²¹So those men were tied up while still wearing their cloaks, trousers, turbans, and other clothes, and were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. ²²But since the king’s command was so urgent, and the furnace was so excessively hot, the men who escorted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were killed by the leaping flames. ²³But those three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell into the furnace of blazing fire while still securely bound.

God Delivers His Servants

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was startled and quickly got up. He said to his ministers, “Wasn’t it three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied to the king, “For sure, O king.” ²⁵He answered, “But I see four men, untied and walking around in the midst of the fire! No harm has come to them! And the appearance of the fourth is like that of a god!” ²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace

3:4–6 See WLC 130.

3:5 Horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes. Three of the six terms used for different types of musical instruments account for the only Greek loanwords (“zither,” “harp” and “pipes”) in Daniel. This is not surprising, since the exchange of musicians and their instruments at royal courts has a long history. The presence of these Greek terms does not therefore constitute compelling evidence that this account was written after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

3:6 Furnace of blazing fire. Furnaces, or kilns, were widely used in Babylon for the firing of bricks (*Ge* 11:3). It was not unusual to use such furnaces for execution by burning (*Jer* 29:22; see Herodotus. 1.86; 4.69; see also 2 Maccabees 7).

3:8 Chaldeans. See NIV text note and *note on* 2:2. The term “Chaldeans” as used here is best understood as indicating nationality rather than function. The informants looked down on the Jews simply because they were Jews (*v.* 12; *Est* 3:5. The privileged position of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (2:49) heightened the Chaldeans’ hostility toward them (*v.* 12).

3:12 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. See *note on* 1:7. Daniel

was either not present or exempted from demonstrating his loyalty because of his high position (2:48).

3:15 Who is that god who can rescue you from my power? From Nebuchadnezzar’s polytheistic, heathen perspective there was no god capable of such deliverance. Unwittingly Nebuchadnezzar challenged the power of the God of Israel.

3:17–18 Our God whom we are serving exists, he is able ... we don’t serve your gods. The men did not assert that God always protects his people from physical harm (*Isa* 43:1–2). Although he may opt to do so, and certainly is able, the central idea is that God’s people should remain obedient to their Lord no matter what the circumstances because he is far more trustworthy than any human ruler and more powerful than any force on Earth. Thus the first six chapters of Daniel exalt the prophet and his friends as men who were unflinchingly faithful to God throughout their ordeals. See WLC 109.

3:25 That of a god. In the ancient world the expression “son of the gods” could refer to various types of heavenly beings. Here it meant “angel” (*v.* 28). No explanation is given for why Nebuchadnezzar recog-

Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality.

C.S.Lewis

of blazing fire. He called out, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come out! Come here!”

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged from the fire.²⁷ Once the satraps, prefects, governors, and ministers of the king had gathered around, they saw that those men were physically unharmed by the fire. The hair of their heads was not singed, nor were their trousers damaged. Not even the smell of fire was to be found on them!²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Praised be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent forth his angel and has rescued his servants who trusted in him, ignoring the edict of the king and giving up their bodies rather than serve or pay homage to any god other than their God!²⁹ I hereby decree that any people, nation, or language group that blasphemes the god of Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego will be dismembered and his home reduced to rubble! For there exists no other god who can deliver in this way.”

³⁰Then Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

4 “King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and language groups that live in all the land: Peace and prosperity!² I am delighted to tell you about the signs and wonders that the most high God has done for me.

³“How great are his signs!
How mighty are his wonders!
His kingdom will last forever,
and his authority continues from one generation to the next.”

Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of a Tree Chopped Down

⁴I, Nebuchadnezzar, was relaxing in my home, living luxuriously in my palace. ⁵I saw a dream that frightened me badly. The things I imagined while lying on my bed - these visions of my mind - were terrifying me. ⁶So I issued an order for all the wise men of Babylon to be brought before me so that they could make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷When the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners entered, I recounted the dream for them. But they were unable to make known its interpretation to me. ⁸Later Daniel entered (whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom there is a spirit of the holy gods). I recounted the dream for him as well, ⁹saying, “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, in whom I know there to be a spirit of the holy gods and whom no mystery baffles, consider my dream that I saw and set forth its interpretation!¹⁰ Here are the visions of my mind while I was on my bed.

While I was watching,

nized the fourth person in the furnace as a heavenly being (see [note on v. 28](#)). Perhaps the miraculous presence of the fourth person was in itself sufficient reason for this conclusion.

3:26 The most high God. A title for God’s universal authority. As in verse 29 (“no other god can save in this way”) and in 2:47, this confession on the lips of a pagan was not an acknowledgment that Daniel’s Lord alone was God but rather that Daniel’s God was supreme above other deities (4:2, 17, 34). On the lips of an Israelite the same confession implied monotheism (4:24–32; 5:18, 21; 7:18–27).

3:27 See WCF 5.3.

3:28 Angel. The angel may be identified with “the angel of the LORD,” who may have represented an appearance of Christ prior to his incarnation (cf. 6:22; see notes on [Ge 16:7](#) and [Ex 3:2](#)). God promised his presence when Israel walked through fire ([Isa 43:1–3](#)).

3:29 No other god. See [note on verse 26](#). See also WCF 20.4.

3:30 Nebuchadnezzar promoted. As this narrative makes clear, their prominence resulted from their faithfulness to God, not from compromise with the Babylonians.

4:1–37 Nebuchadnezzar’s Second Dream. The prophet narrated the story of the king’s second dream and its interpretation. Once again Daniel was exalted and Nebuchadnezzar humbled before God.

4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar. This is the book’s final incident associ-

ated with Nebuchadnezzar. It too is placed late in the king’s 43-year reign, at a time when his building projects were completed and his power was at its height (cf. vv. 4, 30). At that time Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the most powerful kingdom on Earth, but he was no match for the God of Israel.

4:2 The most high God. See [notes on 2:47](#) and [3:26](#) and 28.

4:3 How great. Nebuchadnezzar’s confession in this verse and in [verses 34–35](#) communicates one of the central themes of the book of Daniel; namely, the absolute sovereignty of the God of Israel over the kingdoms of the earth and their rulers.

4:6–7 See [notes on 1:20](#) and 2:2.

4:8 Belteshazzar. See [note on 1:7](#).

4:9 Although he spoke in pagan terms Nebuchadnezzar stated an important truth. The presence of God’s Spirit in an individual has remarkable effects. Here his ability to give extraordinary insight into God’s mystery, such as was later given to Paul and the church ([1Co 2:6–16](#)), is in view.

4:9 Spirit of the holy gods. See [2:47](#) and [note on 2:19](#).

4:10 There was a tree. See [Eze 31](#) for an extensive ‘ description of a nation (Assyria), using the imagery of a tree. Similar imagery is found in [Ps 1:3](#); [37:35](#); [52:8](#); [92:12](#); [Jer 11:16–17](#) and [17:8](#) (see also [Mt 13:32](#)).

there was a tree in the middle of the land.
 It was enormously tall
 .¹¹ The tree grew large and strong.
 Its top reached far into the sky;
 it could be seen from the borders of all the land.
¹² Its foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful;
 on it there was food enough for all.
 Under it the wild animals used to seek shade,
 and in its branches the birds of the sky used to nest.
 All creatures used to feed themselves from it.
¹³ While I was watching in my mind's visions on my bed,
 a holy sentinel came down from heaven.
¹⁴ He called out loudly as follows:
 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches!
 Strip off its foliage
 and scatter its fruit!
 Let the animals flee from under it
 and the birds from its branches!
¹⁵ But leave its taproot in the ground,
 with a band of iron and bronze around it
 surrounded by the grass of the field.
 Let it become damp with the dew of the sky,
 and let it live with the animals in the grass of the land.
¹⁶ Let his mind be altered from that of a human being,
 and let an animal's mind be given to him,
 and let seven periods of time go by for him.
¹⁷ This announcement is by the decree of the sentinels;
 this decision is by the pronouncement of the holy ones,
 so that those who are alive may understand
 that the Most High has authority over human kingdoms,
 and he bestows them on whomever he wishes.
 He establishes over them even the lowliest of human beings.'

¹⁸ "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, for none of the wise men in my kingdom are able to make known to me the interpretation. But you can do so, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you."

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

¹⁹ Then Daniel (whose name is also Belteshazzar) was upset for a brief time; his thoughts were alarming him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, don't let the dream and its interpretation alarm you." But Belteshazzar replied, "Sir, if only the dream were for your enemies and its interpretation applied to your adversaries!
²⁰ The tree that you saw that grew large and strong, whose top reached to the sky, and which could be seen in all the land,
²¹ whose foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful, and from which there was food available for all, under whose branches wild animals used to live, and in whose branches birds of the sky used to nest -
²² it

4:11 Its top reached far into the sky. The term "sky" may also be translated "heaven," a key term in this chapter. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom reaching from Earth to heaven (vv. 11, 20, 22) and protecting birds, which defy the separation of the two spheres (vv. 12, 21). In truth the king was not only subject to the judgment of heaven for his pride (vv. 13, 23, 31) but also dependent on the God of heaven for his existence (vv. 15, 22, 25, 33) and sanity (v. 34).

4:13 Holy sentinel. Although Nebuchadnezzar continued speaking in terms of his pagan religion, he acknowledged that he saw a holy, heavenly being in his vision. This common ancient Near Eastern belief fits well with the Biblical truth that God involves himself in Earth's affairs through revelations by angels.

4:15 Let it live. From Hebrew pronoun "he" it becomes clear that the dream concerned a human being and not just a tree. See [note on](#)

[verse 22](#).

4:16 Let an animal's mind be given to him. Nebuchadnezzar may have suffered from a recognized mental illness called lycanthropy which comes from the Greek words *lukos* ("wolf") and *anthropos* ("man") in which a person is deluded into behaving like a wolf or some other animal (v. 33; see also [note on 4:33](#)).

Seven periods of time. Seven periods of an unspecified duration (cf. vv. 23, 25). Most interpreters conclude that "time" represents a period of one year. Verse 33 suggests that the period was longer than a day, week or month.

4:22 It is you, O king. With this statement—much like that of Nathan to David (2Sa 12:7)—a direct application was made to Nebuchadnezzar.

is you, O king! For you have become great and strong. Your greatness is such that it reaches to heaven, and your authority to the ends of the earth.²³ As for the king seeing a holy sentinel coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its taproot in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze around it, surrounded by the grass of the field. Let it become damp with the dew of the sky, and let it live with the wild animals, until seven periods of time go by for him' -²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king! It is the decision of the Most High that this has happened to my lord the king.²⁵ You will be driven from human society, and you will live with the wild animals. You will be fed grass like oxen, and you will become damp with the dew of the sky. Seven periods of time will pass by for you, before you understand that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes.²⁶ They said to leave the taproot of the tree, for your kingdom will be restored to you when you come to understand that heaven rules.²⁷ Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you. Break away from your sins by doing what is right, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps your prosperity will be prolonged."

²⁸ Now all of this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.²⁹ After twelve months, he happened to be walking around on the battlements of the royal palace of Babylon.³⁰ The king uttered these words: "Is this not the great Babylon that I have built for a royal residence by my own mighty strength and for my majestic honor?"³¹ While these words were still on the king's lips, a voice came down from heaven: "It is hereby announced to you, King Nebuchadnezzar, that your kingdom has been removed from you!³² You will be driven from human society, and you will live with the wild animals. You will be fed grass like oxen, and seven periods of time will pass by for you before you understand that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes."

³³ Now in that very moment this pronouncement about Nebuchadnezzar came true. He was driven from human society, he ate grass like oxen, and his body became damp with the dew of the sky, until his hair became long like an eagle's feathers, and his nails like a bird's claws.

³⁴ But at the end of the appointed time I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven, and my sanity returned to me.

I extolled the Most High,
and I praised and glorified the one who lives forever.
For his authority is an everlasting authority,
and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next.
³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing.
He does as he wishes with the army of heaven
and with those who inhabit the earth.
No one slaps his hand
and says to him, 'What have you done?'

³⁶ At that time my sanity returned to me. I was restored to the honor of my kingdom, and my splendor returned to me. My ministers and my nobles were seeking me out, and I was reinstated over my kingdom. I became even greater than before.³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all his deeds are right and his ways are just. He is able to bring down those who live in pride.

Belshazzar Sees Mysterious Handwriting on a Wall

5 King Belshazzar prepared a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in front of them all.² While under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar issued an order to bring in the gold

4:25 You will be driven from human society, and you will live with the wild animals. In words more specific than those in [verse 15](#) Daniel indicated the form of mental illness that God would bring upon the mighty Nebuchadnezzar. Similar symptoms occasionally afflicted King George III of England (1738-1820) and Otto of Bavaria (1848-1916). See [note on 4:16](#).

Before you understand that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms. The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was to compel him to recognize God's sovereignty. See [WCF 2.2](#).

4:26 Your kingdom will be restored to you. Nebuchadnezzar was assured that, in spite of the severity and length of his illness, he would regain the throne subsequent to his acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. Heaven rules. For the first time in Scripture "heaven" is used as a substitute name for God (cf. [v. 37](#)). Compare [Matt 5:3](#) with [Lk 6:20](#).

4:30 See [WLC 105](#).

4:33 Ate grass like oxen. Because Nebuchadnezzar exhibited traits characteristic of oxen, the form of his mental illness is sometimes termed boanthropy. See [note on 4:16](#).

4:34–69,37-34 Although Nebuchadnezzar confessed God's sovereignty in no uncertain terms, he never explicitly affirmed the God of Israel as the only supreme Creator of the universe. See [WCF 2.2: 5.1](#).

4:37 King of heaven. This unique term brings together the theme of the chapter: the rule of God from heaven (see [4:26](#) and its [note](#)).

5:1–31 Judgment on Belshazzar. Daniel turned next to an account of God's judgment against Belshazzar. In this narrative the king is condemned for his impudent disregard for the holiness of Israel's God and of his temple.

5:1 King Belshazzar. Belshazzar means "Bel, protect the king." It is not to be confused with Belteshazzar, the Babylonian name given to Daniel (see [note on 1:7](#)). From Babylonian sources we know that

*Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely**Lord Acton*

and silver vessels - the ones that Nebuchadnezzar his father had confiscated from the temple in Jerusalem - so that the king and his nobles, together with his wives and his concubines, could drink from them.³ So they brought the gold and silver vessels that had been confiscated from the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, together with his wives and concubines, drank from them.

⁴As they drank wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.⁵ At that very moment the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the royal palace wall, opposite the lampstand. The king was watching the back of the hand that was writing.⁶ Then all the color drained from the king's face and he became alarmed. The joints of his hips gave way, and his knees began knocking together.⁷ The king called out loudly to summon the astrologers, wise men, and diviners. The king proclaimed to the wise men of Babylon that anyone who could read this inscription and disclose its interpretation would be clothed in purple and have a golden collar placed on his neck and be third ruler in the kingdom.

⁸So all the king's wise men came in, but they were unable to read the writing or to make known its interpretation to the king.⁹ Then King Belshazzar was very terrified, and he was visibly shaken. His nobles were completely dumbfounded.¹⁰ Due to the noise caused by the king and his nobles, the queen mother then entered the banquet room. She said, "O king, live forever! Don't be alarmed! Don't be shaken!"¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has within him a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, he proved to have insight, discernment, and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father appointed him chief of the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners.¹² Thus there was found in this man Daniel, whom the king renamed Belshazzar, an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and skill to interpret dreams, solve riddles, and decipher knotty problems. Now summon Daniel, and he will disclose the interpretation."

¹³So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"¹⁴ I have heard about you, how there is a spirit of the gods in you, and how you have insight, discernment, and extraordinary wisdom.¹⁵ Now the wise men and astrologers were brought before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation. But they were unable to disclose the interpretation of the message.¹⁶ However, I have heard that you are able to provide interpretations and to decipher knotty problems. Now if you are able to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, you will wear purple and have a golden collar around your neck and be third ruler in the kingdom."

Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law, was the last king of Babylon. Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, was made co-regent with his father and placed in charge of affairs in Babylon while Nabonidus spent extensive periods of time at Tema in Arabia. The events of this chapter took place in 539 B.C., the year of Babylon's fall to the Persians and of the edict releasing Israelites from captivity. 42 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 563 B.C.

Great banquet. The banquet scene juxtaposes the splendor of the event and the divine judgment that would soon be meted out (cf. [Ge 40:20–22](#); [Mk 6:21–28](#)).

5:2 While under the influence of the wine. Under the influence of alcohol Belshazzar committed a sacrilegious act. Even from a heathen standpoint the holy things of other religions were to be held in reverence.

Gold and silver vessels ... from the temple in Jerusalem. See [note on 1:2](#).

His father. Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar here and in [verses 11, 13 and 18](#), and in [verse 22](#) Belshazzar is called the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar. Although we know that Belshazzar was the immediate son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar, the terms father and son were often used in the ancient world in the broader sense of "ancestor" or "predecessor" and "descendant" or "successor." respectively. It is likely that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother, Nitocris.

5:4 Praised the gods. The temple vessels were defiled not only by being put to profane use but also by being used to honor the false

deities of Babylon.

5:7 The astrologers, wise men, and diviners. See [notes on 1:20 and 2:2](#) (cf. [2:27](#); [4:7](#)).

Anyone who could read this inscription and disclose its interpretation. Once again the king demanded a double requirement: to declare the portent and then to interpret it (cf. [2:3](#)).

Third ruler in the kingdom. Next in power under Nabonidus and his co-regent Belshazzar (see [note on 5:1](#)).

5:8 They were unable to read the writing or to make known its interpretation to the king. See [2:2–13](#) and [4:7](#); see also [Ge 41:8](#).

5:10 The queen. It is unlikely that she was a consort of Belshazzar since these women were already present at the banquet (vv. 2-3). She may have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, but it is more likely that she was Nitocris, the wife of Nabonidus, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and mother of Belshazzar.

5:11 A spirit of the holy gods. See [4:8](#). It is not surprising that the queen mother was more familiar with the events of Daniel's time than was Belshazzar. It is likely that Daniel was in his 80s by 539 B.C. He had been a young man when taken to Babylon 66 years earlier in 605 B.C. (see [note on 1:1](#)).

5:12 Thus there was found in this man Daniel. This divine enablement can be described theologically as the presence of God's Spirit in an individual or as a person possessing a remarkable spirit.

Belshazzar. See [note on 1:7](#).

5:16 Third ruler in the kingdom. See [note on verse 7](#).

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting on the Wall

¹⁷ But Daniel replied to the king, “Keep your gifts, and give your rewards to someone else! However, I will read the writing for the king and make known its interpretation. ¹⁸ As for you, O king, the most high God bestowed on your father Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, greatness, honor, and majesty. ¹⁹ Due to the greatness that he bestowed on him, all peoples, nations, and language groups were trembling with fear before him. He killed whom he wished, he spared whom he wished, he exalted whom he wished, and he brought low whom he wished. ²⁰ And when his mind became arrogant and his spirit filled with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and his honor was removed from him. ²¹ He was driven from human society, his mind was changed to that of an animal, he lived with the wild donkeys, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body became damp with the dew of the sky, until he came to understand that the most high God rules over human kingdoms, and he appoints over them whomever he wishes. ²² “But you, his son Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, although you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. You brought before you the vessels from his temple, and you and your nobles, together with your wives and concubines, drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone - gods that cannot see or hear or comprehend! But you have not glorified the God who has in his control your very breath and all your ways! ²⁴ Therefore the palm of a hand was sent from him, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ “This

5:17 Keep your gifts. Some think that Daniel rejected Belshazzar’s offer of reward not only because he did not seek such honors but also because of his consciousness that it was only by God’s mercy that he had been able to respond to the king’s request; he did not want to use his God-given role as a means of personal profit (Ge 14:23). Yet he had accepted such rewards before (2:48) and did so again later (v. 29). Perhaps he was avoiding any pressure to modify the ominous message (Nu 22:18; Mic 3:5, 11).

5:18 The most high God bestowed. See 2:37 and 4:36.

Your father Nebuchadnezzar. See note on verse 2.

5:20–21 See 4:31–33.

5:21 The most high God rules. This statement summarizes the book’s theology (see “Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives”).

5:22 You, his son. See note on verse 2.

Although you knew all this. Because the king was without excuse—even more so than his father—the time of mercy had passed (see 1Ti 1:13). See WLC 151.

5:23 See WLC 105.

5:24 Therefore. The writing on the wall was God’s answer to the arrogant challenge presented by Belshazzar’s pride and defiance of the God who had demonstrated his existence and sovereignty in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Who was Darius the Mede?

He is first mentioned in 5:31. Some (mainly critical, i.e., liberal) theologians, advocating a late (so-called „Maccabean“) dating of the book of Daniel (according to them around 165 B.C.), claim that (1) Darius Medes never existed because he is not mentioned in other ancient documents; (2) the name Darius was used by an unknown Maccabean author, poorly acquainted with Persian history, and confused it with the legendary Darius I (255–484) of Persia (not the Medes); (3) the author erroneously assumed that Babylon was conquered by Medea, not Persia, and that under the leadership of this legendary „Darius“ the Medes ruled the world empire for several years before it fell into the hands of the Persians.

As a result, advocates of the Maccabean (late) date can claim that the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2) are (1) Babylonian; (2) Median; (3) Persian; and (4) Greek, which gives them the advantage of limiting the horizon of Daniel’s prophecies to no further than 165 B.C. (If the book was written at this time, all of the alleged „prophecies“ could be explained in retrospect by looking back at the historical events *after they occurred*. The problem with the traditional identification of the fourth kingdom as Rome for liberals

is that such a view presupposes actual true predictive prophecy, which rationalist higher criticism fundamentally does not allow.)

Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original: whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it.

C. S. Lewis

The tenability of the Maccabean date hypothesis therefore depends on the above explanation of „Darius the Mede“ (since according to this explanation the Median kingdom pre-dates the Persian kingdom). Therefore, this figure is very important; its identification has serious theological implications.

However, the Persian Darius I, son of Hystapes, cannot be identified with Darius the Mede for several reasons:

is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEQEL, and PHARSIN .²⁶ This is the interpretation of the words: As for mene - God has numbered your kingdom's days and brought it to an end.²⁷ As for teqel - you are weighed on the balances and found to be lacking.²⁸ As for peres - your kingdom is divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."²⁹ Then, on Belshazzar's orders, Daniel was clothed in purple, a golden collar was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed third ruler in the kingdom.³⁰ And in that very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed.³¹ So Darius the Mede took control of the kingdom when he was about sixty-two years old.

Daniel is Thrown into a Lions' Den

6 It seemed like a good idea to Darius to appoint over the kingdom 120 satraps who would be in charge of the entire kingdom.

5:25 MENE, MENE, TEQEL, and PHARSIN. Literally, "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided" or "mina [a unit of weight], mina, shekel, half shekel."

5:26 Mene. The original script for this word could be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning "numbered" or "counted" and interpreted it as signifying that the days and years of Belshazzar's reign had been determined by God and were about to end.

5:27 Teqel. This word could also be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning "weighed" and interpreted it as signifying that Belshazzar failed to measure up to God's standards of righteousness.

5:28 Peres. Daniel construed this word as a verb meaning "divided" and interpreted it to signify that Belshazzar's kingdom would be taken from him and given to the Medes and Persians. If, as is likely, those present at the banquet understood the three terms as nouns that simply indicated various monetary weights (mene, a weight equivalent to 60 Babylonian shekels; tekel, the shekel; peres, a half shekel), then it is not surprising that they failed to comprehend the significance of the inscription. Medes and Persians. See "Introduction: Purpose and

Distinctives." See also BC 36.

5:29 On Belshazzar's orders. Like Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar honored Daniel (2:48), but unlike Nebuchadnezzar he did not honor Daniel's God (2:46-47). The honor that Daniel and his companions had repeatedly received because of their faithfulness to God had established Daniel's credibility as a prophet. He was not a compromiser; he was faithful to God. Therefore his later prophecies ("chs. 7-12" 7:1>) could be fully trusted.

5:30 Belshazzar ... was killed. Ancient Near Eastern texts and the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon record that Babylon was taken in a surprise attack by the Persians while the Babylonians were engaged in reveling and dancing.

5:31 Darius the Mede. It has long been alleged that this and other references to "Darius the Mede" in the book of Daniel (6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1; 11:1) are historical errors. See [note on 6:1](#).

6:1-28 Deliverance From the Den of Lions. The prophet recounted his treatment under Darius the Mede, who succeeded Belshazzar. During his reign Daniel was thrown into a lions' den, and only through faith did he emerge unscathed.

6:1 Darius. See [note on 5:31](#). While it is true that Darius the Mede

1. Darius I was a Persian by birth, a cousin of king Cyrus; he was by no means a Mede.
2. Darius I was a young man of about twenty when he murdered the impostor Gaumata (who claimed to be Cyrus's son Smerdis) in 522 BC. He could not have been 62 (5:31).
3. Darius I was not king of Babylon before Cyrus as liberal theories claim. He did not become an independent ruler until seven years after the death of Cyrus (cf. [Ezd 4:5](#)).
4. Such confusion about the nationality and chronology of Darius and Cyrus was absolutely unthinkable in the Hellenistic world of the second century BC. Students must have read Xenophon, Herodotus and other Greek historians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. From Xenophon and Herodotus we have information about Cyrus and Darius. Any Greek writer who placed Darius before Cyrus would have ended his writing career in public ridicule; he would never be taken seriously again.

Thus, Darius Persian ([Ezra 4:5](#)) and Darius-Median ([Dan 5:31](#)) have nothing to do with each other; the confusion is only on the part of the late date theorists, not on the part of the author of Daniel.

However, it is true that archaeology has not yet discovered any mention of *Darius the Medes* from the time he lived, outside the Bible. (Until the nineteenth century, the same was true of Balsazar, the viceroy representing his father Nabonidus. Critical theologians, advocating Maccabean dating, have argued that Balsazar was another fictional character in Daniel until Babylonian tablets from his time were discovered confirming that Balsazar served as a junior king in the last years of his father Nabonidus' reign. Cf. [note on 5:1](#)).

Nevertheless, we can identify Darius the Mede. There are several indications in the book of Daniel that Darius was not a sovereign king, but was temporarily placed on the throne by some higher authority. In verse [9:1](#), we read that „was made king“. The passive root *hofal* is used here for the verb form „homlak“ (הִמְלַךְ) instead of the common „malak“ (מָלַךְ „became king“) used in the context of gaining the throne by conquest or inheritance (e.g., [1Sam 13:1](#)). Similarly, in verse [5:31](#) we read that Darius „take possession of the kingdom“ (,qabbel“ (קָבַל), as if it had been conferred on him by a higher authority.

The very name Darius (Old Persian *Da-ri-ya-(h)u-(ú-)ish*/ דָּרְיָוִשׁ, Heb. דָּרְיָוִשׁ)

²Over them would be three supervisors, one of whom was Daniel. These satraps were accountable to them, so that the king's interests might not incur damage. ³Now this Daniel was distinguishing himself above the other supervisors and the satraps, for he had an extraordinary spirit. In fact, the king intended to appoint him over the entire kingdom. ⁴Consequently the supervisors and satraps were trying to find some pretext against Daniel in connection with administrative matters. But they were unable to find any such damaging evidence, because he was trustworthy and guilty of no negligence or corruption. ⁵So these men concluded, "We won't find any pretext against this man Daniel unless it is in connection with the law of his God." ⁶So these supervisors and satraps came by collusion to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!

⁷To all the supervisors of the kingdom, the prefects, satraps, counselors, and governors it seemed like a good idea for a royal edict to be issued and an interdict to be enforced. For the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human other than you, O king, should be thrown into a den of lions. ⁸Now let the king issue a written interdict so that it cannot be altered, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed. ⁹So King Darius issued the written interdict. ¹⁰When Daniel realized that a written decree had been issued, he entered his home, where the windows in his upper room opened toward Jerusalem.

is not referred to in extant historical sources outside the Scripture and that there was no interval between Belshazzar/Nabonidus (see [note on 5:1N](#)) and the accession of Cyrus of Persia, this does not necessarily mean that the book of Daniel is in error. Most likely "Darius the Mede" was a throne name for Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire (see [note on v. 28N](#)). It is also possible, but not as likely, that it was a designation for Gubaru, a general who defected from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, led the Persian conquest of Babylon and was made governor by Cyrus over the territories the Persians had taken from the Babylonians.

6:3 Extraordinary spirit. See [1:17](#); [4:8](#) and [5:12](#).

6:5 The law of his God. Daniel's adversaries affirmed not only his moral integrity but also the visible nature of his piety and commitment to the God of Israel. Thus the book's major theme of Daniel's holiness and reliability is affirmed once again.

6:7 To all ... it seemed like a good idea. The false implication was that Daniel had concurred with the proposal. These officials were hypocritical in their seeming devotion to Darius. Their scheme was an attempt to manipulate him into securing their own designs.

Anyone who prays to any god ... other than you. The proposal would have seemed to Darius to be more political than religious and would have served to consolidate his authority over newly conquered territories.

6:8 The law of the Medes and Persians. See [Est 1:19](#) and [8:8](#). The irrevocable nature of Persian law is also attested in extra-Biblical writings. The effect of the decree was to create a conflict for Daniel between allegiance to the Lord and obedience to human government.

6:10 Opened toward Jerusalem. See [1Ki 8:44](#) and [48](#), as well as [Ps 5:7](#) and [138:2](#).

is probably related to *dara*, which appears in Avestan (a dead northeastern ancient Iranian language) as an expression for a king. Like the appellation *augustus* among the Romans, the surname *dārayawush* („royal“) may have been a special honorary title that could also serve as a proper name, like the English surname „King“.

So it seems that soon after the defeat of Babylon by the Medo-Persian armies, Cyrus' personal presence was forced by another front of his expanding empire. It seemed expedient to him, therefore, to entrust the kingdom to Gubar-Darius with the title of King of Babylon, to rule for about a year before Cyrus personally returned for his coronation ceremony in the temple of Marduk. After this year's reign as viceroy, Darius remained as governor of Babylon, but the crown was handed over to his superior ruler Cyrus (who later passed it on to his eldest son Cambyses, cf. [note on 11:2](#), at his coronation as king of Babylon).

This scenario is supported by the text of the book in that Daniel nowhere mentions any later year of Darius' reign than „first“ ([9:1](#)), indicating its very short duration. Even if this were to mean that the one-year reign belonged to the Medes (we know it did not; it belonged to Persian Cyrus), a

one-year empire could hardly have defended its legitimate position as the number two kingdom in a series of empires of considerably greater durability: the Babylonian lasted 73 years, the Persian 208 years, the Greek would have had 167 years of existence by 165 BC.

In addition, a pun on Daniel's interpretation of the inscription on the wall in [5:28](#), which combines two meanings of the same root P-R-S (פָּרַס): *p^erisat*/פָּרִיסַת („divided“) and *pārās* וּפָרַס („given to the Medes and Persians“), while assuring that the author of the book wrote in the belief that kingdom number one (Babylonian) would pass under to the rule of the Persians already allied with the Medes and thus becomes kingdom number two. The book of Daniel leaves no room for critical speculation about the earlier Median kingdom, which the author of the book may have had in mind.

The fourth kingdom, then, is Rome, the only one that has been able to subdue Greece ([2:40](#)), and during whose existence the eternal kingdom of which there will be no end ([2:44](#)) – the church – has come into being by divine intervention. (Cf. chart [Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms](#) on p. 6).

Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.

C.S. Lewis

Three times daily he was kneeling and offering prayers and thanks to his God just as he had been accustomed to do previously.

¹¹Then those officials who had gone to the king came by collusion and found Daniel praying and asking for help before his God.

¹²So they approached the king and said to him, “Did you not issue an edict to the effect that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human other than to you, O king, would be thrown into a den of lions?” The king replied, “That is correct, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.” ¹³Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the edict that you issued. Three times daily he offers his prayer.” ¹⁴When the king heard this, he was very upset and began thinking about how he might rescue Daniel. Until late afternoon he was struggling to find a way to rescue him. ¹⁵Then those men came by collusion to the king and said to him, “Recall, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or decree that the king issues can be changed.” ¹⁶So the king gave the order, and Daniel was brought and thrown into a den of lions. The king consoled Daniel by saying, “Your God whom you continually serve will rescue you!” ¹⁷Then a stone was brought and placed over the opening to the den. The king sealed it with his signet ring and with those of his nobles so that nothing could be changed with regard to Daniel. ¹⁸Then the king departed to his palace. But he spent the night without eating, and no diversions were brought to him. He was unable to sleep.

God Rescues Daniel from the Lions

¹⁹In the morning, at the earliest sign of daylight, the king got up and rushed to the lions’ den. ²⁰As he approached the den, he called out to Daniel in a worried voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God whom you continually serve able to rescue you from the lions?” ²¹Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever! ²²My God sent his angel and closed the lions’ mouths so that they have not harmed me, because I was found to be innocent before him. Nor have I done any harm to you, O king.” ²³Then the king was delighted and gave an order to haul Daniel up from the den. So Daniel was hauled up out of the den. He had no injury of any kind, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴The king gave another order, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions’ den - they, their children, and their wives. They did not even reach the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. ²⁵Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and language groups who were living in all the land: “Peace and prosperity! ²⁶I have issued an edict that throughout all the dominion of my kingdom people are to revere and fear the God of Daniel. “For he is the living God;

Three times daily. See Ps 55:17–18.

He was kneeling. Standing may have been a regular posture in prayer (1Ch 23:30; Ne 9). While kneeling in prostration marked a lowering of oneself, appropriate in circumstances of particular solemnity (1Ki 8:54; Ezr 9:5; see also Ps 95:6; Lk 22:41; Ac 7:60; 9:40).

As he had been accustomed to do previously. Evidently Daniel’s prayer habits were public knowledge, a mark of his genuine piety.

6:13 One of the captives from Judah. This ethnic identification of Daniel is perhaps indicative of prejudice toward the Jews on the part of the other officials (cf. 3:8). That Daniel’s ethnic identity was widely known reveals that he had not compromised his heritage in favor of success in captivity—an important lesson to the readers.

6:14 Began thinking about how he might rescue Daniel. Darius immediately perceived that he had been victimized by the intrigue of his own officials in order to trap Daniel. His appreciation for Daniel remained unshaken.

6:16 Your God ... will rescue you. Against his own will Darius was forced to comply with the decree. Nevertheless, he hoped that Daniel’s God would intervene on behalf of his faithful servant.

6:17 Sealed it with his signet ring and with those of his nobles.

Signet rings and cylinder seals were commonly used by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. The ring or cylinder was rolled across impressionable clay to leave the personal mark of the owner of the seal. Breaking open whatever was sealed in this way would be a violation of the law.

6:22 My God sent his angel. Likely the angel of the Lord (see [note on 3:28](#)).

6:23 Gave an order to haul Daniel up from the den. Darius could do this without violating the initial decree, since its demands had already been fulfilled.

6:26–27 See 2:47; 3:17–18 and 28–29; 4:2–3 and 28–37 and 5:18–29. As in the previous narratives the Lord revealed himself to be greater than human rulers or kingdoms, for his sovereignty extends over nature and history. But this decree went far beyond those earlier confessions in acknowledging God as a living, enduring and saving deity, whose kingdom is eternal and secure.

6:26 Edict. Darius’s decree does not imply that he actually converted from pagan polytheism to faith in Daniel’s God alone any more than did Cyrus’s proclamation that God had instructed him to send the Jews home (Ezr 1:3–4; Isa 44:28; 45:4).

he endures forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed; his authority is forever. ²⁷ He rescues and delivers and performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!²⁸

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

Daniel has a Vision of Four Animals Coming up from the Sea

7 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream filled with visions while he was lying on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream in summary fashion. ² Daniel explained: “I was watching in my vision during the night as the four winds of the sky were stirring up the great sea. ³ Then four large beasts came up from the sea; they were different from one another. ⁴ “The first one was like a lion with eagles’ wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off and it was lifted up from the ground. It was made to stand on two feet like a human being, and a human mind was given to it. ⁵ “Then a second beast appeared, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and there were three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and devour much flesh!’ ⁶ “After these things, as I was watching, another beast like a leopard appeared, with four bird-like wings on its back. This beast had four heads, and ruling authority was given to it. ⁷ “After these things, as I was watching in the night visions a fourth beast appeared - one dreadful, terrible, and very strong. It had two large rows of iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and anything that was left it trampled with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that came before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ “As I was contemplating the horns, another horn - a small one - came up between them, and three of the former horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it. This horn had eyes resembling human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant things. ⁹ “While I was watching,

thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His attire was white like snow; the hair of his head was like lamb’s wool. His throne was ablaze with fire and its

6:28 Daniel prospered. The major theme of God’s blessing toward Daniel appears again. Daniel remained faithful, refusing to compromise. For this reason he rose in prominence under both Babylonian and Persian kings. This fact exalted Daniel as a faithful Israelite whose prophecies could be trusted. the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus. The wording may be understood in two ways: (1) Daniel prospered under the rule of Gubaru (see [note on v. 1](#)) as well as under Cyrus; or (2) Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus. In the latter case, Darius the Mede and Cyrus are understood to be two names for the same ruler (see [note on v. 1](#)).

7:1–28 Vision of the Four Beasts. Daniel reported his dream of four beasts. The dream traces the history of foreign kingdoms oppressing Israel until their earthly dominion was given to the “one like a son of man” and to the saints.

7:1–12:13 The Visions. In these chapters Daniel turned from historical narrative to reports of visions. These visions depend on the two main themes set forth in the first six chapters of the book: Israel’s God was in control of all nations, and Daniel could be trusted as God’s uncompromising prophet. These chapters prepared an exiled Israel for the long delay of the restoration and the trials to come under the control of foreign powers. They also encouraged the people of God not to give up hope that God’s kingdom would come at the end of these trials. Daniel touched on four main topics: the four beasts (7:1–28), the ram and the goat (8:1–27), the “seventy weeks” (9:1–27) and the future of God’s people (10:1–12:13).

7:1 First year of King Belshazzar. See [note on 5:1](#). It is not known whether Belshazzar’s coregency with Nabonidus began at the same time as the accession of Nabonidus (556 B.C.) or a few years later. In any case, the events of this chapter (and [ch. 8](#)) are lobe placed chronologically between those of chapters 4 and 5.

7:2 Great sea. Whether or not this is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea is immaterial. What is clear is that the sea is symbolical the chaotic restlessness that characterized the sinful nations oppressing Israel. See the interpretation given in [verse 17](#) and in [Isa 17:12–13](#) and [57:20](#).

7:3 Four large beasts. These four beasts represent four kingdoms ([v. 17, 23](#)). It is clear that there is a close correspondence between the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the image in chapter 2 and those symbolized by the beasts in this chapter. For identification of the four kingdoms, see chart, “Visions in Daniel,” at Da 2.

7:4 A lion ... eagle’s wings. The lion with eagle’s wings is an ap-

propriate symbol for the Babylonian Empire (cf. [Jer 50:44](#); [Eze 17:3](#)). Winged lions were common Babylonian art forms often placed at the entrances of important public buildings.

Wings were pulled off ... a human mind was given to it. Perhaps this is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation and later restoration following a seven-year period of insanity (4:1–37).

7:5 A second beast ... like a bear. The Medo-Persian kingdom is symbolized by a bear with a voracious appetite. The raised side may represent the superior status of Persia, and the three ribs likely point to Persia’s conquests over Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.) and Egypt (525 B.C.). See [note on 8:3](#).

7:6 Another beast like a leopard. The Greek Empire is symbolized by a leopard, which is known for its speed. Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) conquered the Persian Empire with great rapidity. He encountered the Persians in three major battles: (1) At the Granicus River (334 B.C.) he gained entry into Asia Minor. (2) At Issus (333 B.C.) he was enabled to occupy Syria, Canaan and Egypt. (3) At Arbela (331 B.C.) he destroyed the last Persian army and pushed onward toward India. See also [8:5–8](#). Shortly after his premature death at age thirty-three the empire he had established divided into four parts: Macedonia under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Syria under Seleucus and Egypt under Ptolemy.

7:7 A fourth beast ... dreadful, terrible, and very strong. History has revealed that this unidentified beast represents Rome, the kingdom that ultimately assimilated the various parts of the divided Greek kingdom.

It had ten horns. The ten horns symbolize ten kings or kingdoms arising from the Roman kingdom ([v. 24](#)). It is not clear whether these horns are successive or contemporaneous. Some suggest that they represent a second phase of the fourth kingdom, “a revived Roman Empire” of the last days, but there is no evidence of such a distinction.

7:8 A small one - came up between them, and three of the former horns were torn out by the roots. The ten horns are prior in time to the “little horn” which uproots three of them. Here is another phase of the fourth kingdom. Many interpreters have suggested that the little horn symbolizes the rise of the antichrist ([2Th 2:3–4, 8](#)). If so, this is the first Scriptural reference to the antichrist.

Eyes resembling human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant things. The imagery suggests that this horn represents an individual rather than a kingdom.

7:9 The Ancient of Days took his seat. The title “Ancient of Days”

wheels were all aflame. ¹⁰ A river of fire was streaming forth and proceeding from his presence. Many thousands were ministering to him; Many tens of thousands stood ready to serve him. The court convened and the books were opened.

¹¹ “Then I kept on watching because of the arrogant words of the horn that was speaking. I was watching until the beast was killed and its body destroyed and thrown into the flaming fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their ruling authority had already been removed, though they were permitted to go on living for a time and a season.

¹³ I was watching in the night visions, “And with the clouds of the sky one like a son of man was approaching. He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.

¹⁴ To him was given ruling authority, honor, and sovereignty. All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving him. His authority is eternal and will not pass away. His kingdom will not be destroyed.

An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision

¹⁵ “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed, and the visions of my mind were alarming me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those standing nearby and asked him about the meaning of all this. So he spoke with me and revealed to me the interpretation of the vision: ¹⁷ “These large beasts, which are four in number, represent four kings who will arise from the earth. ¹⁸ The holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will take possession of the kingdom forever and ever.” ¹⁹ “Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others. It was very dreadful, with two rows of iron teeth and bronze claws, and it devoured, crushed, and trampled anything that was left with its feet. ²⁰ I also wanted to know the meaning of the ten horns on its head, and of that other horn which came up and before which three others fell. This was the horn that had eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant things, whose appearance was more formidable than the others. ²¹ While I was watching, that horn began to wage war against the holy ones and was defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days arrived and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High. Then the time came for the holy ones to take possession of the kingdom. ²³ “This is what he told me:

occurs in the Bible only in this chapter (vv. 13, 22). A similar expression appears in Ugaritic texts to designate the great God El. It is clearly used as a designation for God, who is sitting to judge, and it implies that God is eternal or that he has ruled from ancient times.

Attire ...hair . Although God appeared in magnificent glory to Daniel, he still revealed himself in a recognizably human form so that Daniel could grasp what he saw.

His throne ... its wheels . The depiction of God's throne resembles that of Ezekiel's vision (Eze 1:15–28). As in other parts of the ancient world the divine throne is depicted as having wheels, like a mobile chariot throne used most notably in battle. Similar motifs lie behind the pillar of fire that led Israel during the Exodus (Ex 13:21–22).

7:10 The books were opened . See 12:1 (see also Ex 32:32; Ps 149:9; Isa 4:3; 65:6; Mal 3:16; Lk 10:20; Rev 5:1–5; 6:12–16; 20:12). See BC 37.

7:11–12 A contrast is drawn between the complete destruction of the fourth kingdom and the measure of continuance granted the preceding kingdoms as their people and customs were absorbed into the succeeding kingdoms.

7:13 With the clouds of the sky . Elsewhere in the Old Testament only God is said to appear on clouds (Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). The One like a man originates in heaven and comes by divine initiative. He is the same as the rock cut out of the mountain, but not by human hands (2:45; see note on 7:14).

One like a son of man . The term “son of man” may mean simply “a man.” The Hebrew equivalent is used for Daniel in 8:17 and is used many times of Daniel's contemporary Ezekiel (e.g., Eze 2:1, 3, 6). In contrast to the beasts who misruled the earth, this “one” will preside over creation as God had intended before the fall; he will have dominion over the beasts (Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8). Daniel may have been the earliest witness to this special use of “son of man.” Later Jewish apocalyptic literature written between the Old and New Testaments draws upon this passage and speaks of the “son of man” as a supernatural human being who brings the power of heaven to Earth. Daniel saw someone

like a man; i.e., someone who was to be compared with a man yet was somehow qualitatively different (v. 14). The expression “son of man” is used 69 times in the Synoptic Gospels and 12 times in John's Gospel to refer to Christ. It is in fact the most common title Jesus used of himself.

7:14 To him was given ruling authority . God gives him vice-regency over all the nations. He fulfills the symbolic rule of the rock cut out of a mountain (2:44–45).

All peoples ... were serving him ... His kingdom will not be destroyed . The “son of man” whom Daniel envisioned was none other than the great son of David, the Messiah. Isaiah also spoke of his kingdom as never ending (Isa 9:7). Jesus clearly confirmed this Messianic connection by an allusion to this passage. For this he was accused by the religious leaders of his day of blasphemy (Mt 26:64–65; Mk 14:62–64). In serving him, people serve God.

7:15 Spirit was distressed ...were alarming . Daniel was horrified by what he saw and asked an angel to elucidate the vision.

7:18 The holy ones of the Most High . See verses 21–22, 25 and 27. Not angels but true believers who will share responsibility in the administration of the kingdom (1Co 6:1–11; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 22:5).

Will receive the kingdom . There is close identification between the “son of man” as King (vv. 13–14) and the “saints of the Most High” as those who participate in his kingdom (see “take possession of the kingdom” at v. 22; see also v. 27).

Forever . See 6:26, 7:14 and their notes.

7:21 That horn began to wage war against the holy ones and was defeating them . Daniel recounted additional information about the hostility of the little horn (v. 8) toward the people of God (cf. Rev 13:7).

7:22 Until the Ancient of Days arrived . Although the little horn (v. 8) would prevail for a time against God's people, in the end he would fall under the judgment of God (cf. Zec 14:1–4; Rev 13:7–17; 19:20).

Take possession of the kingdom . God's intervention in history will lead to what the New Testament calls “the kingdom of God” (see theological article “The Kingdom of God” at Mt 4).

'The fourth beast means that there will be a fourth kingdom on earth that will differ from all the other kingdoms. It will devour all the earth and will trample and crush it.

²⁴The ten horns mean that ten kings will arise from that kingdom. Another king will arise after them, but he will be different from the earlier ones. He will humiliate three kings. ²⁵He will speak words against the Most High. He will harass the holy ones of the Most High continually. His intention will be to change times established by law. They will be delivered into his hand For a time, times, and half a time. ²⁶But the court will convene, and his ruling authority will be removed - destroyed and abolished forever! ²⁷Then the kingdom, authority, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be delivered to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; all authorities will serve him and obey him.'

²⁸"This is the conclusion of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts troubled me greatly, and the color drained from my face. But I kept the matter to myself."

Daniel Has a Vision of a Goat and a Ram

8 In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me previously. ²In this vision I saw myself in Susa the citadel, which is located in the province of Elam. In the vision I saw myself at the Ulai Canal. ³I looked up and saw a ram with two horns standing at the canal. Its two horns were both long, but one was longer than the other. The longer one was coming up after the shorter one. ⁴I saw that the ram was butting westward, northward, and southward. No animal was able to stand before it, and there was none who could deliver from its power. It did as it pleased and acted arrogantly.

⁵While I was contemplating all this, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of all the land without touching the ground. This goat had a conspicuous horn between its eyes. ⁶It came to the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the canal and rushed against it with raging strength. ⁷I saw it approaching the ram. It went into a fit of rage against the ram and struck it and broke off its two horns. The ram had no ability to resist it. The goat hurled the ram to the ground and trampled it. No one could deliver the ram from its power. ⁸The male goat acted even more arrogantly. But no sooner had the large horn become strong than

7:24 Three kings. A few of the ten, but an indefinite number.

7:25 He will speak words against the Most High. More details are given of the activities of the little horn (v. 8) as a ruler who opposes God.

Harass the holy ones. He will persecute God's people.

For a time, times, and half a time. The word "time" is the same word used in 4:16 and 4:23 and, as there (see [note on 4:16](#)), may be understood as representing a period of one year (cf. [Rev 12:14](#)). It is best understood as symbolic of a period of time that will be shortened when God suddenly intervenes.

7:26 The court. The court of heaven (see v. 10).

7:27 Will be delivered to the people of the holy ones. After God's people face the trials of oppressive kingdoms they will rule over all forever. See [note on 7:18](#).

7:28 Troubled me greatly, and the color drained from my face. Thoughts of Israel falling under repeated and prolonged oppression from foreign powers still troubled Daniel, even though the ultimate outcome would be divine intervention resulting in victory for God's people. See also v. 15 and its [note](#).

Kept the matter to myself. Daniel mentioned this to inform his readers that he did not delight in the prospect of such a future for God's people. Despite his authority in the Gentile courts of Babylon and Persia, no one could rightly accuse him of betraying his loyalty to God's people. He spoke of these future events with regret.

8:1-27 Vision of the Ram and the Goat. The prophet recorded a vision concerning the treatment of God's people under the Medo-Persians and Greeks.

8:1-12:13 Daniel resumed use of the Hebrew language in the book's last five chapters. He had written 2:4-7:28 in Aramaic (see [note on 2:4](#)).

8:1 In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign. That is, two years after Daniel's dream in chapter 7 (see [note on 7:1](#)).

8:2 I saw myself. Daniel experienced a visionary journey like that of Ezekiel ([Eze 3:10-15](#)).

Susa the citadel, which is located in the province of Elam. In Daniel's time Susa was the capital of Elam, about 230 miles east of Babylon. It is unclear whether Elam was then independent or aligned with either Babylon or Media. Later, however, as one of three royal cities, Susa became the diplomatic and administrative capital of the Persian Empire (cf. [Est 1:2](#); [Ne 1:1](#)).

Ulai Canal. This canal near Susa connected two rivers that flowed into the Persian Gulf.

8:3 A ram with two horns. Verse 20 identifies the ram and its horns as a symbol for the kings of the Medo-Persian Empire. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. Medo-Persian history clarifies the symbolism here. The Medes became strong and independent of Assyria after 631 B.C. The Persians began as an insignificant segment of the Median kingdom but eventually rose to control it when Cyrus (reigned 559-530 B.C.) of Anshan (in Elam) brought Media under his control (550 B.C.). Cyrus added to his list of titles "King of the Medes." Thus both horns were long but the one representing Persia longer because it was superior in might, and later in growing because it came to power after the other.

8:4 Butting westward, northward, and southward. Cyrus initially took Asia Minor; afterward, both northern and southern Mesopotamia. Subsequent rulers extended Medo-Persian control far to the East.

Acted arrogantly. The Persian Empire became larger and more powerful than any previous empire in ancient Near Eastern history.

8:5 Over the surface of all the land without touching the ground. This depicts the amazing rapidity of Alexander's conquests (see [note on 7:6](#)). In only three years he was able to defeat the powerful Persian Empire.

This goat had a conspicuous horn between its eyes. Verse 21 identifies the goat as Greece and the large horn between his eyes as its first king. The symbolism is a clear depiction of the rise of the Greek Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.).

8:8 The male goat acted even more arrogantly. Alexander's empire

it was broken, and there arose four conspicuous horns in its place, extending toward the four winds of the sky.

⁹From one of them came a small horn. But it grew to be very big, toward the south and the east and toward the beautiful land. ¹⁰It grew so big it reached the army of heaven, and it brought about the fall of some of the army and some of the stars to the ground, where it trampled them. ¹¹It also acted arrogantly against the Prince of the army, from whom the daily sacrifice was removed and whose sanctuary was thrown down. ¹²The army was given over, along with the daily sacrifice, in the course of his sinful rebellion. It hurled truth to the ground and enjoyed success. ¹³Then I heard a holy one speaking. Another holy one said to the one who was speaking, "To what period of time does the vision pertain - this vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the destructive act of rebellion and the giving over of both the sanctuary and army to be trampled?" ¹⁴He said to me, "To 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be put right again."

An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision

¹⁵While I, Daniel, was watching the vision, I sought to understand it. Now one who appeared to be a man was standing before me. ¹⁶Then I heard a human voice coming from between the banks of the Ulai. It called out, "Gabriel, enable this person to understand the vision." ¹⁷So he approached the place where I was standing. As he came, I felt terrified and fell flat on the ground. Then he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision pertains to the time of the end." ¹⁸As he spoke with me, I fell into a trance with my face to the ground. But he touched me and stood me upright. ¹⁹Then he said, "I am going to inform you about what will happen in the latter time of wrath, for the vision pertains to the appointed time of the end." ²⁰The ram that you saw with the two horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹The male goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. ²²The horn that was broken and in whose place

quickly exceeded the Persian Empire in size. By 327 B.C. Alexander had moved eastward into what is today Afghanistan and then on to the Indus Valley.

No sooner had the large horn become strong than it was broken. When his own troops refused to advance farther eastward Alexander returned to Babylon, where he died at the age of thirty-two, most probably of typhoid fever.

There arose four conspicuous horns in its place. Verse 22 indicates that these horns symbolize four kingdoms that emerged from Alexander's empire but were inferior in strength to its original domain. Historical records indicate that after a time of internal struggle four of Alexander's generals were able to secure portions of the former Greek Empire as their own kingdoms. See [note on 7:6](#).

8:9 A small horn. Verse 23 indicates that this horn symbolizes a wicked ruler who would arise in one of the four Greek kingdoms after an extended interval of time ("in the latter part of their reign"). The descriptions of the actions of this ruler ([vv. 9–14, 23–25](#)) identify him as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the ruler of the Seleucid kingdom from 175 to 164 B.C. This horn is not to be identified with the "little horn" of [7:8](#), which would arise during the Roman rather than the Greek period.

Toward the beautiful land. Daniel showed his love for the promised land by this expression.

8:10 The army of heaven. Or the stars ([cf. Jer 33:22](#)), symbolizing the people of God ([cf. 12:3; Ge 12:3; 15:5; Ex 12:41](#)) and/or a heavenly army ([Isa 14:13](#); also see [2 Maccabees 9:10](#)). Antiochus's coins picture a star above his head. Epiphanes means "God manifest." The attack against the people of God amounted to an attack against heaven itself.

Brought about the fall of some of the army and some of the stars to the ground, where it trampled them. This is a symbolic depiction of the severe persecution of God's people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attempted to abolish Israel's traditional worship and way of life (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives": [cf. 11:21–35; 1 Maccabees 1:10–64](#)).

8:11 Acted arrogantly against the Prince of the army. The "Prince" is to be understood as God, the Lord of hosts. See [verse 25](#), where the designation is "Prince of princes." Antiochus IV took the name Epiphanes ("God manifest") and viewed himself as the incarnate manifestation of Zeus (the chief god of the Greek pantheon).

The daily sacrifice was removed. See [verses 12–13](#) and [11:31](#). Antiochus IV ordered the cessation of all ceremonial observances related to the worship of the Lord at the Jerusalem temple and in the cities of Judah. The place of his sanctuary was brought low. Antiochus

IV not only entered the Most Holy Place and plundered the silver and gold vessels, but he also erected an altar to Zeus on top of the altar of the Lord in the temple court and offered swine upon it (see [note on 11:31](#)).

8:12 The army was given over, along with the daily sacrifice. God's people were subjected to the power of the horn that started small ([v. 9](#)), Antiochus IV. This entailed the cessation of regular temple observances.

Wicked success. The vision depicts the apparent success of the wicked acts of Antiochus IV (the horn that started small). That success included the destruction of copies of the Hebrew Scripture ([cf. 1 Maccabees 1:56–57](#)).

8:14 To 2,300 evenings and mornings. The phrase "evenings and mornings" occurs in the Old Testament only here and in [verse 26](#). Some understand it as a reference to the evening and morning sacrifices ([cf. Ex 29:38–42](#)). On that basis it would represent 1,150 days. Others view it as simply an expression for 2,300 days. Since the beginning of the persecutions of Antiochus IV could be linked with any one of a number of incidents beginning early as 171 B.C., it is difficult to determine which understanding of the phrase is to be preferred. The number 23 may be symbolic of a fixed period, as in apocalyptic literature outside the Bible.

Hen the sanctuary will be put right again. The temple was cleansed and rededicated under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus on December 25, 165 B.C. (see [note on 11:34](#); [cf. Zec 9:13–17](#)).

8:16 Gabriel. This angel is mentioned four times in Scripture ([9:21; Lk 1:11, 19, 26](#)). The name denotes one who is strong in the Lord (Gabriel means "strength of God") because of a relationship with him.

8:17 Son of man. See [note on 7:13](#). The "strong man of God" (see [note on v. 16](#)), the angel Gabriel, was speaking to this exalted mortal.

The vision pertains to the time of the end. See also [verse 19](#) ("the appointed time of the end"). This expression does not necessarily have to do with the absolute end of history. It occurs in [11:27](#) and [35](#) in contexts that probably refer to the end of the persecutions under Antiochus IV.

8:19 What will happen in the latter time of wrath. The "timed wrath" may here refer to the time of God's judgment on his people Israel during the period of their subjection to the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks.

8:20 The ram. See [notes on verses 3–4](#).

8:21 Male goat ... horn. See [notes on verses 5 and 8](#).

there arose four others stands for four kingdoms that will arise from his nation, though they will not have his strength.

²³Toward the end of their rule, when rebellious acts are complete, a rash and deceitful king will arise. ²⁴His power will be great, but it will not be by his strength alone. He will cause terrible destruction. He will be successful in what he undertakes. He will destroy powerful people and the people of the holy ones. ²⁵By his treachery he will succeed through deceit. He will have an arrogant attitude, and he will destroy many who are unaware of his schemes. He will rise up against the Prince of princes, yet he will be broken apart - but not by human agency. ²⁶The vision of the evenings and mornings that was told to you is correct. But you should seal up the vision, for it refers to a time many days from now.“

²⁷I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up and again carried out the king's business. But I was astonished at the vision, and there was no one to explain it.

Daniel Prays for His People

9 In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, who was of Median descent and who had been appointed king over the Babylonian empire - ²in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, came to understand from the sacred books that, according to the word of the LORD disclosed to the prophet Jeremiah, the years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem were seventy in number. ³So I turned my attention to the Lord God to implore him by prayer and requests, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God, confessing in this way:“O Lord, great and awesome God who is faithful to his covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned! We have done what is wrong and wicked; we have rebelled by turning away from your commandments and standards. ⁶We have not paid attention to your servants the prophets, who spoke by your authority to our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors, and to all the inhabitants of the land as well. ⁷“You are righteous, O Lord, but we are humiliated this day - the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far away in all the countries in which you have scattered them, because they have behaved unfaithfully toward you. ⁸O LORD, we have been humiliated - our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors - because we have sinned

8:22 Four. See [note on verse 8](#).

8:23–25 See [notes on verses 9–14](#). Some interpreters have found a picture of the antichrist in the descriptions of the horn of this chapter ([v. 8](#)) by viewing Antiochus IV as a type of any powerful opponent of God's people in the future.

8:25 Many. The faithful Jews, as well as “the mighty” or “the strong ones” of the [verse 24](#).

Prince of princes. A reference to God.

He will be broken apart - but not by human agency. Antiochus IV was not assassinated, nor did he die in battle. His death in 164 B.C. resulted from a physical or nervous disorder. For variant accounts of his death see [1 Maccabees 6:1-16](#) and [2 Maccabees 9:1-28](#).

8:26 Seal up the vision. A “seal” was used either to authenticate or certify something or to close up or secure something for confidentiality or safekeeping. The second sense seems most fitting in this context (see [note on 6:17](#)).

For it refers to a time many days from now. Literally, “[the vision] pertains to many days.” The conquests of Alexander (333-323 B.C.) occurred nearly two centuries after Daniel's vision (c. 550 B.C.), while Antiochus IV was active about a century and a half after Alexander (171-164 B.C.).

9:1–27 Vision of the Seventy Weeks. Daniel recorded an account of a revelation he received concerning Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 years of Jerusalem's desolation. The vision followed Daniel's prayer in which he confessed the justice of Jerusalem's desolation and sought the favor of God for the restoration of the city and the temple. This vision revealed that the time of Judah's exile was extended because the people of God had not yet repented of the sins that had brought exile upon them.

9:1 In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus. See [notes on 5:30–31](#) and [6:1](#). The term “Xerxes” (not the same person mentioned in [Est 1:1](#)) may be a royal title rather than a personal name. The first year of Darius's reign was 539 B.C.

9:2 Understand from the sacred books ... the word of the LORD disclosed to the prophet Jeremiah, the years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem were seventy in number. See [Jer 25:11–12](#) and [29:10](#). Daniel was concerned because the 70 years of exile had nearly come to an end but the Israelites were not ready to return to the land. Interpreters differ on the dates of the beginning and ending of the 70-year period and on whether it is to be understood as a round number, suggesting a human lifetime, or an exact time period. Some date the period from 586 B.C. (the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar) to 515 B.C., when the restoration of the temple was completed under Zerubbabel ([Ezr 6:13–18](#); [Zec 4:9](#)). Others date the beginning of the period to the year of Daniel's own captivity (604 B.C.: see [note on 1:1](#)). Daniel was also undoubtedly aware that Isaiah had prophesied Israel's release from exile under the Persian ruler Cyrus ([Isa 44:28](#); [45:1–13](#)). As Daniel apparently did here, the writer of Chronicles cited Cyrus's release of the exiles as having taken place in 539 B.C. as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy ([2Ch 36:21](#)). In the literature of the ancient Near East 70 years was a standard time period during which a god would punish his people for disloyalty. This period could be lengthened or shortened by the reactions of the people. For this reason it is not surprising that there would be some flexibility in the ways different Biblical writers applied the number to Israel's history.

9:4–19 Daniel's prayer is rooted in a covenantal understanding of the Lord's relation to his people (blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience; see especially [vv. 5, 7, 11–12, 14](#); [Lev 26:14–45](#); [Dt 28:15–68](#); [30:1–5](#)). For a similar prayer see [Ne 9](#). The prayer contains four parts: (1) worship ([v. 4](#)); (2) a confession of sin ([vv. 5–11a](#)); (3) recognition of the justice of God in his judgment on sin ([vv. 11b–14](#)); and (4) a plea for God's mercy based on concern for his name, kingdom and will ([vv. 15–19](#)). The prayer is grounded in God's promises ([v. 2](#)), was voiced in a spirit of contrition and humility ([v. 3](#)) and provides a model for appropriate elements of effective prayer.

against you. ⁹Yet the Lord our God is compassionate and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him. ¹⁰We have not obeyed the LORD our God by living according to his laws that he set before us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹“All Israel has broken your law and turned away by not obeying you. Therefore you have poured out on us the judgment solemnly threatened in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against you. ¹²He has carried out his threats against us and our rulers who were over us by bringing great calamity on us - what has happened to Jerusalem has never been equaled under all heaven! ¹³Just as it is written in the law of Moses, so all this calamity has come on us. Still we have not tried to pacify the LORD our God by turning back from our sin and by seeking wisdom from your reliable moral standards. ¹⁴The LORD was mindful of the calamity, and he brought it on us. For the LORD our God is just in all he has done, and we have not obeyed him. ¹⁵“Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with great power and made a name for yourself that is remembered to this day - we have sinned and behaved wickedly. ¹⁶O Lord, according to all your justice, please turn your raging anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. For due to our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people are mocked by all our neighbors. ¹⁷“So now, our God, accept the prayer and requests of your servant, and show favor to your devastated sanctuary for your own sake. ¹⁸Listen attentively, my God, and hear! Open your eyes and look on our desolated ruins and the city called by your name. For it is not because of our own righteous deeds that we are praying to you, but because your compassion is abundant. ¹⁹O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, pay attention, and act! Don’t delay, for your own sake, O my God! For your city and your people are called by your name.”

Gabriel Gives to Daniel a Prophecy of Seventy Weeks

²⁰While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the LORD my God concerning his holy mountain - ²¹yes, while I was still praying, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness, around the time of the evening offering. ²²He spoke with me, instructing me as follows: “Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you. ²³At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God’s sight. Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:

²⁴“Seventy weeks have been determined concerning your people and your holy city to put an end to rebellion, to bring sin to completion, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to seal up the prophetic vision, and to anoint a most holy place.

²⁵So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince arrives, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will again be built, with plaza and moat, but in distressful times.

9:21 The man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously in a vision. See [note on 8:16](#).

9:24 Seventy weeks. The “seventy ‘sevens’” (lit., “seventy weeks”) represent 490 years (see [note on 9:24–27](#)). The 70 years of exile (v. 2) are multiplied seven times in accordance with the pattern of covenantal curses ([Lev 26:14, 21, 24, 28](#)). God extended the exile because of Israel’s continuing sinfulness. Just as the 70 years of exile predicted by Jeremiah may have followed a standard formula (see [note on v. 2](#)), the period of 490 years probably represented a standard formula as well. For instance, the intertestamental, non-canonical book Jubilees structures the whole of history into periods of 490 years. It is likely, therefore, that Daniel had in mind not a precise calculation of years but broadly defined segments of time. This extension of time was not absolute; it could be lengthened if the people continued to rebel or shortened if they repented.

Have been determined ... to. Six things were to be accomplished during the period of “seventy ‘sevens.’” As with all Old Testament prophecies about the restoration from exile in the latter days, these six items are fulfilled in the work of Christ in bringing the kingdom of God (see theological articles “The Kingdom of God” at [Mt 4](#) and “The Plan of the Ages” at [Heb 7](#)). The New Testament teaches that the kingdom was inaugurated in the first coming of Christ, continues now and will reach its consummation at Christ’s return. Therefore, some aspects of these predictions are more closely related to Christ’s first coming, others to his second coming and still others are fulfilled by both his first and second comings.

9:25–27 The “seventy weeks” of years are divided into three subunits of 49 years (seven “sevens”; v. 25), 434 years (sixty-two “sevens”; v. 26) and seven years (one “seven”; v. 27). Interpreters differ over whether these subunits are to be viewed as a continuous sequence or as subunits separated by time intervals. Many attempts have been made to understand this chronology as precise numbers of years, but all attempts fall short of completeness due to the fact that these numbers were intended as round figures of representative periods of time. Although Daniel’s calculations are not to be taken as precise, the basic pattern of his prediction may be discerned without falling into speculation. The order to rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25) was followed by seven “sevens” or 49 years (v. 25), at which time the rebuilding of Jerusalem was completed (see [Ezra](#) and [Nehemiah](#)). This was followed by sixty-two “sevens” or 434 years (v. 25), at which time the Messiah was cut off (v. 26; see [note](#)). The single “seven” was fulfilled during or near the time of Christ’s earthly ministry (v. 27).

9:25 Anointed one, a prince. Two interpretations of this figure are possible: (1) He is the Messiah, the Christ. (2) He is a king whom God has anointed as his instrument in accomplishing his will (cf. [Isa 45:1](#)). While most interpreters take the anointed one and the ruler in verse 25 to be the same person, there is some disagreement as to whether or not this figure is identical to the person or persons referred to as “anointed one” and “ruler” in verse 26. In verse 26 the ruler appears to act against God. If the same ruler is intended in both verses, he is most likely not to be equated with the Messiah.

²⁶ Now after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one will be cut off and have nothing. As for the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince will destroy them. But his end will come speedily like a flood. Until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction. ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of that week he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt. On the wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys.”

An Angel Appears to Daniel

10 In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel (who was also called Belteshazzar). This message was true and concerned a great war. He understood the message and gained insight by the vision.

² In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three whole weeks. ³ I ate no choice food; no meat or wine came to my lips, nor did I anoint myself with oil until the end of those three weeks.

⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month I was beside the great river, the Tigris. ⁵ I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen; around his waist was a belt made of gold from Upaz. ⁶ His body resembled yellow jasper, and his face had an appearance like lightning. His eyes were like blazing torches; his arms and feet had the gleam of polished bronze. His voice thundered forth like the sound of a large crowd. ⁷ Only I, Daniel, saw the vision; the men who were with me did not see it. On the contrary, they were overcome with fright and ran away to hide. ⁸ I alone was left to see this great vision. My strength drained from me, and my vigor disappeared; I was without energy. ⁹ I listened to his voice, and as I did so I fell into a trance-like sleep with my face to the ground. ¹⁰ Then a hand touched me and set me on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said to me, “Daniel, you are of great value. Understand the words that I am about to speak to you. So stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” When he said this to me, I stood up shaking. ¹² Then he said to me, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day you applied your mind to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words. ¹³ However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia was opposing me for twenty-one days. But Michael, one of the leading princes, came to help me, because I

9:26 An anointed one will be cut off. This is either a reference to the crucifixion of Christ or to judgment that God would bring against a king who had overstepped his bounds as God’s instrument of judgment (see [note on v. 25](#)).

As for the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince will destroy them. A reference either to the Greek Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a precursor to the Roman general Titus (see “Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives”) or directly to Titus and/or his armies, who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

9:27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one week. The most likely antecedent of “he” is “the Anointed One” or the ruler” (v. 26). It is popular to interpret this statement as descriptive of an agreement that the antichrist will establish with Jewish people who have re-gathered in the land of Israel during the “tribulation” period, but this outlook is less likely. In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. This may be a reference to the termination of the Old Testament sacrificial system by the atoning death of Christ. It is also possible that it refers to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see [note on v. 26](#)). Some interpreters take the less likely view that this is a reference to the antichrist’s prohibition of “sacrifice and offering” (perhaps standing for religious practice in general) by the re-gathered Jewish people after three and a half years ([Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14](#)) of the “tribulation” period. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation. Daniel most likely described the destruction of the temple under either Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see [note on v. 26](#) and “Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives”), rather than actions of a future antichrist. Phrases similar to “an abomination that causes desolation” occur in [8:13, 11:31](#) and [12:11](#) (see [their notes](#)), as well as in [1 Maccabees 1:54](#). Daniel [8:13](#) and [1 Maccabees 1:54](#) refer to the activities of Antiochus IV. Daniel used the same language to describe one who would defile the temple in the time near that of the Messiah. Jesus alluded to this abomination in [Matt 24:15](#) and [Mk 13:14](#).

10:1–11:1 The Angel’s Message to Daniel. Daniel was prepared by an angelic being to receive a revelation pertaining to “a time yet to

come” ([10:14](#)).

10:1–12:13 Vision of the Future of God’s People. The prophet turned his attention to a final, lengthy vision that focused on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see “Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives”) and looked beyond that reign as well. This material divides into four main sections: the angel’s announcement to Daniel ([10:1–11:1](#)), events from Daniel until Antiochus IV Epiphanes ([11:2–20](#)), the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes ([11:21–12:3](#)) and a final message to Daniel ([12:4–13](#)).

10:1 In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia. In 537 B.C. See [notes on 1:21, 5:30, 6:1](#) and [9:1](#). The repatriated exiles were at this time back in the land to rebuild the temple ([Ezr 1:1–4; 3:8](#)), but they would soon have to give up the rebuilding ([Ezr 4:24](#)).

10:2 Was mourning. Daniel probably mourned because of the state of Jerusalem ([Ne 1:4; Isa 61:3–4; 64:8–12; 66:10](#)).

10:5 Man clothed in linen. Verses 5–6 give a detailed description of an angel, perhaps Gabriel ([9:21](#)) or the one who spoke to Gabriel ([8:16](#)). His appearance was similar to that of the glory of the Lord ([Eze 1:26–28; Rev 1:12–16](#)). For other references to angels see [Jdg 13:6, Eze 9:2–3; 10:2](#) and [Lk 24:4](#).

10:7 Overcome with fright. See [Isa 6:5](#) and [Lk 5:8](#).

10:12 Your words were heard. I have come in response to your words. The vision and revelation that Daniel received came as a direct response to his prayers.

10:13 However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia. In the context it is apparent that this prince refers to an evil, but powerful, spiritual being (cf. [Job 1:6–12; Ps 82; Isa 24:21; Lk 11:14–26](#)) assigned by Satan to activity pertaining to Persian rule. Similarly, the archangel Michael is called “the great prince who protects” Israel ([12:1](#)). The host of heaven are said to fight for Israel elsewhere in the Old Testament ([Jdg 5:20; 2Ki 6:15–18; Ps 103:20–21](#)).

Michael, one of the leading princes, came to help me. Michael is depicted as the commander of the holy angels in [Jude 9](#) and [Rev 12:7](#). Here a glimpse is given into the spiritual battles waged in the heavenly realms that affect events on Earth (cf. [Eph 6:12; Rev 12:7–9](#)).

was left there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to future days.”

¹⁵ While he was saying this to me, I was flat on the ground and unable to speak. ¹⁶ Then one who appeared to be a human being was touching my lips. I opened my mouth and started to speak, saying to the one who was standing before me, “Sir, due to the vision, anxiety has gripped me and I have no strength. ¹⁷ How, sir, am I able to speak with you? My strength is gone, and I am breathless.” ¹⁸ Then the one who appeared to be a human being touched me again and strengthened me. ¹⁹ He said to me, “Don’t be afraid, you who are valued. Peace be to you! Be strong! Be really strong!” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened. I said, “Sir, you may speak now, for you have given me strength.” ²⁰ He said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Now I am about to return to engage in battle with the prince of Persia. When I go, the prince of Greece is coming. ²¹ However, I will first tell you what is written in a dependable book. (There is no one who strengthens me against these princes, except Michael your prince.

11 And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood to strengthen him and to provide protection for him.)
² Now I will tell you the truth.

The Angel Gives a Message to Daniel

“Three more kings will arise for Persia. Then a fourth king will be unusually rich, more so than all who preceded him. When he has amassed power through his riches, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. ³ Then a powerful king will arise, exercising great authority and doing as he pleases. ⁴ Shortly after his rise to power, his kingdom will be broken up and distributed toward the four winds of the sky - but not to his posterity or with the authority he exercised, for his kingdom will be uprooted and distributed to others besides these. ⁵ Then the king of the south and one of his subordinates will grow strong. His subordinate will resist him and will rule a kingdom greater than his. ⁶ After some years have passed, they will form an alliance. Then the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but she will not retain her power, nor will he continue in his strength. She, together with the one who brought her, her child, and her benefactor will all be delivered over at that time. ⁷ There will arise in his place one from her family line who will come against their army and will enter the stronghold of the king of the north and will move against them successfully. ⁸ He will also take their gods into captivity to Egypt, along with their cast images and prized utensils of silver and gold. Then he will withdraw for some years from the king of the

10:20 I am about to return to engage in battle with the prince of Persia. See [note on verse 13](#).

The prince of Greece. This is a fallen angel or demonic power assigned by Satan to participate in the affairs of the Greek kingdom (see [note on v. 13](#); see [Jn 14:30](#); [Eph 6:12](#)). Although both Persia and Greece would conquer God’s people, Daniel was to understand that their power would be limited by the power of God, whose purposes always prevail.

10:21 A dependable book. A metaphor for God’s knowledge and control over all of history.

No one ... except Michael. Michael’s interest in protecting Israel (see [note on v. 13](#); cf. [12:1](#)) corresponded with that of the messenger, who was directly concerned about God’s purposes.

11:1 In the first year of Darius the Mede. Earlier the angel who was speaking to Daniel had given assistance to Michael (see [note on 10:13](#)), perhaps in connection with the Persian decree to permit the Jews to return to their homeland.

11:2–20 From Daniel Until Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The revelation given to Daniel in 11:2-20 concerned ancient Near Eastern history from the time of Daniel until the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The prophet’s vision was unusually detailed, describing intricate interconnections among events far beyond that normally given to an Israelite prophet. Such details drew the attention of early readers of this book and demonstrated Daniel’s reliability.

11:2 Three more kings will arise for Persia. Cambyses (529-523 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata (523-2 B.C.) and Darius I (522-486 B.C.).

A fourth. Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.).

Unusually rich. See [Est 1:4](#).

He will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. Xerxes

waged a number of campaigns against Greece, beginning in 480 B.C.

11:3 A powerful king will arise. Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.).

See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:5](#) and [8](#).

11:4 His kingdom will be broken up ... toward the four winds of

the sky. See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:8](#).

11:5 The king of the south. Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.).

One of his subordinates will grow strong. Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 B.C.). Seleucus broke with Ptolemy, became king of Babylon and controlled territories from the Indus River in the east, to Syria in the west.

11:6–20 Verses 6-20 contain detailed predictions of relations between the king of the North (the Seleucid kingdom) and the king of the South (the Ptolemaic kingdom). This section may be divided into three parts: (1) events concerning Laodice and Berenice ([vv. 6–9](#)), (2) the career of Antiochus III ([vv. 10–19](#)) and (3) the reign of Seleucus IV ([v. 20](#)).

11:6 The daughter of the king of the south. Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.).

To make an agreement. Refers to a marriage alliance (c. 250 B.C.) between Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) of Syria and Ptolemy II of Egypt.

She will not retain her power, nor will he continue in his strength. Laodice, the former wife of Antiochus, instigated a conspiracy that resulted in the poisoning deaths of Berenice, Antiochus II and their infant son.

11:7 One from her family line. Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.), the brother of Berenice (see [note on v. 6](#)).

Will enter the stronghold of the king of the north. Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid kingdom, had Laodice (see [note on v. 6](#)) put to death and returned to Egypt with considerable booty.

north. ⁹Then the king of the north will advance against the empire of the king of the south, but will withdraw to his own land.

¹⁰His sons will wage war, mustering a large army which will advance like an overflowing river and carrying the battle all the way to the enemy's fortress. ¹¹"Then the king of the south will be enraged and will march out to fight against the king of the north, who will also muster a large army, but that army will be delivered into his hand. ¹²When the army is taken away, the king of the south will become arrogant. He will be responsible for the death of thousands and thousands of people, but he will not continue to prevail. ¹³For the king of the north will again muster an army, one larger than before. At the end of some years he will advance with a huge army and enormous supplies. ¹⁴"In those times many will oppose the king of the south. Those who are violent among your own people will rise up in confirmation of the vision, but they will falter. ¹⁵Then the king of the north will advance and will build siege mounds and capture a well-fortified city. The forces of the south will not prevail, not even his finest contingents. They will have no strength to prevail. ¹⁶The one advancing against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to stand before him. He will prevail in the beautiful land, and its annihilation will be within his power. ¹⁷His intention will be to come with the strength of his entire kingdom, and he will form alliances. He will give the king of the south a daughter in marriage in order to destroy the kingdom, but it will not turn out to his advantage. ¹⁸Then he will turn his attention to the coastal regions and will capture many of them. But a commander will bring his shameful conduct to a halt; in addition, he will make him pay for his shameful conduct. ¹⁹He will then turn his attention to the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall, not to be found again. ²⁰There will arise after him one who will send out an exactor of tribute to enhance the splendor of the kingdom, but after a few days he will be destroyed, though not in anger or battle.

²¹"Then there will arise in his place a despicable person to whom the royal honor has not been rightfully conferred. He will come on the scene in a time of prosperity and will seize the kingdom through deceit. ²²Armies will be suddenly swept away in defeat before him; both they and a covenant leader will be destroyed. ²³After entering into an alliance with him, he will behave treacherously; he will ascend to power with only a small force. ²⁴In a time of prosperity for the most productive areas of the province he will come and accomplish what neither his fathers nor their fathers accomplished. He will distribute loot, spoils, and property to his followers, and he will devise plans against fortified cities, but not for long.

²⁵He will rouse his strength and enthusiasm against the king of the south with a large army. The king of the south will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to prevail because of the

11:9 The king of the north will advance against the empire of the king of the south, but will withdraw to his own land. This refers to the unsuccessful campaign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.), the son of Laodice, against the Ptolemaic kingdom in 240 B.C.

11:10 His sons. Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 B.C.) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.).

Will wage war, mustering a large army. Antiochus III fought with the Ptolemies from 222-187 B.C. and for a time gained control of Canaan, as well as western Syria.

The enemy's fortress. This probably refers to Raphia, a Ptolemaic fortress in southern Canaan. A major battle was fought there in 217 B.C.

11:11 The king of the south. Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 B.C.). **Fight against the king of the north.** Antiochus III. He suffered great losses (over 14,000 men) at the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.

11:13 The king of the north will again muster an army, one larger than before. In alliance with Philip V of Macedon, he raised an even larger army to invade the Ptolemaic kingdom. Ptolemy IV died in mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.), his four-year-old son.

11:15 The king of the north will advance and will build siege mounds and capture a well-fortified city. This refers to the victory of Antiochus III at Sidon over the Egyptian general Scopas in 198 B.C. It marked the end of Ptolemaic rule in the area only much later referred to as Palestine.

11:16 The beautiful land. The promised land (see [vv. 41, 45; 8:9](#)).

11:17 He will form alliances. He will give the king of the south a daughter in marriage. Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus III, was given in marriage to the boy king Ptolemy V.

It will not turn out to his advantage. Cleopatra aligned herself with the Egyptians rather than with her father. She sought Roman help against the attempt of Antiochus III to take coastal cities in Asia Minor

controlled by the Egyptians.

11:18 A commander will bring his shameful conduct to a halt. The Roman general Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus III in several battles and forced him to cede Asia Minor to Roman control (the Peace of Apamea; 188 B.C.). At this time the second son of Antiochus III, later to be known as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was taken hostage to Rome.

11:20 After him one. Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.), the elder son of Antiochus III.

An exactor. Heliodorus (see 2 Maccabees 3:7-40).

11:21-12:3 The Rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Daniel turned to the most important character in the history outlined thus far: the great Antiochus IV, who persecuted the Jews and defiled the temple. The prophet concentrated on his accession and character ([11:21-24](#)), his career ([11:25-31](#)), the conditions of God's people during his reign ([11:32-35](#)), a summary of his religious attitudes ([11:36-39](#)), his heart's ambition ([11:40-45](#)) and a description of his defeat ([12:1-3](#)).

11:21 A despicable person to whom the royal honor has not been rightfully conferred. This is the infamous Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), brother of Seleucus IV but not his legitimate successor, since Seleucus IV had a son, Demetrius Soter, also known as Demetrius I. See [verses 23-24](#) and [notes on 8:9-14](#).

11:22 A covenant leader will be destroyed. Perhaps this is a reference to the assassination of the high priest Onias III by the supporters of Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.) in Jerusalem in 171 B.C. (cf. 2 Maccabees 4:32-43 [an Apocryphal book]).

11:25 The king of the south. Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146 B.C.), son of Ptolemy V and Cleopatra and nephew of Antiochus (see [note on v. 17](#)).

He will not be able to prevail. Antiochus IV defeated Ptolemy VI at Pelusium, located on the border of Egypt (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:16-19).

plans devised against him. ²⁶Those who share the king's fine food will attempt to destroy him, and his army will be swept away; many will be killed in battle. ²⁷These two kings, their minds filled with evil intentions, will trade lies with one another at the same table. But it will not succeed, for there is still an end at the appointed time. ²⁸Then the king of the north will return to his own land with much property. His mind will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action, and then return to his own land.

²⁹At an appointed time he will again invade the south, but this latter visit will not turn out the way the former one did. ³⁰The ships of Kittim will come against him, leaving him disheartened. He will turn back and direct his indignation against the holy covenant. He will return and honor those who forsake the holy covenant. ³¹His forces will rise up and profane the fortified sanctuary, stopping the daily sacrifice. In its place they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. ³²Then with smooth words he will defile those who have rejected the covenant. But the people who are loyal to their God will act valiantly. ³³These who are wise among the people will teach the masses. However, they will fall by the sword and by the flame, and they will be imprisoned and plundered for some time. ³⁴When they stumble, they will be granted some help. But many will unite with them deceitfully. ³⁵Even some of the wise will stumble, resulting in their refinement, purification, and cleansing until the time of the end, for it is still for the appointed time.

³⁶“Then the king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every deity and he will utter presumptuous things against the God of gods. He will succeed until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been decreed must occur. ³⁷He will not respect the gods of his fathers - not even the god loved by women. He will not respect any god; he will elevate himself above them all. ³⁸What he will honor is a god of fortresses - a god his fathers did not acknowledge he will honor with gold, silver, valuable stones, and treasured commodities. ³⁹He will attack mighty fortresses, aided by a foreign deity. To those who recognize him he will grant considerable honor. He will place them in authority over many people, and he will parcel out land for a price.

⁴⁰“At the time of the end the king of the south will attack him. Then the king of the north will storm against him with chariots, horsemen, and a large armada of ships. He will invade lands, passing through them like an overflowing river. ⁴¹Then he will enter the beautiful land. Many will fall, but these will escape: Edom, Moab, and the Ammonite leadership. ⁴²He will extend his power against other lands; the land of Egypt will not escape. ⁴³He will have control over the hidden stores of gold and silver, as well as all the treasures of Egypt. Libyans and Ethiopians will submit to him. ⁴⁴But reports will trouble him from the east and north, and he will set out in a tremendous rage to destroy and wipe out many. ⁴⁵He will pitch his royal tents between the seas toward the beautiful holy mountain. But he will come to his end, with no one to help him.

11:28 The king of the north will return to his own land with much property. His mind will be set against the holy covenant. As a result of intrigues in Jerusalem against his supporters, Antiochus IV plundered the temple on his return from Egypt to Antioch in Syria (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:20-28).

11:29 He will again invade the south. Antiochus IV invaded Egypt again in 168 B.C.

11:30 The ships of Kittim will come against him. Roman armies under Gaius Popilius Laenas forced Antiochus IV to retreat from Egypt. **Indignation against the holy covenant.** Antiochus determined to exterminate Jewish religion.

11:31 Stopping the daily sacrifice ... the abomination that causes desolation. The desecration of the temple in December 168 B.C. by Antiochus IV (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:54,59; 2 Maccabees 6:2 [Apocryphal books]; see [notes on 8:11; 9:27; 12:11](#)).

11:32 The people who are loyal to their God will act valiantly. Refers to those who opposed Antiochus IV and remained faithful to the Lord even unto death (1 Maccabees 1:61-63 [an Apocryphal book]).

11:34 They will be granted some help. Possibly this is a reference to Mattathias, an elderly priest, and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan), who waged a guerrilla war against Antiochus IV. Mattathias died in 166 B.C. His sons carried on the struggle and became known as the Maccabees. Victory was achieved under Judas Maccabeus in December 165 B.C., when the temple was cleansed and the daily sacrifices restored (cf. 1 Maccabees 4:36-39).

11:35 The time of the end ... the appointed time. See [note on 8:17. 11:36-39](#) *This king “will do as he pleases ... [and] magnify himself above every god”* (v. 36). He will “show no regard for the gods of his fathers” (v. 37) but will “greatly honor those who acknowledge him” (v. 39).

11:36-12:3 At his proudest moment this king will be destroyed right at Mount Zion in the heart of the Holy Land (vv. 44-45). His defeat in [12:1-3](#) is described in terms of the absolute end of history. Because these prophecies have not found a historical fulfillment, it is difficult to discern how literal or metaphorical they are, and our interpretation must be guarded. Certain details in [11:36-12:3](#) cannot be easily harmonized with the time of Antiochus IV. For this reason many evangelical interpreters understand these verses to be descriptive of the antichrist who will persecute God's people just prior to the second advent of Christ (cf. [12:1-3](#)). Yet this understanding requires the assumption of an extended time interval between the events depicted in [11:21-35](#) and those in [11:36-12:3](#), which the text does not communicate. It is possible that these prophesied events were averted, altered or delayed (see “Introduction to the Prophetic Books”).

11:36 Until the time of wrath is completed. Just as in [8:17](#) and [11:35](#), the time of persecution is subject to God's control.

11:40 At the time of the end. See [note on 8:17](#).

11:41 Beautiful land. Canaan (see [vv. 16, 45; 8:9](#)).

11:45 He will come to his end, with no one to help him. See [Joel 3](#) (see also [Zec 14:1-4; 2Th 2:8; Rev 16:13-16; 19:11-21](#)).

12 “At that time Michael, the great prince who watches over your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress unlike any other from the nation’s beginning up to that time. But at that time your own people, all those whose names are found written in the book, will escape. ²Many of those who sleep in the dusty ground will awake - some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence. ³But the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavenly expanse. And those bringing many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever.

⁴“But you, Daniel, close up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will dash about, and knowledge will increase.”

⁵I, Daniel, watched as two others stood there, one on each side of the river. ⁶One said to the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the river, “When will the end of these wondrous events occur?” ⁷Then I heard the man clothed in linen who was over the waters of the river as he raised both his right and left hands to the sky and made an oath by the one who lives forever: “It is for a time, times, and half a time. Then, when the power of the one who shatters the holy people has been exhausted, all these things will be finished.” ⁸I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, “Sir, what will happen after these things?”

⁹He said, “Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰Many will be purified, made clean, and refined, but the wicked will go on being wicked. None of the wicked will understand, though the wise will understand. ¹¹From the time that the daily sacrifice is removed and the abomination that causes desolation is set in place, there are 1,290 days. ¹²Blessed is the one who waits and attains to the 1,335 days. ¹³But you should go your way until the end. You will rest and then at the end of the days you will arise to receive what you have been allotted.”

12:1 At that time. Michael, the angelic protector of Israel, will not permit God’s people to be persecuted forever. He will judge those who oppress his people. Michael, the great prince who protects your people. See [note on 10:13](#).

A time of distress. See [Matt 24:21](#) and [Mk 13:19](#), where Jesus drew upon these prophecies about Antiochus IV to describe the time of the Roman siege against Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Your own people ... will escape. This deliverance is not necessarily from martyrdom ([v. 2](#)) but from the power of Satan (cf. [Mt 6:13](#); [2Ti 4:18](#)). As such the verse assures God’s people that he will deliver them from Satan’s temptation to apostatize during the time of distress.

12:2 Will awake - some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence. This is a prediction of the bodily resurrection of the godly and ungodly prior to a final judgment ([Mt 25:46](#); [Jn 5:28–29](#)).

12:4–13 A Final Message to Daniel. The book concludes by setting out a future course of events and by promising Daniel rest in the eternal state.

12:4 Close up these words. The act of sealing was understood as giving something a mark of authentication (see [note on 8:26](#)).

12:7 A time, times, and half a time. See [note on 7:25](#).

12:8 I did not understand. Daniel did not comprehend the angel’s response ([v. 7](#)) to his initial inquiry ([v. 6](#)), so he rephrased the question.

12:11 The daily sacrifice is removed and the abomination that causes desolation is set in place. See [note on 9:27](#). The simile activity of Antiochus IV prefigured this activity of the Roman Titus in A.D. 70.

12:12 1,290 days ... 1,335 days. The angel clarified his previous answer ([v. 7](#); see [note on v. 8](#)). The significance of these time frames is obscure.